

# ‘MOVING ON UP’ SUPPORTING SEND Y6-Y7 TRANSITION



Moving from primary school to secondary is something that (nearly) all of us experience now.

Regardless of whether we change once or twice, there will be some who relish the change and look forward to new things whereas others will be struggling with the idea.

Who do we mean by others? The pupils are who we think about most, particularly those with SEND and after all, they are the ones who will be going to a new school and learning a whole new way of doing things. But how about the families? It is really important that their thoughts and feelings are considered too.

So, how do we make sure everyone feels supported? The best piece of advice we suggest here is to start by managing expectations. Change can be tough - as humans, we are hard-wired to keep ourselves safe and by keeping things the same (predictable), this is much easier. We cannot completely remove feelings of discomfort linked to change but by providing clarity and communicating what the changes will look like, we can go a long way to easing any difficult emotions.

## What practical steps can help with transition?

Some strategies which are commonly used include:

- Additional link visits
- Meeting with new form tutor / key worker
- Tour of the school after hours (less busy)
- Providing Y7 timetable in advance of September
- Setting up a buddy system with an older student

All of these are of course going to be helpful in providing a student with SEND with extra information to help build awareness of their new school. That said, there is a lot more that can be done with some careful planning and minimal cost. Take a middle school for example, where we have incoming students (Y5) and leavers (Y8) so you need to manage transition both into and out of the school in your role as SENCO / Teacher.

As a primary teacher, you have your class most of the day and get to know them all really well. Families often raise concerns as they understandably worry about secondary staff being aware of their child's needs. Do you have a SEND link meeting where you share SEND information with the receiving school? Sometimes GDPR gets cited as a reason not to do this however this is not applicable in this case. If a child has a confirmed place at a new school, it is actually your duty to make sure information is shared (SEND Code of Practice 5.47).

# ‘RELATIONSHIPS ARE CRITICAL’



Let's go back to managing expectations. Parents can be very used to quick, easy contact with their primary (or lower school) class teacher, often face to face at the end of the day. It can feel like a big leap to go from “all to nothing” at secondary. This is not to say that secondary colleagues are not available as of course, they are - but parents often say this is how they feel when staff are now at the end of an email rather than the end of the playground. This can easily lead to anxiety and frustration and sometimes, the odd keyboard warrior which we all know doesn't help anyone.

We invite primary teachers to think about how you can bridge this change. Perhaps your Y6s can leave at home time without needing a parent to collect them from your room / playground? Or another adult takes them out on a rota so gradually phasing down the level of teacher contact? Maybe your class teacher will only be “on the door” on set days. We support transition for pupils and we need to consider adults too.

Why does this matter? Because relationships are critical - families have built a rapport with you which they value as it provides reassurance. How about inviting your secondary SENCOs over for a “Meet and Greet” at your primary school? Yes, this takes some time (and diary co-ordination to set up) but in my experience, there are huge advantages to having a Meet and Greet. Your families are in an environment they are familiar with and get the reassurance of being able to put a face to a name.

## Even better if you can get coffee and cake for the event!

If you have multiple schools that your pupils move on to, invite as many secondaries as you can (or at least the ones taking the highest numbers of SEND). Introduce all of your visiting SENCOs and then families can go in smaller groups to the relevant SENCO for a longer chat and Q&A session. Even better if you can combine this with a tour for the secondary SENCOs so they can see how your school works day to day - this is also a great way to share best practice and network with colleagues.

## Contact Us:

To discuss how we can support you and help your school through transition please get in touch and arrange a call.

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