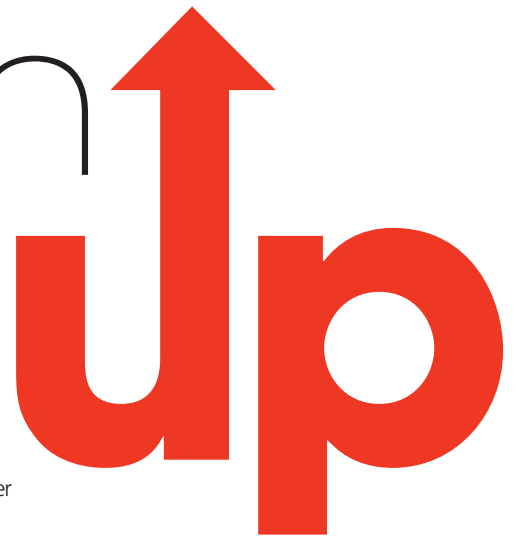


# Moving on



Changing classroom, teacher, or school can be a disconcerting experience. **Kevin Harcombe** explains how to smooth the transition...

**F**irst day in a new class? Trembling lower lip? Blinking back tears? Pleading, "Please don't make me go!"? Just remember you are the teacher and get a grip of yourself.

Transition, be it moving from one class to another within a key stage, or - potentially more problematic - moving between key stages, can be a fraught process. It has the potential to cause emotional and academic problems: emotional because children have to come to terms with a new teacher, academic because transition is a time when children can slip back or stall in the progress they make.

## 1. Transition from pre-school to foundation stage

A series of induction events is preferable to a single hit. Spending time with the children is the most important thing you can do.

Meet with the parents to explain exactly what the EYFS involves in your school. Your first encounter should be spent giving out information and taking questions. This might involve a brief resume of why the children are going to be well cared for, details of buying school kit, and other nuts and bolts stuff like school dinners. It helps to invite reps from the PTA and governors along and you might also include any home school link workers you may have. (I once invited the school nurse to do a ten minute slot, but the graphic warning about nits and worms wasn't creating the image I wanted).

The second meeting is an opportunity for children to spend an hour in class with their teacher-to-be, while carers have a coffee in the hall. We have a third meeting which is a teddy bears picnic, where children and carers enjoy an al fresco sandwich with their ursine companions - teachers and assistants need to bring their teddy bears too.

Home visits can also be very helpful as then children are on their own turf, though not all parents will want to take advantage of this. Teacher can then say on the first day, "How's Tiddles, your cat?" and emphasise rapport.

We also operate sessions of singing and rhymes with carers and children to give them at least a grounding in such areas - often sadly

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**Conversations can help ensure real continuity and are much more important than handing over files in which there is almost too much detail**

lacking - and also to get the children used to the school environment and to have fun together. As a result, the dreaded day one scenario of wailing children clinging to their mother's leg as she tries to exit are generally avoided.

I have found it useful to show a short, home-made DVD of 'a day in FS' so that anxious parents can see what actually happens to their children after they have dropped them off - from registration, to break, to learning.

## 2. Transition within a key stage

If you plan to mix classes up when children move from one key stage to another, you need

to consider which pupils will make a good team. Parents get most cross when two children who clash are placed in the same class - again! Face to face teacher meetings before deciding on class composition can avoid this.

Inform parents and children which class they are in midweek. That way, if there is any initial anxiety children can talk it over with their current teacher and parents can come in too. It would be bad practice to send out such notifications on a Friday afternoon or just before a half-term break, for example.

Invite parents in when they're collecting / dropping off, in order to see the new teacher and find out where the new classroom is. It's important for parents to be able to envisage where their little angel will be spending six hours a day, five days a week and put a face to the name of teacher and assistant.

## 3. What teachers need to do

Hand over paperwork, working to an agreed list. This should include details of assessments and targets, who is on SEN or G&T registers, as well as any essential medical information. Representative samples of work might also be included so that the new teacher knows what the child is capable of. Most



# Eight great taster sessions

LEARN SOMETHING ABOUT YOUR CLASS, AND TELL THEM SOMETHING ABOUT YOU...

- 1** Make a passport. This should include the usual factual details – date and place of birth, but why not add hair and eye colour, height and (more sensitively) weight, shoe size, etc. all of which can be number crunched on computer to produce graphs and charts for display. These can be updated as the year progresses.
- 2** Creating a display is a good activity as it helps children to feel the room is “their” place. This could be a class charter - not just rules for behaviour, but ways in which the teacher and children will collaborate and co-operate to make it a great learning environment for all.
- 3** Make an “ambition tree” – this can be a real tree branch with “dangly” cards, or a 2D tree on the wall. This should include hopes and ambitions for the future and what learning children will need to do to realise their ambition.
- 4** Design your ideal classroom layout. Again this gives the incoming children some sense of ownership. This can be done simply by drawing, using plasticine or play dough modelling, or mathematically on grid paper.
- 5** ‘Wanted’ posters can include a digital photograph or a written description that might include interests – “most often to be seen in the skate park”, “has black, spikey hair”, “known to his friends as Mogsy” etc.
- 6** Try a circle time activity about “what my friends would say about me” where each child comes out with one such statement e.g. ‘My friends say that I am a fast runner’. It is actually helpful if the teacher takes part as well – this can be used to model the process and the children will delight in finding out (appropriate) details about you.
- 7** Children sit in a circle and roll a ball to someone as they call out that person’s name. The teacher joins in and make sure everyone gets a turn. This can be a great and non-threatening way to introduce everyone in class.
- 8** Get children into pairs and give them two minutes to tell their partner all about themselves. Whichever child is listening has to repeat the key facts back to his partner. The speaking partner can show thumbs up if accurate, thumbs down if not.

importantly of all, arrange face to face handover meetings in June / July. These conversations can help ensure real continuity and are much more important than handing over files in which there is almost too much detail to take on board. Crucially, this face to face should be revisited in October to make sure the children are making progress commensurate with their previous form. This is a chance for the receiving teacher to talk about how each individual is progressing (or not) and for the previous teacher to say, “that’s what I would

have expected,” “that’s better than I would have expected,” or “that’s not as good” in which case you can both investigate the reasons why and get that child back on track.



#### 4. Transition to a new key stage

When children are transferring to junior / secondary school, organise a series of taster days, and there's no need to wait till Y2 or Y6 to do it. One or two days in Y1 and Y5 help to get the children used to their next school. In the transition year itself, a shared singing festival held at the new school helps bring all groups together. Days where children get to explore the wealth of secondary resources in ICT or PE are an enormous hit. It can also be exciting to start a unit of work in one school in July – science lends itself to this particularly well – and complete it in the next school in September. This entails extra liaison between teachers – no bad thing – and ensures continuity in at least one curriculum area.

Vulnerable groups need extra time at transition and some schools will operate a "nurture" transition where individuals and groups get extra visits.

Above all, celebrate children's time at junior / infants school with a special assembly and invite teachers from the secondary / junior school to come along. Publish a memories book with photographs, contributions from the children and get every child to sign it before it is photocopied.

## Blur the boundaries

You can supplement a taster day with a series of story times, say for 15 minutes every Friday afternoon – again helping the children get used to you and helping you learn their names, their characters and their abilities. Or why not set up a regular whole Friday afternoon transition slot in the last four weeks of term?

Y1 children, for example, can write to FS children telling them what Y1 is like. Keep it positive and avoid statements like "we never get to use the dressing up box any more!" because, of course, you always use the dressing up box – even, or especially, in Y6.

Assign a "buddy" in the year above, especially useful where you have mixed age classes and one group is staying with you for a second year. Give over assembly time to children having a "buddy chat" – questions about what will happen in their new class.

## Happy memories

When children depart for secondary school, you can mark the occasion with personalised leavers gifts from All My Own Work. Children can draw and label pictures of themselves, which are then printed in full colour onto T-Towels, Memory Mugs, Banners and T-Shirts to provide a lasting memory of their time at school. Visit [allmyownwork.co.uk](http://allmyownwork.co.uk) or call 0115 9725005.



**Above all, celebrate children's time at junior / infants school with a special assembly and invite teachers from the secondary and junior school to come along**

## Senior citizens

### MAKE THE MOVE TO 'BIG SCHOOL' AS PAIN FREE AS POSSIBLE...

The more familiar KS2 pupils become with KS3 routines the better for all concerned. Here are some examples of good practice:

- The headteacher of the secondary school holds an induction meeting for parents - at the junior school. This notion of visiting children and parents in the primary setting goes down tremendously well.
- Y6 teachers and the head of Y7 meet up in May to talk face to face about individual pupils, friendship groups and the like before children are allocated classes. This is an important opportunity to separate those children who rub each other up the wrong way.
- Meanwhile, the Y6 teachers are stepping up the homework so that it doesn't come as too great a shock in September.
- In June, the formal Y6 taster days take place. Children are accompanied by their primary class teacher to give them some moral support. With that and a map they usually cope! When they return to their primary school they really seem to have outgrown it and their apprehensions about moving to 'big school' have all been assuaged.
- In October, the secondary school send a brief, written progress check to the primary school describing each child along the lines of "expected progress" and greater or lesser than. This will flag up any anomalies which the primary teacher can make contact about and help the secondary address. Youngsters who are not happy will often haunt their former primary at the end of the day. Sensitive primary teachers will contact the secondary school to try and help. Sensitive secondary teachers will listen to their colleagues.

