

Guidance for Schools: Covid-19 Arrangements for Enhanced Transitions Planning for Children Transitioning from Year 6 to Year 7



This period of time where we have all been experiencing social distancing and isolation from our extended families and friends is like no other period of time in our lives to date. Our children and the young people in our school community may have adapted better to this change, others will have found the restriction to their lives much more challenging.

We are not clear about when the restriction on our movements will change, but we hear that schools are likely to open sooner than many other restrictions are lifted. What we know about change is that it is managed better if we prepare for it. With this in mind, we have been thinking about conversations you could have with children and families transitioning from primary to secondary schools this year.

The purpose of this document is to outline Plymouth LA Educational Psychology Service's recommendations for schools to support the enhanced Year 6 to Year 7 transition framework during the coronavirus restrictions. It draws on best available evidence from psychological research to support children and young people in their transitions. The link Educational Psychologist for each school will be able to provide consultation and signpost to resources to support the implementation of the recommendations outlined below.

Practice recommendations

This guidance is written to operate in addition to Plymouth's existing Enhanced Transition guidance:

<https://www.plymouthonlinedirectory.com/plymouthlocaloffer/enhancedtransition>

<https://www.plymouth.gov.uk/schoolseducationchildcareskillsandemployability/specialeducationalneedsanddisabilityandlocaloffer/sendasstrategicadviceandsupport8>

At the time of writing this guidance the future of school return timescales is uncertain. Schools will need to plan carefully around timescales around phased transitions and a stepped timetable for planning. This is so that children have the opportunity to physically visit schools and meet people beforehand.

It is recommended that schools devise a coordinated mechanism that allow highly vulnerable children (i.e. requiring an enhanced transition at level 3) to be one of the earliest cohort as part of a stepped timetable for transition into year 7. This will allow a more child and family centred approach during this time of elevated uncertainty. Schools should ensure that they cross reference with vulnerable children monitoring processes.

Whilst we envisage this guidance to apply to most Transition Plus 3 and some Plus 2 children, others may need an enhanced approach where other risk factors are salient. Risk factors to be particularly mindful of in the current situation are:

- Increased safeguarding issues experienced within the home or the community
- School belongingness and opportunities for closure
- The child's interpretation of their individual lived experiences of social isolation
- Separation anxiety and attendance history
- The extent of the child's engagement with educational opportunities
- Bereavement and illness within the child's current school
- Bereavement and illness within the family's network
- Changed family circumstances
- Family access to and engagement with support services
- Social relationships and engagement and the extent to which the child is making the transition with an established peer group
- Varied staff resilience due to different working experiences

Preparation for school staff to manage children who will have experienced these risk factors during social isolation.

Due to the coronavirus at these uncertain times we would encourage receiving secondary schools to continue to take the lead to coordinate a (virtual) Enhanced Transition meeting and deliver the objectives as detailed in the Enhanced Transition Plan. Current evidence indicates that the use of Person Centred Planning approaches is recommended for each child.

Prior to an Enhanced Transition Meeting

We recommend the use of *SEND Guidance: Person Centred Planning Toolkit* (March, 2015) and *Person-centred practice in education: a guide for early years, schools and colleges in Wales* (2019). Familiarise yourself with the roles and processes involved in a Person Centred Planning meeting.

Many of the preparatory approaches within these documents could be worked through virtually or printed and sent to a family and then the child's champion could discuss them with the child and parents/carers. The provision of a single point of contact member of staff as facilitator is an important part of this process.

The Enhanced Transition Meeting

Consideration will need to be given to the structure of the Enhanced Transition meeting which is likely to need to be virtual, whilst also taking individual child and family circumstances into account. Wherever possible visual methods should be employed, but these will clearly be governed by participants' access to technology. Methods such as screen sharing and video calling will support the process, but where these are not possible adjustments will need to be made and this may require additional liaison following meetings.

Other considerations

- 1) Relationship building – whilst pupils and teachers may not be able to meet, other methods can be explored and employed. For example:
 - a. Writing letters
 - b. Video calls
 - c. A 'pavement-only' home visit
 - d. Pre-recorded introductions to key members of staff (e.g. SEN and/or pastoral staff)
 - e. Video tours of key parts of school site
 - f. Formation of 'virtual' tutor groups and regular contact with tutors using group media approaches (e.g. Hangouts, Zoom, Teams)
- 2) Systems are in place for children with additional needs to access the universal transition practices that your school is adapting and implementing.

- 3) There will be a planned offer for children who may be shielding or being shielded and therefore will need to socially distance for longer. This may be due to medical vulnerabilities of their own, or those of people they live with. Liaison with health professionals will need to be considered.

We would like schools to feel reassured they can continue to liaise with their link Educational Psychologist to support them with the planning and implementation of this guidance. More information about Plymouth Educational Psychology Service and updated advice can be found at:

<https://www.plymouthonlinedirectory.com/plymouthlocaloffer/educationalpsychologyservice>