



# Primary to Secondary School Transition Guidance

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Developed by Derby City SENCOs  
and Dr Judith McAlister  
(Educational Psychologist)

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# Background

In Derby City over many years there has been an identified pattern of increased anxiety around the transition of children with Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND). This anxiety is felt not only by the children themselves and their parents or carers, but also by the primary school staff who know them well.

As a result of this increased anxiety, sometimes parents and carers worry that their children will not cope in a mainstream setting and will need an Education, Health and Care Needs assessment and Plan (EHCNP) to provide additional support, and possibly a specialist placement. School staff often also hold similar concerns that the children will not cope at secondary school.

In recognition that this anxiety is real and can affect the success of a mainstream secondary school transfer, Derby City SENCOs<sup>1</sup> and a member of the Educational Psychology Service decided to develop city wide guidance to ensure best practice is being implemented in all settings. This work was carried out as part of Derby City's Graduated Response in schools. Links were also made with the Opportunity Area Project.

The aim will be twofold:

1. To reassure parents, carers and pupils that the move from primary to secondary school will be well supported and smooth
2. To improve and unify the transition offer at both primary / junior and secondary school across the city.

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<sup>1</sup> SENCo refers to SENDco, SENCo, Inclusion Manager, Assistant SENCo etc.

# Research Overview

Research carried out by Dr J McAlister in Derby City during 2011-12 as part of the Educational Psychology doctoral training course identified 7 core aspects of their transition experiences that pupils with SEND said they found helpful: ([google search 'Judith McAlister realistic evaluation etheses' for the full thesis](#))

1. **Increasing their sense of feeling prepared** by accessing extra visits to the secondary school to have practical experiences of the school building, practice lessons and a look at the timetable and to be provided with specific visual aids (floor plan, timetables with rooms and subjects included).
2. **Opportunities to have open and frank discussions between prospective Year 7 students and older students** enables vulnerable students to develop knowledge and information so that they feel less anxious and better prepared.
3. Having **consistent key people to liaise with before, during and after the first term of Y7** makes students feel secure, looked after, listened to and prepared.
4. An emphasis on secondary school being a **'fresh start'** provides students with reassurance that they will not be judged on their previous difficulties.
5. Having **opportunities to foster new friendships and maintain existing ones** thus minimising anxiety and loss and facilitating a sense of security and inclusion.
6. **Effective liaison** between primary and secondary school staff and, between secondary school staff and parents or carers, regarding students who require additional support around learning or pastoral care assures anxious students and parents or carers that appropriate, personalised support will be implemented.
7. **Providing information about the behaviour policy and reward and consequence system** reduces anxiety, develops self-regulation strategies and support students' understanding of behavioural expectations and boundaries.

These findings correlate with previous and subsequent research conducted into this area of children and young people's transition experiences.

The following agreed guidance has been developed from this research and from the observations and experiences of real world practices of the SENCOs who contributed.

# Primary School Year 6 Summer Term

SENCOs aim to do the following where possible:

- To invite secondary SENCO to Y6 annual review for pupils with EHCP, if the secondary school is known at the time
- To complete any proforma sent by Chris Orme (Specialist Teacher; LA) for transition of pupils about whom staff have concerns about vulnerability, attendance, behaviour, learning progress, medical needs, or where social care agencies are involved.
- To complete any proforma sent by secondary school SENCOs re: SEND or to contact SENCOs by phone to discuss pupils with SEND. Clear information about the level of support that has been needed at primary or junior school should be shared.
- Any safeguarding information should be shared with the safeguarding lead for the secondary school.
- To provide at least two extra visits to pupils with SEND to the receiving school on top of common transfer day, supported by staff that know the pupil well (see criteria for who need additional visits). It has been suggested that this would be more manageable if the dates for extra transition sessions at different schools were not on the same days as primary or junior schools are required to send members of staff with the children.
- To ensure that essential information (and paperwork where possible, although some schools cannot send this until September) is shared between settings by the **end of June** or at the latest by the second week in July each year to include:
  - SEN Graduated File or similar
  - One page profile
  - Any professional reports and diagnostic letters

- Safeguarding information
- To have made any relevant referrals prior to summer holidays- e.g. SPOA, EHA, EHC assessment
- To devote time in the summer term to talking about secondary school in positive terms and to debunk any myths
- To spend time working through a transition preparation programme (to be provided by secondary schools?):
  - practising finding your way about on a floor plan,
  - following time-tables,
  - thinking about organisation of bag packing, equipment and so on
- Parents and carers will invest time in developing their children's organisational and independence skills for the change in responsibility at secondary school

# Secondary School Year 6 Summer Term

Secondary schools get the list of pupils coming in September during April each year.

Secondary SENCOs aim to provide the following:

- Liaison visits to feeder school SENCOs or a phone call to the primary school SENCO if there are numerous feeder schools during April and May
- Older current Y7, Y8 and Y9 pupils will visit feeder schools where this is possible to have informal discussions with Y6 pupils
- Open evening for Y6 pupils and their parents / carers in July
- For schools that have 1 or 2 pupils coming up, SENCO will make a visit. These pupils may be invited for additional transition visits to help them make new friends in a similar position
- SENCO will visit all primary / junior feeder schools that have a pupil with an EHCP
- Informal visits for parents and their children with SEND who have been identified as needing additional support to transition (see criteria)
- Photos to be taken by parents / children or by secondary school staff- of key areas in school, key staff and the school building for familiarisation over the summer holiday
- Map of the school / floorplan and exemplar Year 7 time-table to be given during visits / sent home for familiarisation over the summer holiday
- Introduction to the Head of Year 7, form tutor and SENCO
- Highlight the positive aspects of secondary school- specialist teachers, cafeteria etc.

Some secondary schools may:

- Send a pack of information out to schools with pupils with additional needs- to include photos of key staff; a floorplan; basic



information about school and the SENCo / support staff and spaces

- Provide summer schools to develop relationships and instil a sense of belonging
- Provide an online forum for Year 7s to ask questions
- Provide an informal visit / coffee morning / afternoon tea for parents and pupils late June
- Provide personalised transition support for the most vulnerable or those needing extra visits

Secondary school SENCOs would like external agencies to be available at parent/ carer events to discuss the support they provide to schools

## School Summer Holidays Between Y6-Y7

Some secondary schools may:

- Provide details of a member of staff who is available to contact over the summer holiday with any last minute queries
- Offer summer schools

Parents and carers can support their child's transition to secondary school by:

- Talking in positive terms about the move
- Discuss it in terms of a 'fresh start' for children that have not experienced a positive time in school
- Help their child develop independence skills by encouraging them to organise themselves with small aspects of their day during the summer break
- Look at and talk about the floor plans / time-tables / key staff
- Walk past or drive to the new school to familiarise their child with the building and entrance and local area
- Practise catching the bus if this is what they will be expected to do
- Help them budget for lunch and drinks if they have any shopping or visits with friends during the summer
- Ensure that their child has the correct uniform and the various equipment stated on any paperwork sent by secondary schools

## During Term 1 of Year 7

- Some schools may have the first day of term for Year 7s only
- Some schools may start lunch break early for Year 7s so they can access the cafeteria etc. when it is less busy
- Pupils identified as vulnerable may be allocated a peer mentor (Y11) to link with once or twice a week to provide organisational, social and emotional support
- SENCOs will present key information about all pupils with additional needs / SEND to all staff
- This information may be revisited at a twilight or staff meeting to raise awareness of pupils and their needs
- Teaching Assistants or other support staff may be deployed into Year 7 classes, as extra support for those requiring assistance
- Some schools may have nurture group provision or additional support session time-tabled in for Year 7s who have additional needs / SEND
- Some schools use vertical tutor groups (pupils from y7-Y11 in the same tutor group) to provide informal peer support
- Some schools will offer breakfast clubs and / or lunchtime clubs for pupils with additional needs
- Schools will provide a settling in evening update for parents and carers in October
- Secondary school staff will be made aware by the SENCO that fostering friendships is vital to the success of pupils with additional needs
- Some secondary schools may offer a SEND exhibition of work and achievements at the end of term 1 of Y7

All schools have a statutory duty to make reasonable adjustments for pupils with physical and other medical needs, and to ensure they do not discriminate based on any of the other protected characteristics- gender, race, religious belief or gender identity. Please see the Equality Act guidance for further information.

## Criteria for Pupils with SEND Needing Additional Support for Transfer to Secondary School

It is **not** necessary for all children on the SEND register to be included.

Cognition and Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• With EHCP</li> <li>• Likely to need additional ongoing intervention in small groups for reading, spelling, maths</li> </ul>
Communication and Interaction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• With EHCP</li> <li>• Likely to need additional ongoing intervention to develop expressive, receptive language skills and social communication skills</li> <li>• With ASC that impacts considerably on social communication and interactions and leads to increased anxiety linked to change</li> </ul>
Social, Emotional and Mental Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• With EHCP</li> <li>• Severe social and peer difficulties; isolated / withdrawn or with externalised difficulties</li> <li>• Emotional regulation difficulties</li> <li>• Likely to become a school refuser, due to anxiety</li> <li>• Other severe difficulties</li> </ul>
Physical and Sensory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• With EHCP</li> <li>• With additional equipment or requiring orientation of physical environment due to PI / HI / VI</li> </ul>

## TICKLIST FOR ACTIONS WITH DATES

<b>Time of year</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Completed</b>
April - May	Contact with feeder schools to share data / vulnerable student info. This may also include an Information Exchange event	
April-May	Forms completed for secondary schools and Chris Orme	
June and July	Additional visits to schools for vulnerable students	
June and July	SENCOs make contact face-to-face, email or phone call to share pertinent information	
July	Some secondary schools send staff, with adult support to visit schools	
July	Common Transfer Days	
Beginning of September at the latest	Paperwork sent to secondary school from primary or junior	
September onwards	Staff at secondary school can contact feeder school for advice if they have any difficulties with students	

**SCHOOL - Secondary Transition Planning**

Child's Name: \_\_\_\_\_ DOB: \_\_\_\_\_ Completed by: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Date : \_\_\_\_\_

What are child's strengths, interests, motivations?				
What are the child's primary needs?				
What targets are they currently working on?				
What provision is in place?	<i>Provision description</i>	<i>Cost (high, medium, low)</i>	<i>Impact (high, medium, low)</i>	<i>How easy to translate to a secondary setting?</i>
<i>Relational (e.g. ways communicating, therapeutic approaches, supporting emotional regulation)</i>				
<i>Instructional (e.g. QFT, method of instruction, differentiation)</i>				
<i>Environmental (e.g. class size, seating position, transitions)</i>				