

Early Learning and Childcare Shetland



Supporting the transition from ELC to Primary 1: Parent/Carer Information



**Shetland
Islands
Council**

June 2020

Introduction

“Our guiding values should be kindness, compassion, openness and transparency.”

COVID-19 – A framework for decision making, Scottish Government: April 2019

Starting primary school is a significant and exciting step in a child’s life. Preparing for a successful transition from nursery to primary school is important, even more so when the current situation is taken into account. We understand that lockdown has been different for every child and every family.

Staff across Shetland have been planning for this transition for some time. This has been guided by research and national advice from the Scottish Government and Education Scotland. Important considerations for a successful transition during these times are:

- The happiness and the wellbeing of each individual child is the focus for everyone involved.
- Positive relationships between children, parents/carers and staff will support a successful transition.
- Parents/carers are central to providing information about the child’s experiences, growth and learning since the last time they were in the setting.
- Transition is a process. Each individual child will be given the time they need to ensure their transition is successful.
- Play will support learning in a developmentally appropriate way.
- Each community and every school and nursery in Shetland is different. Individual transition arrangements will reflect this.
- Social distancing is extremely difficult for young children in nursery and primary 1.

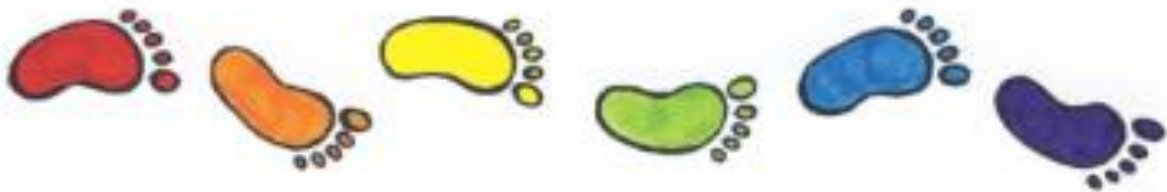
Planning for transition is underpinned by the six principles of nurture:



Your child's setting will be contacting you shortly to provide you with the specific information about the **transition support** arrangements for your child, which is due to take place in late **June**. 'Stay and Play' and being outdoors will be key features of this (so remember warm clothing!) Staff are working hard on identifying what the return to school will look like in August and will communicate with parents/carers on this as soon as they possibly can.

The following aims to provide you, as parents/carers, with some additional information around the transition process and some suggestions that may be used to support your child during this transition period. We have also included a Frequently Asked Questions section at the end.

Please remember that we are all looking to make the transition into primary 1 successful for every child. Please do not hesitate to speak with staff about any worries or concerns that you may have.



Key steps in the transition process

There are key steps in the transition process. The following provides information around each step and some suggestions that you might consider during each step.

Step 1 - Connection

Connection with the nursery setting is important. It enables both children and families to remain a part of their nursery even when they can not be there. Transition starts from what the child knows. When we are not able to be in settings, we can do this in different ways.

- Speak with your child about nursery, the nursery staff and their friends.
- Look at photos from nursery, learning stories or pieces of artwork that your child may have taken home.

- Talk about the things they like about nursery and what they enjoy doing and try them if you can.
- Read stories, sing songs and rhymes that are familiar from nursery.
- Provide positive messages about nursery and about looking forward to school.
- Try to stay connected to the nursery setting through the usual means of communication and involve your child where you can.

Step 2 - Transition Support

The purpose of transition support in June is to begin preparing for the transition. It provides the opportunity to start from the familiar and begin to slowly introduce the unfamiliar. It will afford children the opportunity to connect with peers and staff, as well as opening up communication between parents/carers and staff. It will be an opportunity to begin developing new relationships.

- Engage with your child's setting about the transition support that will be made available. Even if you are not in a position to come to the setting, there are ways that you can still be involved.
- Continue to provide a positive message to your child about their return to nursery and looking forward to starting school.
- Communicate clearly with them about what will happen when they come to the setting. Arrangements will be different. Prepare both yourself and your child that the setting may not be the same as before.
- Use the opportunity to communicate with staff around your child's experiences, positive or negative, during lockdown. The more staff understand, the better they will be able to plan for your child.
- Discuss with staff any anxieties you or your child may have about returning to the setting.
- Follow your child's lead and respond to emotions as they happen. These may be displayed at different times. Remember behaviour is how children show how they feel.

Step 3 - Summer Holiday Period

Over the summer holiday period it will be important for parents/carers to gently continue to prepare children for transition. We must not underestimate the power and creativity of our children to engage in this process.

- Continue to provide reassuring and positive messages about starting school. It is an exciting time for them. Be aware of your own emotions.

- Read the information that has been provided in school handbooks or other forms of parent information.
- Build on the experiences during the transition support sessions in June.
- Some settings may provide additional activities that may be fun to do over the holiday period.
- Talk about the children and staff in the setting that they know (including new faces) and look at photos, if possible.
- Praise and encourage your child when they do things independently. Support the development of good hand hygiene practices.
- Think about what your child will need in primary 1 – getting a new school bag can be really exciting for children!
- Re-establish routines, if needed, including bedtime and meal times.

Step 4 – Return to School

The transition process will continue when your child returns to school. Each school will plan how the transition will continue during this phase. Nursery and school staff will work closely together to support your child and ensure that key information is passed on, so please keep them informed. Starting primary 1 might be different to what might usually happen. Your child's school will be in touch with you with information as soon as they possibly can.



Frequently Asked Questions

Is it safe for my child to return to the setting for transition support?

The safety of everyone is our first concern and we take it very seriously.

The Scottish Government has provided advice to local authorities stating that transition support can begin in June. Shetland Islands Council has issued advice and guidance to all settings to ensure that appropriate public health measures, in line with Public Health Scotland guidance, are in place. Each setting will let you know what these will be and we ask that everyone follow these stringently.

It is widely acknowledged in guidance that young children will find it difficult to physically distance. However, all **adults** will be expected to follow the 2m distance rule.

We are very much focusing on children being outdoors during this time. Evidence suggests that transmission rates are lower outdoors.

What does 'Stay and Play' mean?

Stay and play is a session where a child and parent/carer can attend together. Most children and parents/carers will not have been apart for some time and therefore some children may find separating a little bit more tricky until they build confidence and any initial anxieties settle. This will be different for different children. We want the session to be fun and enjoyable for your child as they reconnect with staff and some of their nursery friends.

There may be reasons why a parent/carer is unable to stay – that is ok. If this is the case, please speak to your setting to work out an arrangement.

What if we are unable to attend the transition support sessions?

Some families may not be in a position to attend transition support sessions at this time. Please speak to your nursery and school to let them know so that you can discuss the right approach for your child. Try to view transition as a process rather than an event, with a clear pathway with different options to support a personalised approach. Your child will not miss out or be left behind.

Where can I get further advice and support?

If you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to contact your nursery or school. The central ELC team will be available for support over the holiday period. Please email elc@shetland.gov.uk. Tips on transition activities and support will be shared on the ELC Shetland Facebook page. The Parent Club website also have lots of useful information on transition and starting school <https://www.parentclub.scot/>.

Best Start School Aged Payment is £250 for families on certain benefits and tax credits. Parents/carers should check if they are eligible to apply at <https://www.mygov.scot/best-start-grant-best-start-foods/> or calling 0800 182 2222.