

Transitions Policy

Port Ellen Primary School & ELC

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Aims

Port Ellen Primary School and ELC recognises that children can experience a range of transitions that can be challenging, including but not limited to: starting ELC, moving into Primary 1, moving between classes, moving from class to class during the school day, changes in staff, and finally on to Islay High School. We therefore aim to make all transitions as smooth, positive, and supportive as possible to prevent and alleviate stress, promote wellbeing, and ensure that there is continuity in learning and development throughout.

Definition

In education, a transition refers to the process or period of change when a child or young person moves from one phase, place, or stage of education to another. This involves a series of adjustments and adaptations to new environments, routines, expectations, relationships, and learning experiences. It is a process, not just an event.

UNCRC

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) sets out that every child has their best interests as a top priority in all decisions and actions (Article 3).

Key principles

- The collection and sharing of information prior to, during, and after the children starting in a new setting will be in cooperation and partnership with parents/carers, existing staff, receiving staff, relevant support staff, and, if age appropriate, with the child themselves, ensuring their voice is heard.
- Discussion and collection of information will focus on the holistic development of the whole child and not just child development or academic achievement, encompassing their routines, interests, family unit, social and emotional wellbeing, and any other relevant factors.
- Timescales, intensity, and approaches to transition will be flexible and variable to meet the individual needs of the child, recognizing that some children may require more time and support.
- Other relevant information, e.g., social and emotional concerns, special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), medical information, cultural and linguistic needs, and any history of trauma, will be gathered, recorded, and shared appropriately and sensitively.
- Safeguarding information (all compliant with General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and other relevant data protection legislation) will be shared securely and on a strict 'need to know' basis, with clear protocols for confidentiality.

Transition into ELC

Our ELC is committed to building strong connections with the local community and ensuring a positive first experience for our youngest learners and their families. We proactively engage with families through initiatives such as Stay and Play sessions (when feasible), providing informal opportunities to meet staff and become familiar with the environment.

Recognising that each child's transition is unique, our ELC staff work in close partnership with parents/carers to develop an individualised settling-in plan. This plan is informed by discussions and the "All About Me" form, which gathers crucial information about the child's routines, interests, and any specific needs.

The settling-in process involves a series of carefully planned, staged visits. Initially, children attend two short sessions alongside their parent(s)/carer(s), gradually increasing in duration and independence based entirely on the child's individual comfort level and needs. For children experiencing separation anxiety, our staff adopt a flexible and responsive approach, working closely with parents/carers to implement strategies that prioritise the child's emotional wellbeing.

Prior to their formal start date, ELC staff will arrange an informal meeting with the parent(s)/carer(s) and the child. This provides a relaxed opportunity for introductions to the setting, their key worker, and initial familiarisation. Parents/carers are provided with multiple avenues for communication, including phone and email contact via the school office, ensuring ongoing dialogue with ELC staff regarding their child's transition and progress.

Upon the child's commencement in the ELC, staff utilise Leuven Scales of Wellbeing and Involvement as a key tool to closely monitor their emotional state and engagement. Observations inform immediate adaptations to the environment and routines to facilitate settling. We strive to be sensitive to parental preferences regarding aspects such as napping and snacks, where practically possible and in the child's best interests.

To ensure families feel connected and informed, all new parents/carers receive our ELC Handbook. Furthermore, we utilise Seesaw as a secure online platform to share children's learning experiences and achievements, fostering a strong home-ELC partnership and providing an additional channel for communication with staff. Throughout their time in the ELC, staff maintain regular, open communication with parents/carers regarding any significant changes or developments relevant to their child, ensuring their evolving needs are met effectively.

ELC to Primary 1

Children in the ELC benefit from regular Joint Sessions with the Primary 1 teacher, fostering early connections and a smoother transition. These teacher-led sessions, rich in learning experiences, integrate aspects of early literacy, numeracy, and health and wellbeing, while also developing essential fine motor skills. This valuable interaction not only prepares the children for starting school but also provides the Primary 1 teacher with an opportunity to observe their learning styles and needs before they formally begin. Joint Sessions take place throughout the academic year, from August to March.

Following this period, the Primary 1 teacher dedicates weekly hourly sessions to the ELC during the final term, further nurturing positive relationships with the children. Additionally, ELC pupils will have the opportunity to meet and share lunch with the current Primary 1 class, promoting social interaction and familiarisation with the school environment.

To support learning at home, the children in ELC will receive four virtual classrooms via their Seesaw accounts, accessible to parents/carers. These resources aim to inform families about the school's diverse learning approaches and provide engaging activities to develop specific skills such as pencil control and number recognition.

A more formal induction process also takes place, where pre-school children spend dedicated time with the Primary 1 teacher, gradually extending their visits to include playtime and lunch with the wider school community. Parents receive the comprehensive School Handbook and a helpful "Starting School" booklet. Furthermore, a "Meet the Teacher" session is arranged in the summer term, providing a platform for the Primary 1 teacher and Head Teacher to discuss the transition into Primary 1 with parents, address their questions, and alleviate any concerns they may have.

Between Classes

Each year, children will transition to a new class within the school. To support this process, children have the opportunity to experience their new classes during induction days in the summer term, coinciding with the Primary 7 transition to High School. This allows children to become familiar with their new classroom environment and teacher in a less formal setting.

Towards the end of the summer term, current class teachers meet with the incoming teachers to discuss each child's individual needs. This collaborative handover involves sharing comprehensive information about the child's progress, including their strengths, areas for development, any additional support needs, and other relevant information that will support a smooth transition. To complement these discussions, teachers typically provide written notes summarizing key information, and the school's tracking system enables the new teacher to access a child's ongoing progress and achievement, facilitating informed planning for their next steps in learning.

Port Ellen Primary to Islay High School

To support children in their transition to High School and foster a sense of confidence, we provide numerous opportunities for them to connect with pupils from other feeder schools. These interactions include:

- **Joint Events:** Participation in shared activities such as sports days, cluster-wide topic work, visits from external organizations, and High School-led events focusing on maths, science, and English.
- **Residential Experiences:** P6/7 pupils engage in residential trips, providing opportunities for relationship building and shared experiences.

High School staff play an active role in the transition process by visiting Port Ellen Primary to:

- **Pupil Engagement:** Meet the P7 children by visiting the primary school, answer their questions, and address any anxieties they may have about moving to High School.
- **Collaborative Discussions:** Engage in detailed discussions with the P7 teacher to gain a holistic understanding of each child, including academic strengths, areas for development, social dynamics, and any specific support needs. These discussions may involve seeking recommendations regarding peer relationships to inform class placement in High School, with the aim of promoting positive social integration.

To ensure continuity of support, formal information is transferred to the High School, encompassing:

- **Academic Data:** Records of progress and achievement.
- **Support Needs:** Details of any additional support needs.
- **Wellbeing Information:** Relevant information regarding behavioural, social, and emotional considerations.

In the final term at primary school, all P7 pupils participate in a formal two-day induction at the High School. This involves:

- **School Experience:** Traveling to the High School by bus and participating in a typical two-day timetable of classes.
- **Parental Engagement:** The High School conducts a parent information session concurrently, providing parents/carers with essential information about the transition and High School life.

Extended Induction:

For a small number of children who may find the transition particularly challenging, an extended induction program is provided. The decision to offer this additional support is made collaboratively through discussions involving the P7 class teacher, Head Teacher, Islay High School staff, and their Learning Support/Guidance team. This tailored approach involves:

- **Gradual Integration:** Increased visits to the High School over an extended period.
- **Confidence Building:** Activities designed to build confidence in the new environment.
- **Practical Familiarization:** Opportunities to navigate practical aspects of High School life, such as school lunches.
- **Staff Connections:** Opportunities to build relationships with key support staff at the High School.

From Home to School Transition

We recognise that the transition from home to school each day can present challenges for some children. This may manifest in various ways, such as separation anxiety for children in ELC, difficulties with change for children with Additional Support Needs (ASN), persistent lateness, or reluctance to travel on the school bus.

In all such instances, our staff will maintain a proactive and sensitive approach, remaining alert to individual children's needs and adapting daily routines to provide appropriate support. Many classes implement a "soft start" to the school day, where the period before formal learning commences at 9:00 am offers a less structured environment. This allows children time to engage in routine daily tasks and settle into the school day at their own pace, fostering a calmer and more positive start. Staff will work closely with parents/carers to understand the underlying reasons for any difficulties and collaboratively develop strategies to support a smoother transition from home to school. This may involve visual supports, social stories, or personalized routines implemented both at home and in school.

Monitoring of this Policy

It will be the responsibility of the Headteacher/Principal Teacher to ensure that all staff, including new or temporary staff, are familiar with this policy, and to monitor that it is being

implemented.