

Moving Schools



Advice for Parents/Carers



Moving from one school to another is often referred to as a 'transition'. This happens naturally when children move from nursery to primary or from primary to secondary school. It can also happen when a family moves house, or when there is a need to change school for another reason.

There are formal processes for planning the transition between schools for some children with additional support needs. However, every school has a slightly different way of managing this. All schools should keep your child at the heart of transition planning and your child's views must be considered at every step of the way.

In addition, you may have your own list of questions. You may have concerns about how your child will manage the transition, and your child will have their own hopes, concerns or questions.



In this guide, we draw from conversations we have had with parents, carers, children and young people to suggest things that will help the move to go smoothly.

Moving from Primary to Secondary School



Schools are used to settling in new pupils, whether it's the Primary to Secondary transition or the move to a new school at a different time. Everyone at the school wants new children coming in to have a good transition.

Moving schools can be a big change which may feel very exciting but may also be a cause of anxiety. Parents and carers sometimes feel more anxious than their child. A lot of people will feel this way and discussing how you feel with others can help.

If your child is going into first year at Primary or Secondary School, the school will be welcoming lots of new children. It will take time for the school to get to know each child, and it may take time for your child to get used to all of the changes including a new routine and new classmates.

In the move from P7 to S1 one of the big changes is the number of teachers that your child will relate to. Over the last year of Primary School they will probably have built up a strong relationship with their class teacher and will now need to build relationships with a number of new teachers. Remember that this takes time, and that the teachers at their new school will be doing their best to get to know a large number of new pupils.

Schools have a lot of experience managing these transitions, so it can be helpful to allow a little time for your child to settle in. However, if things really aren't right or some time has passed and you are still concerned, good communication is key.



Communication

Building positive and respectful relationships will help everyone work together on a successful transition for your child. There will be a key contact in the new school who can help to answer any questions or concerns you may have, and it is a good idea to find out who that person is early on. Keep a note of their name and the best way to contact them.



Find out from your child's current school when they are going to pass information about your child onto their new school. You could ask what information the new school will receive and whether they need anything else from you. If there is something specific you or your child feel your child's new school needs to know, you can ask their current school to pass this information on for you. This could include information about how your child's additional support needs impact them in class.

Once you know the transition timeline, it will be easier for you to think about the questions you have and when is the best time to ask them. If you can, prioritise the most important questions so that you can get the answers you need when you need them. The legislation around when certain things should happen depends on your child's needs and the type of transition they are making. If you need advice about this, our Direct Help and Support Team would be happy to help give advice on your specific situation.



If there are regular planning meetings for your child, you can raise their transition well in advance to make sure that it is on the agenda. The local authority and the professionals working with you and your child have a big part to play in deciding what planning and support is needed. Discussing the transition at these meetings will give you the opportunity to share with professionals the support that you think your child needs. It will also help you to understand what is planned and will help you to tell your child what to expect.

If you don't have regular planning meetings, you can request one. Speak to your main contact at your child's current school about this.

Every school will manage communication from parents differently. In some schools your enquiries will always go through the school office. In others you may have a senior member of teaching staff as your key contact. If in doubt, contact the school office and ask. They will be able to point you in the right direction.



Some tips for effective communication:



Ask your child what they want their new school to know about them and take a note of this to share at meetings. An advocate could share your child's views on their behalf.



Writing things down can often help to make concerns seem more manageable.



Prepare what you want to say about your child's support needs in advance of any meetings. You could use lists or examples to help you.



Grouping questions together into themes helps you to organise your thoughts before you get in touch with the school – for example, questions about health issues, or technology and learning tools, or about your child's friendships and getting along with people.



Always ask for minutes of meetings and be prepared to follow up in writing if nobody is taking minutes or if there are other points that weren't covered in the meeting.

Ways you can support your child to manage the move



When you talk with your child about the move, ask about how they are feeling and what they think may be causing them to feel that way. Allow them to use their own words to do this. Bear in mind that they might not have the same concerns as you. You might be worried about how they will manage in class, while they are most worried about making new friends. It is important to allow your child opportunities to talk about their worries and not assume that you both have the same concerns. If you are worried that your child isn't going to manage particular aspects of the transition, they may pick up on how you are feeling.

Your child may have worries that you can support them with. For example, they may not be sure about how they will manage a busy lunch hall. However, you

might recall that your child has had positive experiences in other busy settings.

You could remind your child that they are able to manage these kinds of environments and model the different strategies that helped. Our Moving Schools Toolkit can help you to begin these discussions with your child and support them to start thinking about strategies that will address their concerns.



You may find your child isn't feeling worried about the transition and that there are things they are looking forward to. Try to focus on this as you prepare for the transition. After the move, it is important to celebrate the things your child has enjoyed or done well.



Some final thoughts

Be optimistic. With the right support and understanding, the new school could really help your child to thrive and fulfil their potential.

School moves usually work out for the best because everyone involved wants them to succeed. Sometimes this takes a bit of time to achieve, but most families get there in the end.



If you need advice or you're not sure where to start, you could call us on 0131 370 6730 or email directhelp@mindroom.org.

Published by and Copyright © Salvesen Mindroom Centre, 2022

Salvesen Mindroom Centre is a Scottish charity that supports, informs and empowers children and young people living with learning difficulties. Our vision is to become an internationally recognised centre of excellence in neurodiversity to help create a world in which no mind is left behind. To learn more about us please visit www.mindroom.org or ask for copies of our literature.

Salvesen Mindroom Centre is a charity registered in Scotland: SC03047

Registered Office: Suite 4/1 Great Michael House, 14 Links Place, Edinburgh EH6 7EZ
A company limited by guarantee and registered in Scotland: SC209656

www.mindroom.org | office: 0131 370 6731 | admin@mindroom.org