Transition from primary to secondary school: impact on health and wellbeing, factors affecting success and example resources to support effective transition

Schools and Colleges Mental Health Working Group
9th November 2018
• Times of change can be stressful and challenging

• Children and young people can worry about academic expectations, and about negotiating new environments and social relationships

• School transitions can also provide important opportunities for pupils to build resilience
Poor school transition

Negative effect of poor school transition

Lower stress resilience
Increased stress, anxiety, feelings of loneliness
Reduced confidence and self-esteem

Sustained high stress response

Common cold and flu
Anxiety and depression

Long-term chronic stress response

Negative health outcomes

Lower academic attainment

Increased welfare dependence
Lower skilled & paid jobs
Unemployment
Teenage pregnancies

Unhealthy lifestyle behaviours
Higher stress levels
Adverse pregnancy outcomes

Associated with premature mortality and a range of non-communicable diseases including:
- Cancer
- Liver disease
- Cardiovascular disease
- Heart failure
- Kidney failure

Conduct problems

Physical Fights
Unhealthy lifestyle behaviours
Depression
Use of fewer preventive services

Not liking school and disengagement

Reporting not liking school
Behavioural changes:
- Reductions in concentration and motivation
- Poor school attendance
- Frequent tardiness and exclusions

Depression
Attempted suicide
Suicide
Unhealthy lifestyle behaviours

UCL Institute of Health Equity, 2015
Children at greater risk of struggling with transition from primary to secondary school

Pupils:

• from socioeconomically disadvantaged families
• from transient families
• with special educational needs (SEN)
• with lower prior academic attainment
• with English as an additional language
• with poor socio-emotional skills, low self-esteem or low confidence
• who are the youngest pupils in the school year
• who are looked after
Key factors affecting the success of school transitions

- **SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY FACTORS**
  - Extent to which wider social determinants are addressed and the effectiveness of strategies

- **FAMILY AND BACKGROUND FACTORS**
  - Unaddressed anxieties about the unknown and higher expectations

- **CHILD AND YOUNG PERSON FACTORS**
  - Experience of bullying
  - Perceived friendliness of older pupils
  - Peer support and acceptance
  - Having older siblings
  - Quality of sleep
  - Level of physical activity
  - Use of transition initiatives, support and advice
  - Provision of transition initiatives, support and advice, for all and targeted pupils and families

**THE SIZE OF CHANGE PUPILS EXPERIENCE**

UCL Institute of Health Equity, 2015
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SPECIFIC APPROACHES</th>
<th>BASICS</th>
<th>BELONGING</th>
<th>LEARNING</th>
<th>COPING</th>
<th>CORE SELF</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Good enough housing</td>
<td>Find somewhere for the child/YP to belong</td>
<td>Make school/college life work as well as possible</td>
<td>Understanding boundaries and keeping within them</td>
<td>Instil a sense of hope</td>
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<td>Enough money to live</td>
<td>Help child/YP understand their place in the world</td>
<td>Engage mentors for children/YP</td>
<td>Being brave</td>
<td>Support the child/YP to understand other people’s feelings</td>
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<td>Being safe</td>
<td>Tap into good influences</td>
<td>Map out career or life plan</td>
<td>Solving problems</td>
<td>Help the child/YP to know her/himself</td>
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<td>Access &amp; transport</td>
<td>Keep relationships going</td>
<td>Help the child/YP to organise her/himself</td>
<td>Putting on rose-tinted glasses</td>
<td>Help the child/YP take responsibility for her/himself</td>
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<td>Healthy diet</td>
<td>The more healthy relationships the better</td>
<td>Highlight achievements</td>
<td>Calming down &amp; self-soothing</td>
<td>Foster their talents</td>
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<td>Exercise and fresh air</td>
<td>Take what you can from relationships where there is some hope</td>
<td>Develop life skills</td>
<td>Remember tomorrow is another day</td>
<td>There are tried and tested treatments for specific problems, use them</td>
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<td>Enough sleep</td>
<td>Get together people the child/YP can count on</td>
<td>Lean on others when necessary</td>
<td>Have a laugh</td>
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<td>Play &amp; leisure</td>
<td>Responsibilities &amp; obligations</td>
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<td>Being free from prejudice &amp; discrimination</td>
<td>Focus on good times and places</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Make sense of where child/YP has come from</td>
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<td>Predict a good experience of someone or something new</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Make friends and mix with other children/YPs</td>
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**NOBLE TRUTHS**

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<th>ACCEPTING</th>
<th>CONSERVING</th>
<th>COMMITMENT</th>
<th>ENLISTING</th>
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Factors and school processes that can improve transition from primary to secondary school

Factors that support successful transition:

• Enthusiasm and commitment of staff
• Cross-sector liaison and interchange
• Being flexible and responsive to the needs of the community
• Familiarisation lessons, open days, school visits and one-to-one support

Actions schools can take:

• Notice and assess how easily children interact with staff and to what extent they feel a sense of belonging to school.
• Deliver PSHE lessons and curriculum approaches focused on helping children to recognise and manage thoughts, feelings and emotions, problem-solve, and seek help when needed.
• Make parents aware how they can support children during crucial primary to secondary transitions.

Other transition initiatives:

• Relaxing rules in the first few weeks
• Information booklets
• Meetings with staff and other pupils
• Showing students examples of work and sample lessons
• Providing information, encouragement, support and assistance with lessons and homework

Processes to support transition (example East Sussex school)

• During the summer term we aim to visit every young person at their primary school to introduce ourselves and start to get to know them individually.

• We also liaise with their primary school teachers and collect information which aids us when allocating mentor and teaching groups.

• In June we invite all Year 6 students and their Parents/Carers to meet their Mentor who will support them up until the end of Year 11.

• Parents/Carers will also have the opportunity to speak with key members of staff, buy or order uniform and find out about and apply for a bus pass and locker. Parents/Carers can also find out more information about and join the PTA.

• In July we invite all Year 6 students to attend an Induction morning where they will again meet their Mentor and be introduced to their Mentor Group. During the morning the students will be able to experience life at secondary school, taking part in activities in a number of subjects and enjoying a meal in the Dining Room.

• We can also arrange additional visits for vulnerable students.

• The ‘transition stories’ of pupils at our school are published on our website.
Mentally Healthy Schools: access to a range of resources to support transition

A website to help primary school staff support the mental health of pupils.

Includes:

- Range of expert and practical information on risks and protective factors, mental health needs, whole-school approaches
- Teaching resources, whole-school programmes, assembly and lesson plans.

www.mentallyhealthyschools.org.uk
Student Transition and Resilience Training

- Developed by the state of Victoria (Australia), this resource is designed to enhance the ability of schools to support Year 6 and Year 7 students transition from primary to secondary school.

https://www.mentallyhealthyschools.org.uk/resources/start-pshe
Young Minds – Find Your Feet

A film to watch in your class to help them prepare for the transition between primary and secondary school: [https://youtu.be/xT6ctrk3pVQ](https://youtu.be/xT6ctrk3pVQ)
Toolkit to support introduction of a peer mentoring support programme

- Includes training plans and resources

Covers areas needed to achieve recognised quality standards for mentoring projects:
- Management and operation
- Service users (mentees)
- Mentors
- The mentoring relationship

East Sussex Transforming Health Improvement in Schools Programme

Wide range of emotional health and wellbeing approaches in school health improvement action plans:

Smart Moves

Emotional resilience for transition to secondary school

www.eikon.org.uk/resilience
Smart Moves content

**Basics**
- Transport and access to places and things
- Healthy diet
- Exercise and fresh air
- Enough sleep
- Play and leisure

**Belonging**
- Help them understand their place in the world
- Tap into good influences
- Keep relationships going
- The more healthy relationships the better
- Take what you can from relationships where there is some hope
- Get together people you can count on
- Belonging involves responsibilities and obligations too
- Make friends and mix with other children

**Learning**
- Make school life work as much as possible
- Help students to organise themselves

**Coping**
- Being brave
- Solving problems
- Rose-tinted glasses
- Fostering their interests
- Calming and self-soothing
- Lean on others when necessary
- Have a laugh

**Core self**
- Teach the child to understand other people’s feelings
- Help the child to know her/himself
- Help the child take responsibility for her/himself

View full workbooks at: [www.boingboing.org.uk/smart-moves-workbooks-schools](http://www.boingboing.org.uk/smart-moves-workbooks-schools)
Write your name or draw a face in the centre red circle.
In the first green circle write the names of your closest friends.
In the second yellow circle write the names of casual friends; these are people you enjoy talking to and visiting.
In the outer blue circle write the names of acquaintances, these are people you speak to sometimes but do not consider to be friends.

Friendship

Finds you to impress them
Supportive
Listens to your problems
Funny
Reliable
Honest

Sticks up for you
Likes similar things
Kind

Friendship recipe

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.
6.
7.

Fries into trouble
Exciting
Fashionable
Talks behind your back
Clever
Popular

Friends

Trusting
Likes school work
Loyal
Smart Moves in East Sussex

• Included in the whole-school health improvement action plans of at least **four secondary schools** and **three primary schools**.

• Smart Moves Training (train the trainer model) delivered at the **Secondary PSHE Hub** (12 schools, School Health Service and a Primary PSHE Hub lead (March 2017)

Evaluation information received from a secondary school that used Smart Moves as part of a range of approaches to improve emotional health and wellbeing:

• *Smart Moves (Eikon)* was used as a transition programme to all our year 7s for the first two terms of the academic year. The aim of the programme is to promote resilience and aid smooth transition.

• *Following evaluation of the year 7 tutor groups, 82% of students felt they were more confident to manage a conflict amongst friends* and *78% felt more confident to solve a problem in an unfamiliar situation*. The cohort of year 7s have had a particularly smooth transition and our pastoral team have had significantly less behaviour/friendship issues with the year 7s.

• *Smart Moves is being continued and delivered as a whole PSHE unit to the year 7s.*