

POSITIVE TRANSITIONS FROM ELC TO P1

Category: Early Years

Risk Management and Legal Implications

Failure to manage risk may impact on the delivery of Service objectives and the outcomes achieved by Service users. Education and Children's Services aim to mitigate the implications by ongoing management and review of risk in all elements of work activity.

The production of this document is one way in which we aim to reduce our exposure to risk. By providing staff with information on good practice, making reference to other guidance that is available across the Council and providing clarity on how we should do things, we can ensure that the management of risk is intrinsic to what we do.

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Principles, Actions and Responsibilities

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Introduction

Transitions are pivotal moments in a child's learning journey, shaping their confidence, engagement, and overall education experience. Moving from a nursery or childminding setting into school is one of the most significant transitions a child will make, influencing their early impressions of formal education. Ensuring this transition is positive, seamless, and well-supported is crucial for fostering a love for learning and the child's needs and emotional well-being are met.

Education Scotland's Realising the Ambition: Being Me highlights the importance of high-quality transitions that focus on relationships, environments, and the continuity of learning experiences. Transitions should be child-centred, ensuring children feel secure and confident in their new setting while maintaining strong connections with their previous experiences.

- A high-quality transition process **acknowledges the needs of each child**, embraces their learning styles, and maintains continuity in their relationships and routines.
- Positive transitions **ensure well-being**, reducing anxiety, building resilience, and creating an environment where children feel safe, valued, and excited about the next stage of their learning journey.
- Effective transition **involves collaboration** between early years practitioners, childminders, families, and primary school educators to ensure children feel secure and prepared.

Aims

This guidance aims to:

- establish a well-structured transition process from ELC to Primary one that focuses on the well-being of all children, their continuity in learning across the curriculum, and the shared understanding of their holistic needs,
- strengthen collaboration and information-sharing between early learning settings, families, and school setting to support a seamless transition,
- detail the roles and responsibilities, within a practical framework of the steps each setting should take to prepare children effectively for their next stage in education.

A positive transition from early years settings, including outdoor nurseries and childminders, into school is essential for children's well-being, confidence, and readiness to learn. This process should be underpinned by key Scottish frameworks and policies, including:

- Realising the Ambition: Being Me (2020) – which emphasises the importance of continuity of experience, nurturing relationships, and play-based learning.
- Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) – ensuring that every child's needs are met through early intervention, multi-agency collaboration, and a child-centred approach.
- Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) – which promotes a seamless learning journey from Early Level (pre-school and early Primary 1), encouraging active, experiential, and play-based learning.
- Health and Social Care Standards (Scotland, 2017) – which highlight the importance of transitions in ensuring children's rights to compassionate, responsive, and person-centred care, aligning with the principles of dignity, respect, and well-being.

Key Principles for Positive Transitions

1. A Child-Centred Approach

- Transitions should be tailored to each child's individual needs, interests, and pace of adjustment.
- Well-being indicators (Safe, Healthy, Achieving, Nurtured, Active, Respected, Responsible, Included) from GIRFEC should be considered when planning transitions.

Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS 1.13, 1.15, 1.19) state that children should experience care and support tailored to their individual needs, ensuring a transition that is smooth and meaningful.

2. Strong Relationships & Continuity of Care

- Key adults (nursery practitioners, childminders, and P1 teachers) should communicate regularly to ensure continuity in relationships and routines.
- Transitions should feel seamless, with children seeing familiar adults and having the chance to visit their new setting.
- Peer support (buddy systems) could be used to help children feel a sense of belonging in their new school environment.

HSCS 3.6 highlights the importance of children being supported by people who are familiar and knowledgeable about their needs.

3. Clear Communication Between Settings & Families

- Information-sharing between early years practitioners, families, and schools is essential for supporting children's well-being and continuity in learning and development.
- Early years settings should share insights into each child's learning profile, emotional needs, interests, and strengths.
- Parents and carers should be actively involved in the transition process, with clear communication about what to expect.

HSCS 2.8 states that children should have a smooth transition between services, where relevant information is shared effectively.

4. Outdoor & Play-Based Transition Experiences

- CfE Early Level emphasises learning through play, movement, and exploration—schools should continue to embrace a play-based approach to learning to support transition into primary one.
- All children, but particularly those coming from outdoor nurseries or nature-based childminders, will benefit from outdoor learning experiences being integrated into the transition process.

HSCS 1.25 highlights the right of children to experience meaningful, stimulating, and developmentally appropriate learning activities, including outdoor play.

5. Inclusive Transitions

- Transition visits should be carefully structured to meet children's emotional and developmental needs.
- Enhanced transition processes are implemented in a well-planned, and timely way for children with ASN, ensuring that their support needs are clearly understood and accommodated.
- Settings and schools should work collaboratively with parents/carers, early years practitioners, and ASN specialists to ensure smooth transitions.

HSCS 2.3 highlights that children's needs should be met in a way that is inclusive and responsive to their individual circumstances.

6. Supporting Emotional Well-being & Resilience

- Transitions can be emotionally challenging for young children—opportunities for expressing feelings through stories, play, and discussions should be provided.
- Self-regulation strategies should be established, especially for children who struggle with new routines.
- Nurture-based approaches and support for children's self-regulation should be implemented to help children feel safe, secure, and supported.

HSCS 1.14 states that children's transitions should be planned with care and sensitivity to ensure they feel safe, secure, and valued

7. Practitioner Training & Collaboration

- Joint professional learning between early years practitioners and P1 teachers should be encouraged.
- Multi-agency collaboration (in line with GIRFEC) should be embedded to ensure children with complex needs receive appropriate support.

HSCS 4.11 ensures that staff have the right training to support children's transitions in an effective and sensitive way.

8. Celebrate the Transition

- Making transition a positive experience, recognising all processes involved.
- Transition experiences should be documented to allow children and families to reflect upon and celebrate the experience.

HSCS 1.6 emphasises that transitions should be meaningful and engaging, creating positive emotional experiences.

Roles and Responsibilities

ELC Responsibilities

- Share detailed developmental and learning records with the receiving school e.g. PLJs, progression pathways, care plans.
- Identify children who may need additional support and ensure Requests for Assistance (RrA) are made in a timely manner
- Create opportunities for children to engage in school-related activities, such as visits or social stories about school.
- Discuss the upcoming transition with children in positive and reassuring ways.
- Provide parents/carers with information about the transition process and offer guidance and strategies for supporting their child at home during this period.

School Responsibilities

- Liaise with nursery staff to understand each child's needs, strengths, and preferences.
- Use shared information to plan individualised support where necessary.
- Host open days, tours, or "meet the teacher" sessions for children and families.
- Consider arranging a buddy systems or peer support for new entrants.
- Plan the initial weeks of school to include familiar nursery practices, such as play-based learning.
- Gradually introduce new routines and expectations.

ELC and School Shared Responsibilities

- Collaborate on transition policies and procedures to ensure a consistent approach.
- Hold joint meetings or training sessions for nursery and school staff to align practices.
- Provide families with consistent messages about the transition process.
- Offer opportunities for parents to ask questions and share concerns.
- Establish systems for tracking children's adjustment in the first few months of school.
- Gather feedback from children, families, and staff to improve future transitions.

Parents/Carers Responsibilities

- Talk positively about school and what to expect.
- Encourage independence, such as dressing, using the toilet, and tidying up.
- Attend information sessions, open days, and meetings.
- Communicate any concerns or specific needs with both nursery and school staff.

Accessing an Additional Year of Funded ELC

Deferred Entry to Primary One

In Scotland, children usually start primary school between the ages of 4 ½ and 5 ½. Children aged 5 years on the first day of the academic year must start primary school or other formal primary level education such as home learning. **If a child is still 4 years on the day they are due to start primary school, then parents can choose to defer entry to Primary 1 for their child until the following academic year.**

Every child is different, even those of the same chronological age. Prior to parents making the decision it is important to consider a range of factors, including:

- how their child feels about starting school.
- the child's strengths as a learner.
- the particular outcome that would be achieved for the child by having an additional year at nursery.
- who can help inform the decision-making.

While the decision to defer a child's entry to primary school is ultimately for parents, it is widely accepted that the best decisions are reached with the involvement of those who know the child as a learner. We would recommend that parents discuss options for their child with the staff in the child's current ELC provider as soon as possible. If parents have any questions about the primary school their child will attend, they can contact the Headteacher of the school directly.

Please be aware that once a child has started in a deferred ELC placement, the decision cannot be reversed at any point during their education.

Deferred places can be funded in any of the ELC Providers listed on our website www.fife.gov.uk/earlyyears

PLEASE NOTE

Children who are 5 on or before the start date of the new school session are not entitled to a deferred entry to Primary One.

Therefore, parents should make the decision for their child to start school or be home educated.

If an ELC setting has concerns about a child starting P1 they should discuss this with the child's link Educational Psychologist in the first instance.

Further information can be found at: [Deferring Primary 1 | Fife Council](#)

Actions and Processes

AUGUST – DECEMBER PRIOR TO TRANSITION TO SCHOOL					
Actions to support ALL children	To be led by		Additional actions to support SOME children	To be led by	
	ELC	School		ELC	School
All ELC practitioners continue to assess and record children's progress in profiles	x		Raising awareness with parents/carers about potential deferred entry to Primary one (mid-August – end of February birthdays), offering advice and support around legislation and processes of deferral and enrolment. (by end of October)	x	
Establish the yearly overview of the nursery to P1 transition events. (Sept/Oct)		x	Initiate/continue to review meetings with parents/carers of children requiring additional support, involving other professionals where required.	x	
Ensure that school information for parents/carers is accessible and up to date to support prospective parents making choices.		x	Families of children with ASN may require more support with school application and transition processes.		
Encourage all families of pre-school children to begin thinking about their child's transition into primary one.	x		Consult with the Educational Psychologist about children who may require a higher level of additional support when they move onto school to Educational Psychologist. If further involvement is agreed a Request for Assistance should be completed with parental agreement. (no later than October)	x	
Identify the catchment area of school for all children by working in	x		Ensure that needs of children with ASN continue to be met	x	

partnership with parent/carers			through appropriate additional planning and team around the child meetings.		
Staff begin to create a list of schools children will be attending. Alert relevant forwarding schools that you will have children potentially enrolling for primary one. No names transferred at this point, only potential numbers. (by start of October).	x		School staff to be invited to attend review meeting for a child with ASN.	x	
Establish the yearly overview of the nursery to P1 transition events. Inform all ELC settings who you may potentially receive children from. (by start of October)		x	Delayed entry to school may be considered by the TAC in exceptional circumstances only (<u>Mar-mid Aug birthdays</u>). This is not at the parent's discretion. If delayed entry is being considered, consult with your Educational Psychologist and link with your Education Manager prior to holding a review meeting. The meeting should be held before the end of December so the Education Manager can take any requests for delayed entry to the Delayed Start Panel in January.	x	
Signpost/Display and Direct families to information about school admissions procedures and how to apply. (December)	x		Identification of children for Local Resource Panel (LRP) by October holiday. process. Any consideration of alternatives to	x	

			mainstream must be discussed with the Educational Psychologist.		
	x		Mainstream school applications should continue to be made for children with LRP applications.	x	
Book provisional dates to meet with school staff early January to give overview of children's progress or supports in place.	x		Finalise any LRP applications with families and professionals involved. (by early November).	x	
Continue to update child's chronology with any relevant information.	x				
Continue to liaise with settings where children attend ELC blended placements to ensure maximum amount of information is gathered and shared about individual children. (Termly).	x				
School SLT responsible for nursery to P1 transition to drop off posters, set up information stall and informally meet and greet parents at the nursery to share info about school. (November)		x			

At all stages schools should remember to include children who may be attending private nurseries, playgroups, or childminders as part of their funded ELC entitlement.

JANUARY – MARCH PRIOR TO TRANSITION TO SCHOOL					
Actions to support ALL children	To be led by		Additional actions to support SOME children	To be led by	
	ELC	School		ELC	School
All ELC practitioners continue to assess and record children's progress in profiles	x		Deferral form to be completed and sent to Fife Council. (by the end of January).	x	

All families to complete application for catchment area school (including families who are making application for a placing request to non-catchment school) (by the end of January)	x		HT to inform associated ELC settings of children who are making placing request at their school.		x
Families who wish to make a placing request for Primary one supported to do so (by the end of January)	x		Communicate with schools regarding identified children requiring enhanced transition – increased visits, organised meetings to include agencies and representatives from school. (February).	x	
Continue to liaise with settings where children attend ELC blended placements to ensure maximum amount of information is gathered and shared about individual children. (Termly).	x		During N5/N6 ASN Reviews or TAC meetings, representation from child's catchment school should be invited. Enhanced transition programmes to be agreed by TAC and implemented over the next 2 terms	x	
Meeting with relevant HT to review children being enrolled and plan programme of transition visits	x		Support staff to begin to visit children in Nursery.		x
Share programme of transition with parents/carers	x		Enhanced Transition to begin.	x	
Primary 1 teacher (s) to begin to visit children in Nursery		x			
All communication from school to be shared with relevant ELC settings for distribution to parents/carers – parent booklets, transitions newsletters etc.		x			

At all stages schools should remember to include children who may be attending private nurseries, playgroups, or childminders as part of their funded ELC entitlement.

APRIL – JUNE PRIOR TO TRANSITION TO SCHOOL					
Actions to support ALL children	To be led by		Additional actions to support SOME children	To be led by	
	ELC	School		ELC	School
All ELC practitioners continue to assess and record children's progress in profiles	x		Invitation for N5/N6 ASN Reviews / TAC meetings to be sent out to representation from child's catchment school as well as placing request school if relevant.	x	
Continue to liaise with settings where children attend blended placements to ensure maximum amount of information is gathered and shared about individual children. (Termly).	x		Programme of agreed enhanced transition visits continue.	x	
Programme of agreed transition visits begin.	x		Placing request confirmed. Schools to share confirmed placing request with relevant ELC settings. Encourage all families to respond.		x
School enrolment confirmed. Schools to share confirmed enrolments with relevant ELC settings.		x	Meeting with HT or CPC to share any safeguarding/CP concerns	x	
Primary 1 Teachers continue to visit ELC setting meeting with children and staff.		x			
Set up role play area to support transition to school, e.g. books about school, school uniforms for dressing up, photo books of local schools etc. (May).	x				
Primary 1 Parent induction meeting held		x			
ELC children and families to be invited to		x			

a school lunch experience					
End of year ELC summary transition report written and copy shared with relevant school.	x				
PLJs and PPRS transferred to school on last day of term. (if children attend during summer holidays this should wait until first day of new term in the August)	x				
All CP information chronologies and Wellbeing information transferred to school on the last day of term. (if children attend during summer holidays this should wait until the first day of new term in August)	x				

At all stages schools should remember to include children who may be attending private nurseries, playgroups or childminders as part of their funded ELC entitlement.

AUGUST – OCTOBER FOLLOWING TRANSITION TO SCHOOL					
Actions to support ALL children	To be led by		Additional actions to support SOME children	To be led by	
	ELC	School		ELC	School
PLJs and trackers to be used as a transition tool for all P1 children.		x	Discuss relevant children with Educational Psychologist and any relevant RfA made.		x
Potential for key workers to visit children in the school setting shortly after starting, which supports with settling in and allows for the opportunity for teachers to gather more information about individual children. (August/September).		x	Continue with appropriate review/TAC meetings for those children who require them.		x

Set a date early in new term to have a meeting to give the ELC setting the opportunity to provide any additional information or advice required.		x			
Gather feedback from children, families, and partners re: transition programme and children settling in. Share results and act upon results.		x			

At all stages schools should remember to include children who may be attending private nurseries, playgroups, or childminders as part of their funded ELC entitlement.

Resources To Support Transition to School

Realising the ambition (Section 8: Transitions matter; to me p88-97). Emphasises the need for transition and key features of transition. [realisingtheambition.pdf](#)

How Good is our Early Learning and Childcare. QI 2.6: transitions. Provides best practice examples and challenge questions - [How good is our early learning and childcare?](#)

Fife Council Guidance on Transitions. Highlights considerations for transition. [Transitions-Oct-2024.pdf](#)

Scottish Early Childhood and Families Transition statement. A series of Scottish Government funded national seminars and conferences from parents, practitioners, leaders, and policy officials from across Scotland emphasising the importance of transitions and the need to address the impact of transitions in children's lives. [Scottish Early Childhood and Families Transitions Statement | Resources | National Improvement Hub](#)

Suggested Supporting Activities:

Scottish Book Trusts webinar on supporting the transition to P1 with Bookbug. The webinar gives ideas and tips on being creative with nursery songs, rhymes, and stories to support children and families during periods of transition and change. [Webinar: Supporting the Transition to P1 with Bookbug - Scottish Book Trust](#)

References

Realising the Ambition - [Realising the Ambition | Resources | Education Scotland](#)

Curriculum for Excellence - [Curriculum for Excellence | Education Scotland](#)

Health and Social Care Standards - [Health and Social Care Standards: my support, my life - gov.scot](#)

Getting It Right for Every Child - [Getting it right for every child \(GIRFEC\) - gov.scot](#)

Getting it Right in Fife Framework and Resources and Publications - [Resources and publications | Children in Fife](#)

Fife Council Deferring Primary 1 - [Deferring Primary 1 | Fife Council](#)

Fife Council Early Learning and Childcare - [Early Learning and Childcare | Fife Council](#)

How good is our Early Learning and Childcare - [How good is our early learning and childcare?](#)

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