

Falkirk Council - Children's Services

Key Transition Stages - Moving-On Successfully

Guidance Paper 1. May 2020

1. Introduction

It is widely accepted that closure of ELC settings and schools on 20 March has interrupted progress relating to the management of transition activity.

Well-planned and carefully considered transition arrangements is crucial for all children and young people regardless of age and stage. However, national guidance and research tells us that particular attention needs to be given to children and young people, especially those with an additional support need, who are at **key transition** stages:

- moving from the ELC sector to primary school.
- moving from primary to secondary school.
- moving from mainstream to specialist provision.

Therefore, to account for the current situation, it is necessary to give consideration as to the core principles that should be consistently applied as part of wider recovery plans in organising transition activity for these groups.

2. Key Principles

The core purpose of transition activity and arrangements more broadly is to achieve the best possible start for children & young people in their new learning environment, allowing them to confidently exercise their position as a new member of the community.

Well-planned transition activity, under usual circumstances, is aimed towards: providing regular opportunities for children & young people to become familiar with the physical environment of the new setting; become familiar and feel 'well known' to key adults; and, begin to form secure, positive relationships with peers so that they feel part of a social grouping from the earliest point.

In practical terms, this purpose and aims are evidenced by the following principles:

- Quality of experience
- Equity
- Equality
- Securing social and emotional wellbeing of every child and young person

3. Particular considerations

By virtue of being in the identified cohorts at this time, during COVID-19, means that there are additional considerations to be made for these groups beyond the usual.

These are:

- Recognition of the impact of the experience of lockdown on individuals' emotional, educational, financial and social capital.
- Timely yet accurate communication with parents/carers about the plan for each phase of the transition: Term 4 and return to the new session. Parents/Carers should

be helped to understand that ongoing transition-type activities will form an important part of the new curriculum.

- Communication should be delivered in a range of ways, both digital and non-digital, to ensure everyone receives and understands it.

4. Planning Timetable

It is accepted that the timetable for the delivery of transition arrangements needs to be altered. Under usual circumstances transition activity would be undertaken prior to children and young people entering a new stage or sector.

This activity remains important, albeit the focus will have to shift so that information is based on 'what we know' and can be certain of. In addition, and as important, will be the work needed to support children and families when there is a return to education. This work will feature much of the activity that traditionally would be undertaken prior but now will happen 'in the moment'.

Guidance issued to local authorities on 21 May 2020, relating to the reopening of schools and early learning and childcare provision as part of [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): framework decision making – Scotland's route map through and out of the crisis](#) highlights the need to consider in phase 1 activities relating to children at key transition stages: ELC into P1 and P7 into S1, particularly consideration of 'in-school' activity during the course of June 2020, when teachers are returned to schools.

The additionality of an 'in-school' activity will not be mandatory in Falkirk provided transition plans comprise a range of approaches and there is evidence of these being accessed equitably by all children.

5. Term 4 Arrangements for Key Groups

All arrangements should be based on the purpose, aims and principles above.

ELC – Primary 1

- Primary schools with an ELC class are ideally placed in affording opportunities for ELC class staff and teachers to jointly plan and deliver transition activity. Particular consideration needs to be given to ensuring equality for children coming from a different setting, particularly private partner provider/Childminder. Your EY Central Team link can support when planning/liasing with these partners.
- During Term 4, transition activity for the new P1 cohort should focus on helping children to foster a positive identity with their new stage and setting. Key to this is the fostering of relationships, based on nurturing principles, with peers, adults and with the primary school setting more generally.
- Equally however, it is not yet possible to offer transition activity/information that would ordinarily be shared at this time relating to the physical building (entry/exit points; classroom environment; toilets; lunch hall) and other organisational arrangements (break times; dropping off/collecting; school day timings). It is anticipated transitions activity dealing with these matters will be the subject of future guidance and will happen more closely to the point of schools re-opening.

- ELC staff and teachers should continue to work together to share and discuss pastoral information about children. This will inform on-going transition activity and support initial planning ensuring wellbeing is appropriately prioritised.
- Upon re-opening, every opportunity will be afforded to ELC staff for supporting transition/settling of children in P1 and for the delivery of a developmentally appropriate curriculum. This joint working will also provide opportunities for continued exchange of assessment information/profiling around the fuller aspects of the curriculum.
- Children will continue to be identified in 'classes', however, it is likely that smaller cohorts will need to be identified (no more than 10). Teachers and ELC staff, including those from partner nurseries and childminders, should work together to identify these groupings with opportunities for wellbeing and nurture as a primary consideration.
- Throughout Term 4, ELC staff and teachers should work together with a focus on maintaining and establishing positive relationships with the children and families of the new P1 cohort by regular activity, for example:
 - Using digital and non-digital approaches to help children 'see' and interact with their class/key group.
 - Joint messages via YouTube, Twitter, etc. involving already known adults and new staff.
 - Personal letter/postcard/greeting card sent home addressed to the child with photos of key staff giving a welcome message. This could continue, for some, during the summer holiday.
 - Where buddies have been identified, use digital platforms to introduce older buddies to new primary 1 children. Non-digital approaches such as a 'pen pals' approach could be considered. [St Andrew's Primary & ELC example](#)
 - Using a transition mascot to offer virtual welcome messages and family learning suggestions throughout the Term 4 and, where appropriate, over the summer holiday period. [Denny Cluster example](#) (glow login required)

ELC to Primary 1 EP, Primary 1 Wings, Primary 1 ASC

- Clear process for Sending School staff to share information on pupils with Receiving School staff, including assessment judgements, so that classes can be formed and appropriately supported. Receiving School to initiate contact with Sending ELC.
- Receiving School to develop a series of virtual transition resources (such as virtual tours, introduction to key staff at the Receiving school). Need to be mindful that not all pupils will have access to these resources.
- Direct communication with families and pupils to facilitate Transition discussions and experiences, including provision of a greater level of support than normal. This should also include attendance at relevant TAC meetings to develop individualised packages. Consideration of bringing identified pupils in to the Receiving school to undertake a welcome tour where possible.
- For pupils starting P1 at the new Grangemouth Primary ASC (Sacred Heart campus), the Head Teacher will make direct contact with families and colleagues regarding transition arrangements.
- On arrival at the Receiving School, 'transition activities' should take place which: promote social interaction; raises awareness of the emotional, pastoral and curricular supports on offer; establishing new routines. Consideration to be given to grief and loss and emotional health and well-being of new pupils using Social stories if appropriate.

P7 – S1

- Clear mechanisms for primaries to share information on every pupil with secondaries, including assessment judgements, so that classes can be formed and appropriately supported. This should also be facilitated for pupils transitioning due to Placing Requests.
- Using methods that already are in place in schools communication with all families once there is a clearer understanding of the 'return to school plan'. Where needed, these should be posted home to ensure everyone receives the communication.
- Plan for social interaction between pupils from different primaries, recognising that this may or may not have taken place.
- Focus on ensuring new S1 pupils have the opportunity for emotional closure, working in partnership with Primary colleagues to plan and deliver experiences that facilitate this at the High School.
- During term 4, establish a virtual Transition Team (key staff, Pastoral & Subject PTs, SLT and P7 Teachers) to promote shared learning, ideas and communication.
- Develop a series of virtual transition resources (such as virtual tours, RRS activities, interviews with current pupils/staff, link Pupil Support staff and P7s via Teams/Google Classroom, interactive activities/challenges, including online resources such as <https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/tags/zh4wy9q/starting-secondary-school/1>). Need to be mindful that not all pupils will have access to these resources.
- For vulnerable pupils, including ASN, Pupil Support should engage directly with colleagues across the Cluster. Direct interaction will take place with families and pupils to facilitate final stage Enhanced Transition discussions and experiences, including provision of a greater level of support than normal. This should also include attendance at relevant TAC meetings to develop individualised packages. Consideration of bringing identified vulnerable pupils in to the Hub (2/3 at a time) to undertake a welcome and virtual tour of the school.
- On arrival at High School in S1, 'transition activities' should take place which: promotes social interaction; raises awareness of the emotional, pastoral and curricular supports on offer; boosts confidence and develops teamwork. This may include the consideration of a check-in time to allow regular contact with Pupil Support, promoting nurturing approaches.
- Specific focus on pupils being placed by Placing Request or from schools with very small numbers of pupils transitioning.

Children & Young People with complex ASN – Moving from Mainstream to Specialist Provision

- Clear mechanisms for Sending School staff to share information on pupils with Receiving School staff, including assessment judgements, so that classes can be formed and appropriately supported.
- During term 4, establish a virtual Transition Team (key staff Sending School and Receiving School) to promote shared learning, ideas and communication.
- Develop a series of virtual transition resources (such as virtual tours, introduction to key staff at the Receiving School, interviews with current pupils, interactive activities/challenges). Need to be mindful that not all pupils will have access to these resources. Plan for social interaction with pupils at the Receiving School.

- Direct communication with families and pupils to facilitate Transition discussions and experiences, including provision of a greater level of support than normal. This should also include attendance at relevant TAC meetings to develop individualised packages. Consideration of bringing identified pupils in to the Receiving school to undertake a welcome tour where possible.
- Focus on ensuring pupils have the opportunity for emotional closure, working in partnership with Sending School, colleagues to plan and deliver experiences that facilitate this at the Receiving School.
- On arrival at the Receiving School, 'transition activities' should take place which: promote social interaction; raises awareness of the emotional, pastoral and curricular supports on offer; boosts confidence and establishes new routines. Consideration to be given to grief and loss and emotional health and well-being of new pupils using Social Stories if appropriate.

6. **References and Resources**

Key reference materials	Social Stories Resources & Templates
Scottish Early Childhood and Families Transitions Statement and Resources	COVID-19
Applying Nurture as a Whole School Approach	National Autistic Society – Social Story Guidance and Templates
Realising The Ambition	Social Stories Guidance and Free Resources – Blog Post
	National Children's Bureau: Listening & Participation Resources