SCHOOL TRANSITIONS TOOL
A trio of challenges

Education Endowment Foundation

Transition is a time of change between classes, year groups and settings. Research evidence that attends transition is largely focused on the move from primary to secondary. However, principles can be learned for other potentially vulnerable transition points. Several studies have shown a dip in attainment coinciding with transition, especially in literacy and numeracy.

Reasons cited include:

- lack of curriculum continuity and difficulties adapting to academic challenges;

- lack of familiarity with school systems, routines and expectations; and

- issues with developing healthy peer networks.

By anticipating the risk points around times of transition; schools, parents and young people can work together to deliberately build support.

This resource poses questions for reflection for school leaders to support transition decisions.

The evidence on how transitions impact upon pupils is varied, with some studies focusing mostly on attainment trajectories by quantitative research, and others exploring pupil experiences with qualitative methods. However, throughout this disparate evidence base are many useful points around the factors most likely to contribute to a successful transition.
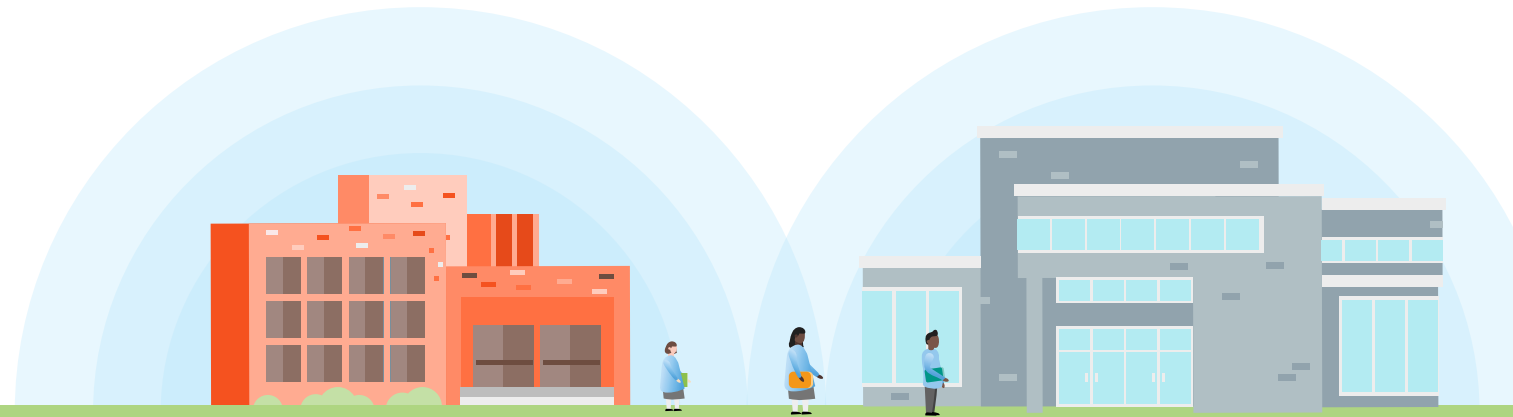
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Successful school transitions

Curriculum Continuity

Some children are vulnerable to poor academic progression and disengagement during transition. Children who have the necessary academic preparedness and who are able to work independently are often able to cope with problems and difficulties and are more likely to be successful. Conversations between teachers on curriculum matters are helpful. Bridging projects and booklets, offering information, encouragement, support and assistance with lessons and homework can be useful. Good communication across schools can help foster curriculum continuity.

- *How do teachers across the transition communicate? Are shared curriculum conversations and/or cross phase moderation exercises carried out?*

- *How is diagnostic assessment used in the new setting to identify knowledge of foundational curriculum concepts and skills?*

The EEF guide to *Metacognition and self-regulated learning* eef.li/metacognition/

School routines and expectations

Successful transitions, as identified from case studies in the research, are those with close cross-phase links. A variety of opportunities for induction, taster days and visits between schools appear to improve institutional adjustment. For example, help with getting to know the physical school building, routines; including relaxing rules in the early weeks to allow time for explanation, practise and reinforcement.

- *Have pupils and families experienced their new school and class/es (e.g. physical space, teachers routines)?*

- *Is there a bespoke offer for high need pupils? Is starting new classes supported and scaffolded (e.g. checklists, videos, timetables, additional visits etc).*

- *How are positive relationships between all stakeholders in the transition process developed; including schools, pupils and parents/carers? What information is shared?*

The EEF guide to *Improving behaviour in schools* eef.li/behaviour/

Healthy peer networks

Pupils and parents are often concerned with changes in relationships during transitions, including issues around bullying. Some studies report a positive effect on social adjustment through opportunities for establishing new friendships.

Positive transition among pupils include: looking forward to going to their new school; the friendliness of the older children and those in their class; having moved to the same school with existing friends; having older siblings who could offer them advice and support.

- *How are older pupils in the school involved?*

- *How is peer collaboration built into the transition process?*

- *How do teachers, pupils and families name and model emotions around transition so strategies can be shared?*

The EEF guide to *Improving social and emotional learning in primary schools* eef.li/primary-sel/