

Curriculum for Excellence Factfile – 3 to 18 Transitions



What are transitions?

Transitions are the moves children and young people make from home to nursery, from stage to stage (and through the Curriculum for Excellence levels), from primary to secondary, between schools, and from secondary to further education and beyond. Transitions and changes are part of everyone's life. When these transitions work well they help children and young people to develop confidence and acquire skills to manage future change in their lives. The vast majority of children and young people look forward to moving on, in learning and in life, and these moves almost always turn out to be positive experiences. However, transitions can also be challenging and support from parents and staff at school can help the transitions go more smoothly.

All children and young people benefit from support from parents and staff as they make these important transitions. Some may need particular help, perhaps including other agencies to ensure that they feel confident about the transition. Schools will usually hold meetings for parents before key points of transition. These are very important opportunities for parents to learn about their child's transition and to support their children through it. Children may not always be keen to discuss their learning with others, but helping them to be open and discuss any concerns can play an important part in enabling them to find the best path and move successfully to the next stage.

It helps children and young people at all transitions if parents:

- talk with them about what is going to happen
- encourage them to ask questions
- encourage them to talk about any concerns or anxieties
- listen carefully to their concerns and consider sharing them with other relevant people
- help them to become familiar with the new setting and what will be expected of them.

Transition into pre-school or nursery

Starting nursery is an exciting step, and listening and talking to children about this change in their lives will help to prepare them for a good start. Parents may also have questions and concerns at this time and should not be afraid to ask questions of the nursery staff. Parents have an important role to help and support staff in getting to know their children by letting them know about their child's interests and any health or personal issues which may affect the child's learning.

The Curriculum for Excellence 'early level' spans the period from age three to early primary school. This provides new and exciting opportunities for meaningful and challenging learning experiences and for children to develop educationally, emotionally and socially within that level. It also encourages good transitions from nursery or other early years settings into primary school.

Transition from pre-school to primary school

Primary teachers work closely with nursery staff and parents to ensure that information about each child's learning and achievements is passed on. This will help ensure that their learning and development continues without interruption. Staff will also share other information which will help the teacher to support each child's learning – for example relevant health issues, friendship groups and preferred ways of working.

Transition from stage to stage in primary school

When moving on from P1 to P2 through to P7, and when moving through Curriculum for Excellence levels, class teachers share information about each child with their next teacher. This will be, for example, information about learning and achievements, examples of their work, records of their progress and skills development and other relevant information.

www.LTScotland.org.uk/commstoolkit

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Generally there are no formal transition meetings for parents or pupils at this stage (although there can be, depending on the school and/or the needs of the individual child), but pupils often get a chance to meet their new teacher for the next session.

Transition from primary to secondary school

Primary and secondary schools within their local clusters already have good systems in place for this transition across the country. Secondary schools usually have arrangements with all of their associated primary schools for children in P7 (sometimes earlier) to visit and spend time in the secondary school. Pupils meet teachers, see their new surroundings and learn about some of the work they will do in S1. Visits often take place in the summer term, so that there is not too big a gap before the young person begins the new school after the holidays.

Once again the primary school will share relevant personal information and profiles of progress and achievements across the whole curriculum with the secondary school that the child is attending to ensure that young people's learning continues with minimum interruption. This high level of planning for transition between primary and secondary school ensures that most young people will make a smooth transfer. As children get older they don't always share information quite as readily as they did when they were younger. Teachers understand this and there will always be someone available in the secondary school to talk to about this important stage in a young person's life. Parents can speak to the school if they are unsure who best to approach.

Transition from broad general education to the senior phase (S4-S6)

Young people continue their broad general education until the end of third year. Making the transition to the senior phase, which starts at the beginning of S4, involves important choices, including choices of subjects and the courses to be taken as qualifications. The senior phase will look different from school to school but will involve learners preparing for and taking qualifications at the different levels.

Transitions – preparing to leave school

From S4 onwards all young people begin to pursue different options. Many of them will stay at school to study for further qualifications, others may choose a blend of school and college learning or work placement; some will plan to move on to university, college or a training programme or to get a job.

Regardless of what each young person's post-16 learning choice is, it will be important for teachers to work with them and parents and others to make sure they find the option which will be best for them. This can involve working with other learning providers and support agencies, and taking part in programmes delivered in partnership with other agencies, e.g. youth work, often out of school.

At every stage of transition the aim is always to ensure that:

- every child and young person is supported and has a positive experience
- information about each child's learning and achievements will be passed on to make sure that every child's broad general education and senior phase continues uninterrupted at the correct level and at an appropriate pace for them
- parents speak with the staff involved to ensure that staff understand any concerns or circumstances that might affect the child or young person's progress
- parents get information about their son/daughter's progress and the curriculum, at parents' nights and through reports, newsletters and information leaflets from the school.

If my child has difficulties or experiences changes which affect their learning, can they get extra help with transitions?

If your child experiences any barriers to learning, whether short or longer-term (for example because of health, bereavement, bullying, sensory impairment or communication problems), they may require additional support at times of transition. In these instances, the school and local authority must assess the extent of their support needs and prepare a plan to help ease that transition, especially major transitions.

Further information online:

www.enquire.org.uk Enquire – the national advice service in Scotland for additional support for learning

www.LTScotland.org.uk/Parentzone Parentzone – information for parents on all aspects of children's learning

www.LTScotland.org.uk/understandingthecurriculum – more detailed information on Curriculum for Excellence

www.sqa.org.uk/curriculumforexcellence – latest information on the new qualifications

www.hmie.gov.uk – information on inspection and evaluation of education provision

www.employersandyoungpeople.org – making connections with employers to support learning

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Education/edandtrainingforyoungple> and www.LTScotland.org.uk/supportinglearners/choicesandchanges/16pluslearnchoices/index.asp – 16+ Learning Choices programme (learning opportunities for young people from age 16)

www.playtalkread.org – ideas to help parents of young children

www.parentingacrossscotland.org/publications/top-ten-tips.aspx – top ten tips for parents series, including starting primary and secondary school

www.rcst.org.uk/ – The Royal Caledonian Schools Trust, support for sons and daughters of Scots service families, including help and advice on changing schools

Curriculum for Excellence is a major change to the education system in Scotland that aims to raise standards of learning and teaching for all 3-18-year-olds, wherever they learn. In this factfile we sometimes use the term 'parents' for short – we mean all parents and carers. When we talk about 'learners' we mean all young people learning in nursery, school, college, community learning, training, special schools, extended support and secure settings. 'Teachers' or 'teaching staff' means all staff who support young people's learning e.g. lecturers, nursery staff, trainers, youth workers, learning support personnel, among others.