



# 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.



# PRIMARY TRANSITION GUIDANCE



# Key Principles of successful transition

## PROFILE STRENGTHS AND NEED



Thorough identification and sharing of need was cited as the most important factor for our secondary schools

- Create a rich and thorough profile of student's strengths and needs using evidence-based assessments, (e.g. R2i).
- Evidence plan-do-review cycles - highlighting strategies that have been effective.
- Create a succinct pen profile summary

## INFORMATION SHARING

- Share information about students as early as possible.
- Rich, honest account of needs
- Meet and share information face to face where possible



## COMMUNICATION WITH SECONDARY



- Regular meetings with secondary colleagues to share student profiles.
- Close contact with secondary colleagues to arrange visits, assemblies etc

## SUPPORT FAMILIES

- You have built strong relationships with families over years of supporting them. The transition can be anxiety provoking for families.
- Support access to secondary events and key contacts.

Our research found that secondary schools really value your support with parent engagement

# Transition Timeline

Have you considered applying for an EHCP for the highest profile students?

## Year 5

Ensure needs are identified and plan-do-review cycles actioned. Begin assessments for those that may be vulnerable in the Year 6-7 transition.

## Year 5 - Summer Term

Liaise with Secondary colleagues who may offer taster lessons, assemblies at this stage.

Consider a co-created transition wall display

## Year 6 Autumn Term

- Identify pupils who may need additional transition support (SEND, attendance, SEMH, vulnerable families)
- Begin informal conversations with pupils about secondary school
- Share general transition information with parents/carers
- Ensure parents aware of the application process. Offer parent evening / support with applications where possible
- Encourage development of independence skills (organisation, routines, self-advocacy)
- Initial liaison between primary SENCO / DSL and secondary schools (where possible)
- Ensure applications made by parent / carers by October deadline ( before October half term)

## Year 6 January - March

- Attend Portal training
- Review SEND/EHCP transition arrangements
- Gather and update pupil information (strengths, triggers, successful strategies)
- Submit information to Portal
- Parent meetings/support sessions where needed
- Emotional preparation work (friendships, anxieties, change)
- Work on:
  - Time management
  - Following instructions from different adults
  - Asking for help

## Year 6 April -May

- Secondary school visits / transition days
- Additional visits for SEND or anxious pupils
- Transfer of key records and support plans
- Meet form tutor / pastoral staff (where possible)
- Practical preparation:
  - Timetables
  - Equipment
  - Uniform routines
  - Travel planning

Consider a transition PHSE curriculum

## Year 6 June - July

- Final transition meetings for high-need pupils
- Confirm support arrangements for September
- Provide families with clear points of contact
- Celebrate endings and achievements
- Acknowledge mixed emotions (excitement and worry)

# Profiling



## USING R2i

- Start the R2i process as early as possible – ideally Year 5.
- Focus on analysis and how the assessments have developed your theory of what is happening for the young person.

What strategies did you put in place and did they work?

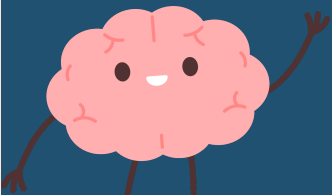
Which strategies could be supportive at secondary?

“  
Include an hypothesis of need  
”

Summarise strengths and areas of need/risk factors

## ★ EXAMPLE HYPOTHESIS

We hypothesise that James’s physical aggression occurs in response to feelings of threat and is maintained by a cycle of negative staff responses and limited opportunities to express himself safely. This may be linked to him witnessing domestic violence at a young age and is best understood in the context of ongoing family conflict and previous school suspensions.



# Key Risk Factors

Several risk factors can increase the likelihood of difficulties (academic, emotional, social, or behavioural) during this transition.

## Individual / personal factors

- Low self-esteem or poor confidence
- Anxiety, especially about change or new environments
- Poor social skills or difficulty making friends
- Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)
- Previous behavioural difficulties
- Mental health concerns (e.g. anxiety, low mood)

## Family factors

- Limited parental support or involvement in education
- Family stress (e.g. conflict, separation, financial hardship)
- Major life changes occurring at the same time (e.g. moving house)
- Low expectations around education

## Academic factors

- Low attainment or falling behind in primary school
- Poor literacy/numeracy skills
- Lack of independent learning skills
- Poor organisational skills

## Peer & social factors

- Friendship disruption (e.g. not moving with existing friends)
- Experiences of bullying or social isolation
- Difficulty adjusting to larger peer groups

## School / systems factors

- Poor transition support (limited communication between schools)
- Lack of familiarity with the secondary environment
- Reduced individual attention from staff (larger classes)
- Inconsistent pastoral support
- Unclear expectations or routines

## Environmental factors

- Moving to a much larger, more complex school
- Longer travel times to school
- Changes in community or neighbourhood
- Cultural or language barriers

## Protective factors to help reduce risk :

- Strong relationships with a trusted adult
- Good transition programmes
- Good home-school communication
- Peer support or buddy systems
- Consistent routines and clear expectations

# What about students that have SEMH needs that are managed within the Primary environment but may struggle in Secondary?

## EARLY IDENTIFICATION

- Identify those young people at the earliest opportunity (e.g. ideally Year 5). Identification could be through observation, teacher discussions, R2i data, family input.
- Reflect on transition vulnerability as the criteria, this may include:
  - Reliant upon very trusted adult relationships to emotionally regulate.
  - Needs high adult scaffolding for routines, organisation or relationships
  - Emotionally reactive under stress but settled in familiar environments
  - Masking behaviours (compliance, withdrawal, humour)
  - Increased anxiety around change or uncertainty

Please complete the following form for the pupils in your class.

Do you expect this child to settle in well at secondary school?

1 = Strongly disagree; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Not sure; 4 = Agree; 5 = Strongly agree

	Academically	Socially, with peers	Socially, with teachers	To the new routine
Example: John Smith	4	5	4	3
1.				
2.				

Consider using the Start scale as a register to monitor this cohort.

## BUILD TRANSITION SKILLS

- Focus on transition preparation skills e.g. emotional literacy, help-seeking skills from a range of adults, repairing conflict, managing change and inconsistency.

## INVOLVE FAMILIES

- Support families to engage with all universal transition offers from the secondary school.

# PEN PROFILE EXAMPLE:



My previous setting and the key contact

## KEY THINGS ABOUT ME!

My language, culture, identity:

My hobbies/interests:

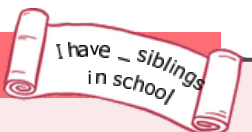
...

Things I'm looking forward to about secondary:

How to build a relationship with me:

Vulnerabilities e.g. frequent moves, :

## MY FAMILY



My family context:

How best to communicate with my family:

## MY LEARNING

Strengths:

Areas I need support with:

Strategies that have worked:

KEY SAFEGUARDING INFORMATION

## MY PEER RELATIONSHIPS

Established relationships I have already:

In friendships, I need support with:

KEY INFORMATION ABOUT SEND

Other information..

# Best Practice for Enhanced Transition

## IDENTIFY VULNERABLE GROUP EARLY



- Early identification of pupils needing enhanced support (SEND, SEMH, attendance, family context)
- Clear transition profiles / pupil passports shared with all relevant secondary staff in meetings and on Portal

## INFORMATION SHARING

- Share information about students as early as possible.
- Rich, honest account of needs



## ADDITIONAL VISITS



- Tailored transition experiences (additional visits, quiet times, meeting key staff)

## 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

Add sufficient information that captures perspectives from relevant staff

#### Transition meetings

In person where possible or online meetings to share key information about the highest profile students

Our research suggests in person meetings work best in gaining contextual information

### TRANSITION DOCUMENTS

Consider R2i summary profiles, Attendance, safeguarding, Attainment data.

### SEND SPECIFIC SHARING

Additional steps:

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

### SAFEGUARDING

Shared separately from other information  
Transferred securely (system or hand delivery)  
Logged and receipt confirmed

### FAMILY INPUT

Parents should have opportunity to:

- Share concerns
- Provide relevant information

### PUPIL VOICE

- Questionnaires
- Transition booklets
- One-page pupil profiles
- Opportunities for Q&A

## TIMEFRAME

Year 6	Action
Spring Term	Identify vulnerable pupils
Early Summer	Share initial information
Mid Summer	Hold transition meetings
Late Summer	Final updates (e.g. SATs)
Post-transfer	Respond to follow-up queries

## STAFF RESPONSIBILITY



Year 6 Teachers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complete transition profiles</li> <li>• Ensure accuracy and clarity</li> <li>• Highlight key needs and strategies</li> </ul>
SENCO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure SEND information is detailed and clear</li> <li>• Liaise with secondary SENCO</li> <li>• Support transition planning</li> </ul>
DSL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transfer safeguarding records securely</li> <li>• Communicate directly with receiving DSL</li> <li>• Confirm receipt</li> </ul>
SLT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure systems are in place</li> <li>• Monitor quality of information shared</li> </ul>

## CHECKLIST

- Transition summaries / profiles completed
- Detailed and specific SEND information
- Safeguarding transferred securely
- Portal information up to date
- Face to face meetings held for key pupils
- Pupil voice included
- Receipt of information confirmed

# HOW TO SUPPORT WHEN

PARENT/CARERS ARE NOT ALLOCATED  
FIRST CHOICE OF SECONDARY SCHOOL



## GUIDANCE FOR PRIMARY SCHOOLS

### ACKNOWLEDGE THE EMOTIONAL IMPACT



- Explicitly normalise disappointment, anger or anxiety in conversations and written communications.
- 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.”

### PROVIDE INFORMATION ON NEXT STEPS



- Support parents to understand the details or what is offered and why the preferred school was not allocated. (e.g. distance, oversubscription criteria)
- Explain the options to parents:
  1. Accept the offered school
  2. Join the waiting list(s) for higher-ranked schools
  3. Appeal for a place at a preferred school

Advise that parent/carers accept the place offered whilst they appeal/stay on the waiting list for the preferred school

### SUPPORT TO UNDERSTAND APPEALS

Additional support for vulnerable families:

Offer of additional support

Early and regular check-ins

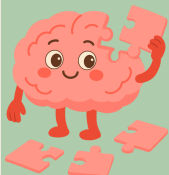
- Clarify that appeals are independent and based on a number of factors E.g. current intake of school etc.
- Appeals must be made within 20 days.
- Ensure that additional information can be provided if parent/carers are considering appealing (e.g. medical, SEND, professional reports)

### HELP TO SEE POSITIVES

- Encourage parents to:
  - Attend transition events or induction days
  - Read the school's SEN and pastoral information
- Share balanced messages:
  - Many pupils settle well after an anxious start
  - Children's experience is shaped strongly by relationships
- Share anonymised examples of pupils who flourished in similar situations.
- Ensure all staff give a consistent message.



### CONTINUE WITH STRONG TRANSITION



- Continue transition work as normal ensuring that all information is shared.
- Continue emotional-based transition support with students



# 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)

The School Transition and Adjustment Research Study (STARS) UCL :

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

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

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