

Primary to secondary transition in Camden

Camden's Education
Strategy to 2030

Building Back Stronger





Camden's Education Strategy to 2030 – Building Back Stronger identifies as a priority successful transition between settings and phases for every child.

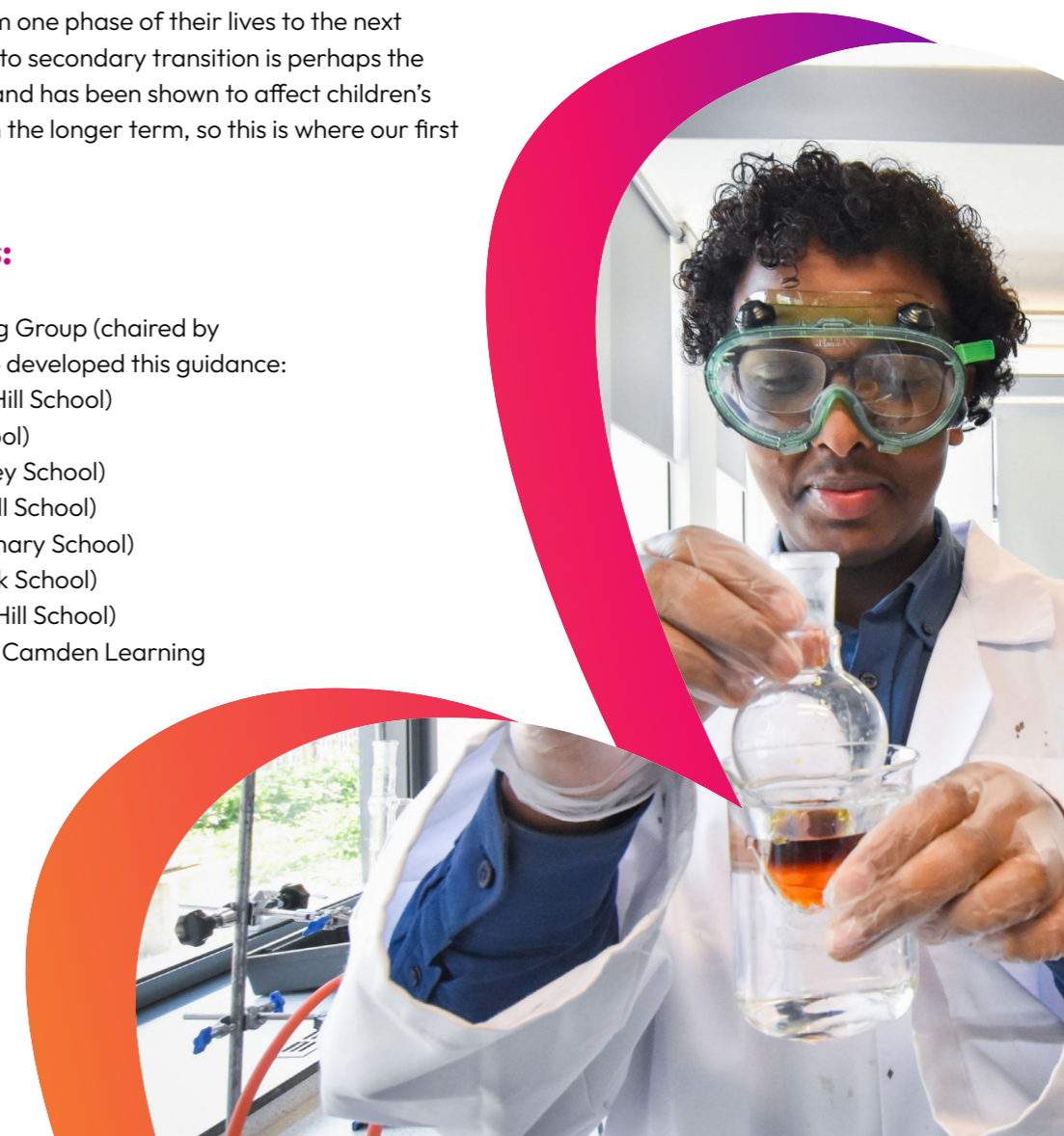
Camden's commitment:

“We will ensure that Camden's education system recognises the importance of transition and builds that into practice across all schools.”

Even before the added strains of the pandemic, it was evident that when a child moves from one phase of their lives to the next it can be unsettling. Primary to secondary transition is perhaps the most challenging transition and has been shown to affect children's attainment and well-being in the longer term, so this is where our first piece of work has focused.

Acknowledgements:




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What is a successful transition?

A young person making a successful move from primary school to secondary school will show:

-  **Emotional wellbeing:** coping with the changes, inevitable anxieties, highs and lows
-  **Successful peer relationships:** making new friends and successfully negotiating the larger setting with its more complex social groupings
-  **Academic progress:** quickly getting to grips with the secondary curriculum

What are the challenges in achieving this successful transition?

Anxieties of children

The top concerns are:

- Getting lost in the larger school
- Fears of bullying, especially from older children
- Anxiety about discipline systems, especially detentions
- The pressures of homework, quantity and difficulty
- Fear of losing old friends

Anxieties of parents

These mirror those of children but also include:

- Practical issues such as rules around mobile phones, meals, money
- Travel to and from school and enabling independence while ensuring safety
- Fear that the individual child's needs will be lost in a bigger system which is less accessible to parents

Primary secondary transfer coincides with adolescence which adds an additional layer of challenge for young people

London's fragmented system means that children do not transfer in large cohorts but move to many different secondary schools from any given primary, often crossing borough boundaries so school to school working is more challenging, onerous and the bureaucracy of information sharing is challenging. There is also a **'churn'** process where children on waiting lists or new to the borough can come onto a secondary school's roll only just before the term has started or even once it has started. This makes the job of preparing and supporting more difficult.

Good transition narrows rather than widens the attainment gap between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged pupils – but nationally and in Camden too this gap tends to widen between primary and secondary. The risk of poor school attendance (a higher risk for disadvantaged pupils) also gets worse between primary and secondary.

Relationships and attachments can be easier in primary than in secondary school. In primary school, it can be easier for the child to know their class teacher and other staff members and easier too for parents to feel part of the school community. In primary, feedback can be very personalised and live. It can also be an easier environment in which to make mistakes and struggle with particular areas of the curriculum.

Transition heightens vulnerabilities:

Vulnerabilities

Known to children's social care

Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA)

Young carers

In care/care experienced

SEND

Looked after

In temporary accommodation

Family vulnerability e.g DA

Vulnerable to harmful cultural practices

Privately fostered

Mental health needs

Criminal exploitation

Signs of abuse or neglect

Missing

Risks – problems with...

Attendance

Punctuality

Self-organisation

Self-regulation

Work in class

Homework

Peer relationships

Relationships with teachers

The primary to secondary transition journey

This guide to good practice in Camden divides the child's journey into five sections:

1 The **formal secondary transfer process** where parents express their preference and the local authority and schools manage the admissions system

2 The **preparation that goes on in primary school** to help children in Year 5 and 6 to be ready for transition

3 The **information sharing between primary and secondary** that is necessary to ensure a successful transition

4 **Secondary schools' work to ease transition** before the pupils arrive in Year 7

5 The work that secondary schools do **once children have started in Year 7**



1. The formal secondary transfer process

What can schools do to help?

Primary schools have an important role in helping parents and children with the formal process of secondary transfer, **holding open evenings themselves and promoting open evenings at local secondary schools**. Some parents need **help with the online application process** and primary staff are great at giving this assistance. Primary colleagues can also help **reduce anxiety** around secondary transfer among both parents and pupils, including through **sharing positive messages** about local schools. Primary schools can also welcome **pupil and parent ambassadors** and these are very reassuring for pupils who are about to transfer.

Secondary schools can participate in the **Moving On Fair** (held in June each year) and hold open evenings and days that they coordinate with other local schools and with primary schools.



Primary and secondary schools can signpost Camden's booklet **Life in secondary school – a guide for parents** (available in English and Somali) to help parents understand the secondary school system, especially parents who have not been through the English system themselves <https://www.camden.gov.uk/life-in-secondary-school-a-guide-for-parents>. This web page includes videos too.

Good practice: Letter on offer day

Regent High School writes to each family offered a place on offer day to congratulate them!

Good practice: Working with Meet The Parents

Fitzjohn's Primary School has worked closely with the parent-led organisation, Meet the Parents (MTP). It has found a parent ambassador to promote MTP events across the school. The school sends regular texts and emails and holds an MTP event before the headteacher's Year 6 transition workshop.

At **Haverstock School**, a member of staff reaches out to heads of year and department heads to identify families and students who can present the school to prospective parents. Through this has developed a committed groups of families who represent the school at MTP meetings.

For more information visit: <https://meettheparents.info/>

2. Preparation for transition in primary school

What can primary schools do to help?

For everyone:

- Helping children understand that **fear of change is normal** and helping them prepare for the change through the **PSHE curriculum**: PSHE lessons are a great opportunity to focus on the feelings, opportunities and challenges of transition and helping children develop strategies for managing the change from KS2 to KS3. See resources: on the [PSHE Association website](#) and use the Anna Freud centre animation and activity sheets on their [website](#).
- Hold **special assemblies** on transition – see the Anna Freud Centre's 'Moving Up!' assembly plan in their [toolkit](#).

- Place particular value on **role play and drama** to act out situations and try out 'scripts' for apologising and coping with things going wrong. Consider doing this 'promenade style' in situ at a secondary school (to act out arriving late for lesson or borrowing a library book) or at a bus stop or a station to plan for transport problems
- Welcoming **Y7 ambassadors** from secondary schools to recount their own journey (myth bust and reassure)
- Planning **transitional events and rites of passage** for the end of Year 7 to celebrate, thank and say goodbye. These help children move on and also **encourage good attendance right up to the end of Year 6**, putting them in a better position for Year 7
- **Welcoming secondary teachers** to enhance their understanding of the KS2 curriculum and developing their trust in primary assessment data
- **Accepting offers of support from secondary schools** including for pupils to visit to help with Modern Foreign Languages etc
- Accepting invitations for **KS2 teachers to visit closest/cluster secondary schools** to enhance their understanding of the KS3 curriculum and the academic transition issues

Good practice:
Transition workshops

Fleet Primary School organises informal 'teas' where former pupils now in Camden secondary schools (and their parents) engage with Year 6 pupils and parents to pass on learning and wisdom from experience.

- For primaries with significant cohorts transferring into specific schools, **host visits from that secondary school's transition co-ordinator** to learn about and understand the children coming into Year 7 and **give children the chance to meet the co-ordinator** and ask questions
- Encouraging children (especially those who are most likely to struggle) and their parents to **take advantage of induction offers** from their secondary school, such as summer schools and extended transition days

Good practice:
Extended transition days

Acland Burghley School uses the information provided by parents and feeder schools to host four additional extended transition morning for identified students. The days include meeting Acland Burghley students who used to attend their primary schools and who can make the school feel familiar. There are activities to begin social interaction, learning about key staff and personal development lessons around making the transition positive and less of a big step.

Good practice:
Mental health transition support

Brookfield Primary School works closely with the Mental Health Support Team (MHST) to identify and assist children who benefit from additional transition support. Sessions run across six weeks, with up to six children, to reflect on their personal development throughout primary school and to celebrate their identities going forward. Whole class mindfulness techniques are taught in lessons that children can use in times of unease.

For children who may need more support:

- Children who are **neurodiverse may** find transition more challenging but there are good, practical ways to help them. [View presentation here](#)
- For children with **mental health** vulnerabilities, Camden's Mental Health Support Team in Schools (**MHST**) offers **whole school training and small group work** specifically on transition ([see the MHST website](#))
- There are several organisations offering **parent workshops and webinars:**
 - the [Health and Wellbeing Team](#) offer workshops helping parents to understand how the transition from primary to secondary school might affect children's mental wellbeing and strategies for preparing them for these changes
 - the [MHST](#) offer webinars for parents on supporting their child through transition to secondary school

- [The Health and Wellbeing Team](#) also offer **pupil secondary transition workshops:** a chance to discuss and understand fears and hopes and to develop strategies to build resilience, with a particular emphasis on making healthy friendships
- **Children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)** with an EHCP have more specific arrangements for primary to secondary transition – see the [SEND Code of Practice](#).



3. Information sharing after offer day (1st March)

For everyone:

Primary schools are expected to complete a **Camden Secondary Transition Form** for each child transferring to a Camden secondary school. These are completed online, with some fields pre-populated and information goes from the primary school to secondary school via Camden Learning. The form gives a rounded picture of the child and highlights whether a Vulnerability Matrix (see below) will be completed for the child.

This information is used by the co-ordinators in secondary schools for:

- Tutor group and house allocation
- Getting an overview of needs and issues for the cohort
- Planning proactive, personalised support to students who may need some additional support through transition
- Knowing what to look out for in the early weeks of term for specific students

Each child will also transfer with a **piece of written work in English** which represents their starting point for secondary school.

Good practice: Students' best work

Parliament Hill School collects students' best pieces of work from primary school on the Year 6 taster day. This work is photocopied and given out to subject teachers to stick in the front of students' exercise books. This brings student data to life, exemplifies the work students are capable of, reminds students of what they are capable of and can be used for showing progress later in the year

[Here is Parliament Hill's template for eliciting the piece of 'best work'.](#)

Good practice: Golden piece of work

Le Sainte Union Catholic School asks Year 6s to bring in their 'golden' piece of work to the one to one conversation with their parents and a member of the senior team. The child is asked to talk through the piece of work which then goes into the Year 7 books and is used as an example of what a child can achieve, which means that there is no drop in expectations from Year 6 to 7.

For children who may need more support:

For each child where some additional support is needed, primary schools will fill in a **Vulnerability Matrix** highlighting that child's needs. This is highly confidential and is therefore transmitted and stored very carefully. It is sent through a secure link to the secondary school's secondary transfer coordinator.

SEND:

Each child with an EHCP or ENG has an **Education Passport** which transfers information about that pupil in terms of attainment, support needs and their personal wishes.



4. Before starting at secondary school

What can secondary schools do to help?

For everyone:

- Holding an **induction day** for all pupils transferring to Camden secondary schools on the same day in July each year. It really helps if pupils spend the day in their form groups with their expected tutor for September. Subject taster sessions can both build excitement about Year 7 and allay fears. [Example Induction Day Programme.](#)
- Inviting all parents for a **parent welcome conversation**, a personal meeting with every child's parents/carers in the summer term
- **Visits from senior staff to primary schools** between March and May to meet pupils transferring. Visits to schools further afield and those only sending one or two pupils may well be a worthwhile investment in easing transition
- Using **home school agreements** to help clarify expectations between pupils, families and the secondary school. [Example Home School Agreement.](#)
- Holding **parent induction meetings** around the time of the induction day to enable parents to meet each other, hear from staff and ask questions
- Giving parents and primary schools **links to useful online information** including, on the school's own website, maps of the school, sample timetables and virtual tours, 'what a day looks like for pupils at our school' and make it easy to find on the school website. These should be **updated and checked for accuracy every March**
- **Signposting to parents** materials designed to enable them to be proactive prepare their children for secondary school, for example, [Anna Freud Centre's resources for parents](#)

- Enhancing communication by setting up and publicising a **transition@[school] email address** so parents can send in queries even if they don't know the right person to send them to
- **Building links with primary school pupils before Year 6**
- **Summer schools** led by teaching staff to help children get to know staff and each other and feel ready for secondary school

Good practice: A strategic approach

Regent High School has taken a strategic approach to building links for transition including:

- Working with Year 4 and 5 in nearby primary schools
- Involving primary pupils in the Science Challenge with the Crick Institute
- Holding a Primary Maths Challenge
- Including Year 5 art work in in the Regent High summer exhibition

Good practice: Transition bulletin

Le Sainte Union Catholic School issues a fortnightly transition bulletin in the summer term with information specifically geared to Year 6 and their parents. [See examples here.](#)

For those who need more support:

- **Extended transition days** for students who will especially benefit, including secondary school staff meeting key workers from primary schools to understand pupils' needs

5. Making the first term at secondary school a success

What can schools do to help?

For everyone:

- Design the beginning of term to induct the new students, for example by making **the first day of term** exclusively for Year 7
- **Using PSHE lessons** to address the issues of transition. Here are some resources <https://pshe-association.org.uk/resource/new-key-stage>
- **Giving parents a clear line of communication** to the secondary school: Good practice includes a **phone call to each parent from the form tutor**, giving a **contact email address for the form tutor**
- **Feeding back to parents on how their child is settling in**

Good practice: September parents' evening

Williams Ellis School runs an introductory evening for parents in September to review how students have settled and to talk in more detail about the curriculum

Good practice: Coffee and conversation for parents

Haverstock School runs coffee sessions for parents and conversation sessions for parents giving them the chance to meet each other and key people in the school. They find it helps with building relationships, especially for parents who have English as an additional language

- **Offering group work with parents** to help them form their own support networks
- **Using peer mentoring** where older pupils take responsibility for helping younger students
- **Using team building activities** to help Year 7 feel like a cohesive group and part of the school family

Good practice: Year 7 Residential camp

In **William Ellis School** all Year 7s attend a residential 3 day camp at their outdoor education centre in Surrey in the third week of September. This includes team building activities, learning about living in the outdoors and opportunities to build new friendships. Their tutors and head of year are there for the week

- **Prioritising early intervention** to tackle **attendance** problems in Term 1, since research shows that any child absent in the first weeks of term is likely to become a persistently absent child. Camden's Attendance Strategy emphasises secondary transfer
- Ensure support for **children who have not reached the expected standard in reading** by the end of primary school is **systematic** and **early** to enable access to the curriculum
- **Is Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA) suspected?** This has really increased since the pandemic. Camden's hospital school www.royalfree.camden.sch.uk may be able to offer advice as they are seeing more and more children referred to their outreach service. There are also useful resources available from the [Anna Freud Centre](#)
- **Issuing reports in Term 1** so pupils and parents understand what is going well and what needs to change

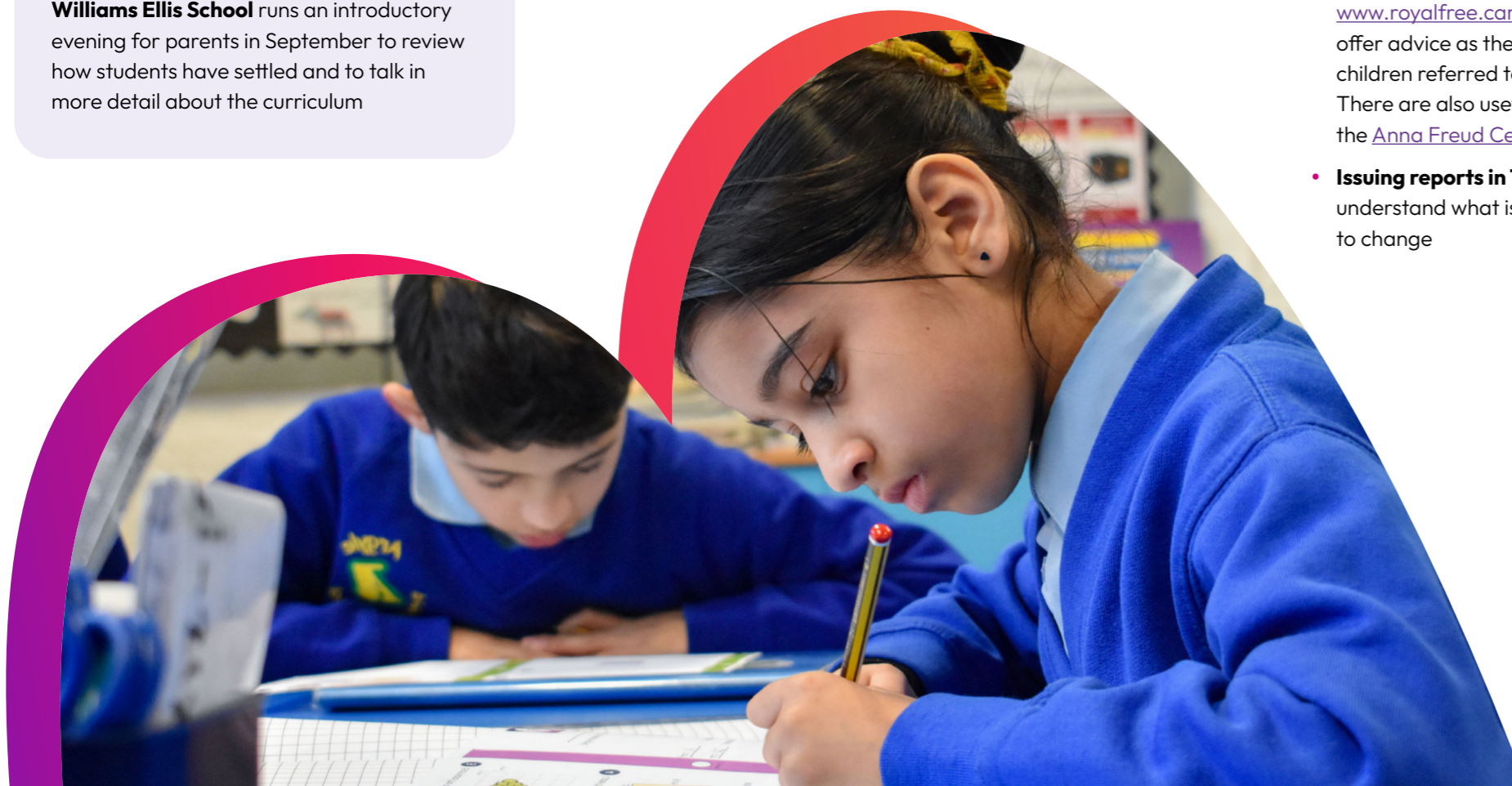
- **Marking the end of Term 1** for example by **each pupil writing a letter, in PSHE, to their primary school** reflecting on how they have changed and developed, as well as how reality lived up to or differed from expectations

Attendance good practice

- Take a **trauma informed approach** where a child is not attending
- **Follow up** and address all non-attendance at the beginning of Y7 – ie, there is no 'settling in' period before poor attendance is followed up
- **Show curiosity** about the vulnerabilities which may underly poor attendance, punctuality or dress code violations – for example is the child in temporary accommodation?
- Have an **action plan for improvement**
- **Keep sanctions under review** to make sure that they do not reinforce reluctance to come to school or generate more oppositional behaviour

Good practice: Using transition data

Parlament Hill School continue to use transition data for the whole of Year 7, especially where attendance problems emerge, often calling the primary school to discuss vulnerabilities



Getting better all the time? How can we improve at helping primary to secondary transition?

We need to keep challenging ourselves and finding out what is going well and not so well in transition from primary to secondary.

Here is a link to a questionnaire which you can use in term 2 or 3 of Year 7 to find out from pupils how transition has gone. [Year 7 Transition Questionnaire](#).



Test and learn:

Case Study: Brecknock, Eleanor Palmer and Torriano Schools with Camden School for Girls – Transition in Maths

Staff collaborated across three primary schools and one secondary school to develop special maths lessons to help the transition of current year 6 pupils into year 7 – a ‘transition unit’ bridging the two phases.

The ‘transition unit’ built on research about what worked and the EEF report Improving Mathematics in KS2 and 3. Teachers noticed that primary school classrooms often had a higher quality approach to talking about maths. This learning meant the unit:

- Comprised tasks that encode success, not answer-focused and with a low threshold and high ceiling

- Allowed deep teacher assessment of pupil approaches, knowledge and confidence
- Baked in ‘making mistakes’ and alternative approaches
- Used worked examples or representations as a starting point for debate, building to ‘what’s most efficient?’

The teachers found that working together across the phases improved their practice and understanding.

For more information [click here](#)



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