



# Using stories and songs to support nursery to primary transition

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Age 3-5

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CFE Levels Early and First

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Resource created by  
Scottish Book Trust

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**Scottish  
Book Trust**  
inspiring readers and writers

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## About this resource

This resource is for any practitioner supporting the nursery to Primary 1 transition. The aim of the resource is to offer idea, activities and examples of projects that can be used to support transition during this challenging time.

# Activities to support transition

## Use familiar songs and rhymes

Many nurseries across Scotland use [songs and rhymes](#) regularly in their early years setting. Teachers can use this familiarity to help children settle into their new setting. In the first weeks of school, songs can be used regularly to support children adapting to their new environment and support them to learn a new routine. Well-known songs and rhymes could be used to lead into classroom specific tidy up, handwashing or routine songs.

If possible, nurseries and schools should be in conversation about which songs are regularly used to allow for continuity into the new environment. This might be challenging if a school has many feeder nurseries, but certain songs and rhymes may appear regularly across many feeder nurseries. Learning and sharing action songs across the two settings will also ensure continuity for children transitioning.

Below are some suggested songs and rhymes that could be explored in class. Not all children will be familiar with these, but learning a new song together could be a shared experience and support peer bonding. These songs could be shared in person, digitally or hard copies could be shared with families. All songs available through the [Bookbug Song and Rhyme library](#) have songs sheets to download.

Counting songs are a great way to explore maths, songs about food could be used to explore healthy eating as part of Health and Wellbeing, and the toothbrush song could start conversations about routines and hygiene. All of these videos are available on [Scottish Book Trust's website](#), and the [free Bookbug app](#), and could be shared with families as part of a blended learning model.

## Counting songs

- [Five Fat Peas](#)
- [One, Two, Three, Four, Five](#)
- [One Little Teddy](#)
- [Finger Rhyme - Scots](#)
- [Five Little Ducks](#) (this one counts backwards)

## Health and Wellbeing

- [If You're Happy and You Know it](#)

## Routines

- [Bananas Unite](#) (snack time)
- [I'm a Little Teapot](#) (snack time)
- [Pat-A-Cake](#) (can be used as a 'getting to know people' song – using initials and names of children)

- [Tiny Tim](#) (hand washing / cleaning up time)
- [Brush Your Teeth](#) (tooth brushing time)
- [Goodbye song](#) (tidying up time)
- [Ciamar a tha thu?](#) (how are you?)
- [Madainn Mhath!](#) (good morning)

However, it is important to remember that not all children will be able to draw on these nursery experiences of songs and rhymes. Encourage families to explore the [Bookbug app](#) together. In the first few weeks of the school term, you could support families to learn new songs and rhymes together as part of home learning.

### **Hello from school staff**

Use the [Bookbug Hello Song](#) to introduce school staff to children entering Primary 1. Schools could create a film of teachers, and other school staff the children may encounter such as canteen staff, janitors or receptionists, singing and dancing at home to the Hello Song. Staff can introducing themselves and then show a walk-around video of the school, pointing out each teaching classroom and which teacher it belongs to as the video progresses. If schools are running an online meet up with entrant students, schools could also use the Hello Song as a way for children to introduce themselves to each other. It could be sung together and to learn each other's name- this could be done physically in the classroom.

### **Write a hello letter**

As an extension (or alternative) to the activity above, school staff could write a short letter, either handwritten or typed, to send out to families to introduce themselves. A photo or hand drawn picture could be included so that children can familiarise themselves with their new teacher and other support staff. Staff could include information on their likes and dislikes, or their favourite picture book or song and rhyme. This activity would be great way to introduce school staff to children with limited online access.

### **Share stories digitally**

If staff have access to books at home, or in school, then sharing your favourite story digitally can be a great way to introduce yourself to new pupils. Staff could film themselves reading their favourite picture book, or a book they especially enjoy sharing with a class, and share it with new pupils and their families. If you are holding a digital get-together with entrant pupils, the books could be used to start the session. The same books could be used during the first lessons children have in

their new setting. If you are concerned about the copyright implications of sharing books digitally, you can advise on the [Scottish Book Trust website](#).

### **Using the Bookbug Explorer books in class**

All nursery children are gifted the Bookbug Explorer bag as part of the [Bookbug universal bag gifting scheme](#). The Bookbug Explorer books would be good books for teachers to use as part of a transition project, as they are familiar to children and children are more likely to have access to these books than other titles.

If you do not have access to physical copies of the books, [videos of the books being shared](#) with families are available on our website. Children entering Primary 1 will most likely have received the books included in the 2019 Bookbug Explorer bag, but some may have received the 2018 Bookbug Explorer bag depending on bag availability and local authority timelines for gifting. [Videos for the 2018 Bookbug Explorer Bag](#) are also available to watch on the website.

To use the books to support transition, activities could be set around the books as part of home or blended learning. You can use our [learning activities](#), or create your own. Activities could include:

- Action games
- Exploring food
- People who are special to us

Use the books and activities to explore new topics in class, to lead into new and unfamiliar titles.

In the Autumn term, you will also receive the Bookbug Primary 1 Family Bag for your class to be gifted in November during Book Week Scotland. You could introduce these stories earlier, before you even receive the bags, and build up excitement before their gifting. More information about the contents of these bags, including the three books, which are shortlisted for [The Bookbug Picture Book Prize](#), will be on our website in August.

### **Dolly Parton Imagination Library**

The Imagination Library provides a free book once a month to all Looked After Children and all adopted children in Scotland from birth to the age of five. Some Housing Associations also receive the books for children. If you are looking to particularly reach and include children who may need additional support with transition, then the books included in the Dolly Parton Imagination Library would be a good place to start. You can see a full list of all the titles children born in 2015-16 will have received [here](#).

Not all children may have received all these books; however, children are far more likely to be familiar with these than other titles. Activities you could do include:

- Reading and sharing the books
- Sing songs and rhymes on a similar theme to the book
- Using the books to discuss Health and Wellbeing
- Be inspired by the books to create artwork in class

### **Paired reading and reading buddies**

Many schools run paired reading or reading buddy schemes, with older pupils paired with and reading to younger pupils. Although reading together might not be physically possible, you can still encourage pupils to work together and older pupils to support new pupils. Activities you could do include:

- Asking older pupils to create a quiz to learn more about their new buddies.
- Encourage older pupils to write a story for new pupils based on their likes and dislikes.
- Ask older pupils to record themselves reading a book or telling a story aloud for their buddy.
- Encourage older pupils to write letters to their buddy about their experience of starting school, what they found scary, but also what they like about their school and school day.

## **Books to support transition**

### **Booklists**

Access to books may be challenging right now, but if you do have access to a library and can share books with your nursery children and Primary 1 pupils, Scottish Book Trust recommends titles on the following lists:

- [Books about starting school](#)
- [Books to help children explore and understand emotions](#)

If you are looking for picture books with explain the current situation and why the school might look different and scary, you could use these free e-books:

- [Coronavirus: A Book for Children](#) by Kate Wilson and Nia Robert, illustrated by Alex Scheffler
- [Everybody Worries](#) by Jon Burgerman

- [Grin and Bear It](#) by Matthew Kinghorn

### Online books and videos

Scottish Book Trust has a wide range of read along videos you can use share and use with families and use in the classroom to support transition.

On the theme of starting school, we have:

- [Mouse's First Night at Moonlight School](#) by Simon Puttock

On the theme of dealing with change, we have:

- [Little Owl's Egg](#) by Debi Gliori
- [The King Cat](#) by Marta Altes

On the theme anxiety about trying something new, we have:

- [Eric Makes a Splash](#) by Emily Mackenzie

On the theme of separation anxiety, we have:

- [Owl Babies](#) by Martin Waddell and Patrick Benson

On the theme of making new friends, we have:

- [The Knight Who Said "No"!](#) by Lucy Rowland and Kate Hindley
- [The Station Mouse](#) by Meg McLaren

For more read along videos, you can explore [Scottish Book Trust Youtube channel](#), as well as videos on [our website](#).

## Examples of transition projects

Schools and nurseries across Scotland partake in a variety of transition projects each year. Here are a selection of examples of different projects you could run in your setting.

### Projects across a local authority

#### Familiar books

In Renfrewshire, schools and nurseries used books to support emotional stability between the two settings. Nurseries and schools involved in the project received the same books. Nurseries could prepare children for transition by reading and running activities with these books. This created a clear link between the two settings, and the authority ensured pupils had access to the same texts in school as they did in nursery. During this initial settling in period, this parity in texts ensured there was something pupils were confident to children's emotional wellbeing in their new

setting. The same books could be read during story time, or used for class projects. Once pupils had settled into the new setting, new titles could be introduced.

### **We're Going on a Bear Hunt**

During lockdown, primary schools and nurseries in Edinburgh have been involved in *We're Going On a Bear Hunt* themed activities. Families have been asked to display bears in their window for other families to spot during daily exercise and walks. Other activities including recreating the story, exploring song and rhymes and exploring sensory activities. You can find out more about the project [here](#). The aim is that all children are familiar with the same story in advance of schools re-opening, and that children will have had shared experiences which can be built on at the beginning of the school year.

### **A digital approach**

Midlothian Council's 'Digital Team' is creating films of school settings across the local authority so that all pupils have access to a virtual tour of their new school. This could be extended further into an individual school setting (if you are able to produce and share a virtual tour) by sharing a quiz following the video, or using the video to allow children to ask questions about their school. You could ask what they liked or did not like about it, or what they might be nervous about.

### **Kids get active**

[Aberdeenshire Council](#) runs a programme each year that helps children settle into their new environment through getting active and health and fitness. A sports coach delivers sessions. However, this year these are [happening digitally](#) and are based on the *Henry Let's Go Outside* series. The sessions will run throughout June 2020. The project is supported by [Aberdeenshire Library and Information service, which has](#) a large number of e-reading resources and materials available on the theme of starting school and staying active.

### **Reading Rainbows**

The city of Edinburgh council gifts to children in targeted areas as part of the Reading Rainbows book gifting scheme. Books are gifted to nursery age children, with CLD sessions run in libraries by library staff for nursery staff. The aim is to support families to read together and to give parents the chance to engage in their children's literacy skills. Nursery staff receive training about the books and activities to support literacy in nursery, and Family Learning Workers support families in small groups to become familiar with the books and reading them aloud.



# Individual school projects

## **A global citizenship focus**

Rosebank Primary School used [global citizenship resources](#), recommended by the [One World Centre](#) in Dundee, with themes of fairness, justice, equality and human rights, as the basis for their transition resources for every stage of the primary school. Nursery pupils looked at toys and different toys in Malawi and Scotland. They used books that explored play and toys, and used this to start conversations in the Primary 1 classroom.

## **Using paired reading**

St Bridget's Primary School in North Ayrshire runs a paired reading project with their onsite nursery, with primary school pupils read picture books for the younger children. Many schools across Scotland implement a similar project, and it is a great way to introduce the new setting and other pupils to children entering Primary 1. You can see our suggestions above for how this might work with blended learning.