



NOTTINGHAM CITY TRANSITION GUIDANCE TOOLKIT

Supporting Primary and Secondary Schools with
the Transition from Year 6 to Year 7

2026

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Introduction

What is this guidance based upon?

We conducted research exploring the current practice around Year 6 to 7 transition across Nottingham City. Perspectives were gained from Primary staff, Secondary staff, Year 6 and Year 7 parents and current Year 7 students. This research, alongside a systematic literature review of current research, was the foundation for the contents of this guidance toolkit.

The Inclusive Service, Changing Lives, Changing Futures, Nottingham City Council

01 INTRODUCTION

The transition from primary to secondary school is a critical educational milestone. Research consistently indicates that high-quality transition processes improve academic engagement, wellbeing, and attendance. This project aimed to identify strengths, challenges, and opportunities for enhancing transition practice across Nottingham City, ultimately informing guidance for schools.

02 OBJECTIVE

The research aimed to:

- Explore current transition practice across primary and secondary settings.
- Identify factors supporting or hindering successful transition.
- Gather views from pupils, parents, and staff.
- Produce evidence-based guidance for schools.

03 METHODOLOGY

A mixed-methods approach was used, including online surveys, thematic analysis, and focus groups. Surveys included quantitative items and open-ended qualitative responses. A total of 466 stakeholders responded across phases.

With thanks to our respondents: 28 Primary staff, 135 Year 6 Parents, 29 Secondary staff, 176 Year 7 Parents, 298 Year 7 Students



How to use the toolkit

- The toolkit is designed as an aid document to be used throughout the academic year. It hopes to be a practical guide to supporting transition and valid practice that is already happening.
- Example documents can be adapted or used as presented.
- Parent/carer documents can be shared accordingly
- Signposting is provided for additional documents and guidance.

Research Summary



Why is transition planning so important?

A well-managed transition from primary to secondary school is critical to ensuring that pupils experience continuity in their learning, wellbeing, and personal development.

This period represents one of the most significant changes in a child's educational journey, and the way it is handled can have long-term effects on academic attainment, engagement, and emotional resilience.

Challenges in Transition



- Children's anxieties: fear of bullying, getting lost, discipline systems, homework pressure, and losing friends.
- Parents' concerns: safety, independence, mobile phone rules, meals, and fear of their child's needs being overlooked.
- Systemic issues: fragmented school system, cross-borough transfers, late admissions, and information-sharing difficulties.
- Vulnerabilities: SEND, attendance, mental health, social care involvement, temporary housing, and more.

EFFECTIVE TRANSITION PLANNING IS KEY TO ENABLE :



Emotional wellbeing:

The move to a larger and more complex school environment can generate anxiety and uncertainty. Structured support helps to reduce stress, build confidence, and promote a positive attitude towards learning.

Safeguarding: Systemic approach to support safety, involving shared information between schools.

Continuity of learning:

Effective transition planning minimises the risk of learning loss, enabling pupils to build on prior knowledge rather than revisiting or repeating work. Ensuring that secondary teachers understand pupils' starting points supports progression

Equity and Inclusion Vulnerable groups.

Tailored transition support ensures equity of experience, prevents widening gaps in attainment or wellbeing.

Social integration:

Secondary school requires pupils to form new peer relationships and adapt to different teaching staff.

A supportive transition fosters social belonging, reduces feelings of isolation, and strengthens resilience in managing change

Long-term outcomes:

Research shows that pupils who experience a positive transition are more likely to sustain engagement, demonstrate higher motivation, and achieve better educational outcomes across their secondary years.



SECONDARY TRANSITION GUIDANCE TOOLKIT

Key Principles of successful transition

EARLIER THE BETTER



- Engage with primary colleagues as early as possible.
- Consider events and activities for Year 5 students
- Identify those that are most vulnerable and needing enhanced support as early as possible.

Having reassurance that information has been widely shared was cited as important by our primary schools

INFORMATION LOOP

- Share information about students with all staff.
- Reassure primary staff and parents that information has been received and shared
- Use information to inform CPD planning and provision maps for upcoming cohort

RELATIONSHIPS ARE KEY



- Prioritise building relationships with students and families
- Ensure peer relationship building is a focus for transition and first term.
- Allocate key adults to those most vulnerable

PERSONALISE WHERE NEEDED

- Enhanced transition for vulnerable students
- Transition days and provision tailored according to primary information.

MONITOR AND REVIEW

- Closely monitor the Year 7 cohort in the first 6-8 weeks
 - Use Round-Robin assessments to identify any concerns at the earliest opportunity
 - Continue pastoral support for at least the first term

Transition Timeline

Early Preparation

September – October

- Identify feeder primary schools
- Assign transition lead / team
- Create transition calendar
- Website section for transition

November – December

- Primary school visits (introductory)
- Build relationships with Year 6 teachers and SENCOs
- Open evening invitations

Autumn term Y6

Y6 Spring term

January – February

- Hold Open Evening / School Tours
- Identify vulnerable students early
- Launch parent communication:
 - Welcome letters
 -

March – April

- Transfer of data: Portal
- Arrange face to face meetings with primaries

Year 6 Summer Term

May/ June

- Develop individual transition plans for high-need pupils
- Offer enhanced visits:
 - SEND pupils
 - High-anxiety students

June / July

- Transition Day(s):
 - Taster lessons
 - Meet tutors and peers
 - School tour
- Collect student voice:
- Parent information evening:
 - Uniform
 - Expectations
 - Behaviour systems
- Additional support:
 - Nurture groups / summer school invite
 - One-to-one meetings for key students
- Staff briefing:
 - Profiles for vulnerable pupils
 - Strategies to support

- Structured primary visits:
 - Meet pupils in their primary setting
 - Run Q&A sessions
- Small group transition workshops:
 - Anxiety support
 - Social skills
- Parent engagement sessions (especially for vulnerable groups)

Summer Holidays

- Run Summer School / Transition Programme:
- Confidence-building activities
- Provide transition packs:
- Reading tasks
- "All About Me" booklet
- Maintain contact with key families if needed
- Send welcome letter / postcard to students

September

Focus on:

- Routines
- Expectations
- Relationships
- Tutor time transition programme:
 - Organisation skills
 - Friendship building
- Early check-ins for vulnerable students
- Parent communication

October

- Monitor:
 - Attendance
 - Behaviour
 - Engagement
- Run transition review meetings
- Intervene early:
 - Mentoring
 - Small group support

Year 7 Autumn Term

Consider Year 7 peer activities e.g. school disco

Year 7 Autumn Term

November – December

- Parent evening
- Evaluate transition effectiveness:
 - Student voice
 - Parent feedback
 - Staff input
- Adjust support plans

KEY ONGOING STRATEGIES

- ✓ Regular communication with families
- ✓ Pastoral tracking of vulnerable pupils
- ✓ Peer mentoring / buddy systems
- ✓ Close collaboration between pastoral, SEN, and teaching staff

Best Practice for Enhanced Transition

IDENTIFY VULNERABLE GROUP EARLY



- Engage with feeder primaries early (Year 5 or early Year 6) to identify pupils needing enhanced support (SEND, SEMH, attendance, family context)

INFORMATION SHARING

- Involve relevant staff (SENDSCO, DSL, HOY etc) in transition meetings.
- Attend relevant meetings throughout Year 6 (e.g. EHCP review, Social care meetings)
- Share information widely with school staff



ADDITIONAL VISITS



- Tailored transition experiences (additional visits, quiet times, meeting key staff).
- Provide additional visits and meetings with parent/carers.
- Consider transition booklets

STRONG PARTNERSHIPS

- Strong primary-secondary partnership with honest, meaningful information sharing
- Relationship-led approach with a trusted key adult and pupil voice at the centre
- Family engagement to reduce anxiety and build shared confidence
- Multi-agency working where needed to ensure continuity of support

METHOD

Transition Portal

Ensure cohort information is digested and organised in a manner that can be analysed

Transition meetings

Face-to-face is recommended, particularly for vulnerable students.

Our research suggests this is most effective

TRANSITION DOCUMENTS

See information sharing template examples

SEND SPECIFIC SHARING

Additional steps:

- SENCO to SENCO discussions
- Review meetings where appropriate
- Share provision maps or plans

SAFEGUARDING

DSL staff share information

Secondary DSL attend social care meetings in Year 6

FAMILY INPUT

Parent / carers should have opportunity to:

- Share concerns
- Provide relevant information

Provide parent / carers with a key contact

Our parent / carer surveys say this increases confidence

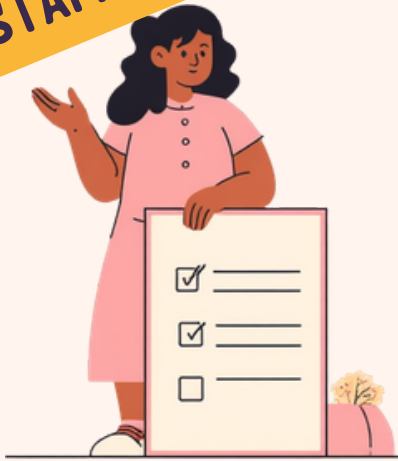
PUPIL VOICE

- Gain feedback from students following transition days and on additional visits

TIMEFRAME

Year 6	Action
Spring Term	Identify vulnerable pupils
Early Summer	Gain initial information
Mid Summer	Attend transition meetings
Late Summer	Enhanced transition
Post-transfer	Share all information widely Meet parent/carers

STAFF RESPONSIBILITY



Transition Lead	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attend transition information meetings Visit primary settings Highlight key needs and strategies
SENCO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attend SENDCo meetings to ensure SEND information is detailed and sufficient
DSL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communicate directly with receiving DSL Confirm receipt
SLT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure systems are in place Monitor information sharing amongst staff

CHECKLIST

- Portal information received
- Check SEND information is sufficient
- Safeguarding information received securely
- Face to face meetings held for key pupils
- Primary school visits
- Information shared widely with staff
- Parent/ carer meetings to gain updates from summer

Example planning meeting template



Planning for Transition to Secondary School

Name D.O.B: Primary School Secondary School

Date of plan

Area of Need	Professional supporting / previous agency involvement	What do I have in place now? What needs putting in place prior to me starting?	Who by?	Date when completed	What can be put into place for Secondary
Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH)	Eg. CAMHS, EPS, Include, Autism Team, LST,	e.g. Key adult, transition visits, nurture, pupil passport, ELSA,			E.g. Reasonable adjustments, regular check ins, review of passport, regular review meetings. Parent / carer involvement, identified safe space
Personal (Family needs, physical changes, placement of foster placement, bereavement, divorce, adoption)	Eg. Social care, Family Help, Counsellor	Eg. Key adult,			E.g. Staff awareness, review, check ins, regular contact with social worker, other professionals and parent / carer involvement, identified safe space
Physical	Eg. OT, Physiotherapist	Eg Specialist staff training, moving and handling, designated staff member, staff awareness			Eg. continued staff training, designated staff members, nurture, reasonable adjustments
Self Help (e.g. dressing, toileting)	Eg. OT	Eg. Specialist staff training, staff awareness, Changing area			Eg. Continued staff training, designated staff member, reasonable adjustments – toilet pass, uniform adjustment

Communication and Language	Eg, SALT, Autism Team, Sensory Team	Eg, Visual aids / timetable			Eg. Visual aids, staff to use Makaton signs, SALT programme, reasonable adjustments
Learning	Learning support team, SENCO, EP, teachers	Eg, Nurture, send support plans,			Eg, staff awareness, reasonable adjustments, interventions, learning breaks.
Medical	Eg GP, consultant, CAMHS	Eg Care plan, specific staff identified, specialist training			staff awareness,, follow care plan, share care plan, breaks, reasonable adjustments

Agreed by Primary SENCO: _____

Agreed by person with parental responsibility: _____

Agreed with CYP: _____

Agreed by Secondary SENCO: _____

HOW TO SUPPORT WHEN

PARENT/CARERS ARE NOT ALLOCATED FIRST CHOICE OF SECONDARY SCHOOL



GUIDANCE FOR SECONDARY SCHOOLS

SUPPORT THE EMOTIONAL IMPACT



- Liaise closely with primary settings to identify any families that may be concerned/
- Provide reassurance whilst still validating parental concerns.

Key messages such as:
"It is completely understandable to feel upset or worried. We are here to help you think through next steps calmly and clearly."

TARGETED OPEN EVENINGS



- Support parent/carers to understand more about the school and make an informed choice around what happens next.
- Provide focused open evenings and events for this group of parent/carers as soon as possible following national offer day.

PROVIDE A KEY CONTACT

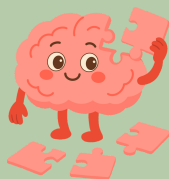
- Give families a key person to contact within the school that can respond to queries and worries directly throughout the transition process.

FOCUS ON CHILDS WELL BEING

- Encourage parent / carers to :
 - Speak positively (or neutrally) about the allocated school
 - Reassure their child that they will be supported
- Avoid discussing worries in front of them.
- Offer to speak with the child if appropriate
- Identify transition support (summer schools, pastoral teams)

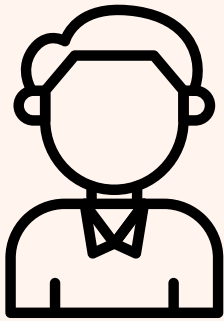


CONTINUE WITH STRONG TRANSITION



- Continue transition work as normal ensuring that all information is received and shared.
- Continue to invite students and families to all transition events

Case Study Examples



Child A (aged 11)

Needs

- SEMH needs, undergoing assessment for ASD/ADHD
- Parental mental health difficulties
- High levels of support required in primary

Key risks

- Anxiety around transition to secondary
- Behaviour and emotional regulation difficulties
- Family stress impacting wellbeing
- Risk of disengagement without continuity of support

Support Provided

- Early identification through Supporting Families and primary school
- Transition Family Support Worker allocated
- Key adult introduced pre-transition (continued post-transition)
- Additional tailored secondary school visits
- Transition day plan created and shared with all staff
- Multi-agency working: school SENCo, Supporting Families, MHST
- Summer holiday workshops focused on anxiety and friendships
- Strong parent and pupil voice gathered to shape provision

Outcomes and Impact

- ✓ Successful and supported transition to secondary
- ✓ Reduced anxiety and improved emotional wellbeing
- ✓ SEND needs met with pupil passport and tailored support
- ✓ Parents more confident and engaged
- ✓ Stronger family relationships and home stability
- ✓ Sustainable support embedded in school



Signposting for schools

Additional Toolkits:

Barnardo's Support – transition booklet

<https://educators-barnardos.org.uk/uploads/transition-guide-stepping-into-secondary-school.pdf>

Gloucestershire Belonging Toolkit: <https://sites.southglos.gov.uk/safeguarding/wp-content/uploads/sites/221/2015/05/South-Gloucestershire-Schools-Belonging-Toolkit-January-2025.pdf>

Camden Learning. (n.d.). Say hello, wave goodbye: Good practice guide for schools. Camden Council. <https://camdenlearning.org.uk/transition/>

Transition resources:

<https://www.annafreud.org/schools-and-colleges/resources/moving-up-the-transition-to-secondary-school-animation-teacher-toolkit/>

<https://www.mentallyhealthyschools.org.uk/resources/> <https://www.annafreud.org/schools-and-colleges/>

Transition Support Video created by Young Minds

Assessment resources:

UCL Start Scale: <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/brain-sciences/pals/research/clinical-educational-and-health-psychology/research-groups/school-transition-and-adjustment-research-study-stars>

R2i: <https://www.nottinghamschools.org.uk/send-inclusion/routes-to-inclusion-r2i/>

Student resources:

<https://www.teenhealth.org.uk/stories/moving-to-a-secondary-school/>

<https://www.youngminds.org.uk/parent/parents-a-z-mental-health-guide/transitions-and-times-of-change/>

Enhanced transition resources:

<https://www.scope.org.uk/advice-and-support/storybooks-featuring-disabled-children>

Nottingham City Autism Team: <https://padlet.com/grotesquewondermotors/transition-support-school-resources-2a6krdg061b7yl1z>

Local Authority Services

- MHST / MIAT
- Autism Team
- SEN support teams - training / CPD
- NPST
- EPS
- INclude Service
- Admissions

<https://nottalone.org.uk/>

References

Nottingham City Transition Research April 2026

Nottingham City Transition Project (2023-2025)

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<https://www.ucl.ac.uk/brain-sciences/pals/research/clinical-educational-and-health-psychology/research-groups/school-transition-and-adjustment-research-study-stars>

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