

# CHILDREN AND ADULTS OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

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## TRANSITION BETWEEN YEARS 6 AND 7

Report from: Rose Collinson, Director of Children and Adults

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### Summary

This report highlights current activities and practice to support the effective transition of pupils from the primary phase to the secondary phase of education and sets out key questions to prompt discussion of Members with representatives of the Children's Trust 21st Century School's Group to maximise and accelerate pupil progress in Medway schools.

### 1. Budget and Policy Framework

- 1.1 Successful transition supports children and young people in their learning and enables them to succeed in educational attainment and therefore supports the aims within the Children and Young People's Plan.
- 1.2 Positive transition also supports the performance of the Department of Education national indicators<sup>1</sup>, which form part of Medway's Local Area Agreement.

### 2. Background

- 2.1 Each year over 3000 pupils in Medway transfer from primary to secondary phase education. The majority remain within the local authority boundaries, while some pupils cross the boundary into Kent and others migrate from Kent into Medway. 76% of pupils entering year 7 in September 2010 had achieved at least the expected level or better of attainment at key stage 2 in English and 74% in mathematics. This is below the national average.
- 2.2. These results have implications for Medway secondary schools as the attainment and average points score show a varying trend which is slow to improve. Recognising pupils' needs, some secondary schools

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<sup>1</sup> NI 92, 72, 73 or 76, 93, 94, 74 or 77, 83, 95, 96, 75 or 78, 97, 98, 87, 99, 100 and 101.

are offering an integrated curriculum for some year 7 pupils offering more stability in staffing and less movement across the school

2.3. In recent years, Medway has made use of a number of transition models with varying degrees of success and engagement by schools. These models have been based on best practice for successful transition as identified in the national research paper “What makes successful transition from primary to secondary school?”<sup>2</sup>

2.4. Current Arrangements include:

2.4.1. At Local Authority Level:

- Transfer of end of KS2 Standard Attainment Tasks (SATs tests) results to receiving secondary schools within 72 hours of publication;
- Collection of question papers from all primary schools and analysis of pupil responses giving both primary and secondary schools information about the strengths and learning needs of individuals and groups;
- Support for subject leaders to make effective use of the question level analysis to inform teaching and learning and maximise progress;
- Support for joint moderation and agreement trialling of teacher assessment levels.

2.4.2 School level:

- Sharing of information at individual pupil level between schools;
- Visits to secondary schools by children and their parents/carers;
- Visits to primary phase schools by staff and pupils from receiving secondary schools;
- Taster Days – to get to know the school, its environment and staff.

2.5 Other specific group projects:

2.5.1 A questionnaire specifically relating to pupils with special educational needs was developed and sent to secondary schools in July 2010 seeking to identify what works well. Eight schools (2 grammar schools, 1 wide ability and 5 high schools) returned the questionnaire, which highlighted their effective practice. Good communication with pupils and their families and the primary schools was the key and unifying characteristic of the activities schools undertake to support effective transition. Schools also highlighted that carefully planned taster and induction days contributed to a smooth transition into secondary school.

2.5.2 A pilot project with TAMHS (Targeted Mental Health in Schools) working with schools in Strood and Hoo has recently been evaluated by an educational psychologist in the Inclusion division. This project focussed on vulnerable pupils and supported the establishment of nurture groups working with pupils pre and post transition into two

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<sup>2</sup> (ISBN 978 1 84775 085 3)

secondary schools. The aim was to ensure pupils with special needs were well supported and arrangements included visits to the secondary schools during the school day where appropriate to familiarise them with the environment and meet key staff.

2.5.3. The evaluation highlights the need for consistent identification of vulnerable pupils. It also identified as good practice replicating a primary curriculum model by a small team of secondary staff interacting with primary pupils in a single base. The evaluation suggested that the small team approach enhanced the pupils' feelings of being safe. Silverbank Park are leading on encouraging roll out of the project to other Medway schools.

2.5.4. Information about the attainment of looked after children is transferred to the designated looked after child teacher (DLACT) in the receiving secondary school before the end of the summer term. A cross phase DLACT meeting is held early in July, and transition is a standing item on the agenda

### **3. Best practice**

3.1 The Department for Children Schools and Families (now the Department for Education) published the findings from the Effective Pre-school, Primary and Secondary Education 3-14 (EPPSE) project in January 2008 which identified the following key findings:

- A range of practices were employed by schools which helped to support children's transitions including: the use of 'bridging materials'; the sharing of information between schools; visits to schools by prospective teachers, children and their parents; distribution of booklets; talks at the schools; relaxing rules in the early weeks, procedures to help pupils adapt, support and assistance with lessons and homework, taster days and other joint social events between schools.
- Most children (84%) said they felt prepared on entry to secondary school. Many believed that their family and/or teachers helped them to prepare by addressing worries, reassuring and encouraging them, explaining what to expect and how secondary school works, and by giving advice and tips on how to cope at their new school.
- The data analysis revealed five outcomes of a successful transition:
  - developing new friendships and improving their self esteem and confidence,
  - having settled so well in school life that they caused no concerns to their parents,
  - showing an increasing interest in school and school work,
  - getting used to their new routines and school organisation with great ease,
  - experiencing curriculum continuity.

3.2. In Medway, pupils already benefit from the implementation of the good practice outlined above, for example, a buddy system with older pupils

befriending year 7 pupils. As the Rose report<sup>3</sup> noted secondary schools need to receive reliable and relevant information pupils' prior learning. For the core subjects of English and mathematics, the question level analysis fulfils these requirements.

- 3.3. However, as reported in more than one national study, a barrier to effective transition practice is the reluctance of secondary colleagues to accept primary teacher assessment as accurate. In order to move forward and establish a strong professional relationship, it is important to embed a standardised assessment system such as "Assessing Pupils Progress" where teachers at both phases are confident in the reliability and accuracy of the reported levels. To achieve this and build strong partnerships between schools, there should be clustered moderation meetings led by experts in assessment. These are already planned as part of the 2010-11 local authority programme of support.

#### 4. Advice and analysis

Key questions for discussion by the committee:

- 4.1 What are the key messages for the Children's Trust and the Council to support effective primary/secondary transition?
- 4.2 In a rapidly changing school sector how can targeted support be provided to vulnerable groups of pupils to ensure effective transition?
- 4.3 How can differentiated support be extended to ensure that pupils from diverse backgrounds transfer effectively to secondary schools?
- 4.4 What more could local communities do to foster long term friendships beyond primary school?
- 4.3 What more should governing bodies and schools be doing to encourage effective transition arrangements between receiving and feeder schools?

#### 5. Risk Management

Risk	Description	Action to avoid or mitigate risk
Withdraw analysis work	If support is withdrawn for analysing data and dissemination, then the local authority wide data set is compromised leading to fragmentation and an inability to address wide spread misconceptions/gaps in pupils' learning.	Promotion of benefits by the authority for schools in its proactive support of transition activities and keeping costs for the service as low as possible.

<sup>3</sup> An independent review of the primary curriculum:  
[http://publications.education.gov.uk/eOrderingDownload/Primary\\_curriculum\\_Report.pdf](http://publications.education.gov.uk/eOrderingDownload/Primary_curriculum_Report.pdf)

## **6. Implications for looked after children**

- 6.1 There is an on-going need to ensure that there is good communication with schools to ensure pupils' needs are met. Meetings with the Designated Teacher for Looked After Children (DLACT) in schools are held and data transferred to the receiving school/college.

## **7. Financial and legal implications**

- 7.1 There is a cost to the local authority and schools in organising visits and transferring data but because of the perceived benefits for young people and their learning, these costs have been absorbed within existing budgets.
- 7.2 There are no legal implications arising from this report.

## **8. Recommendations**

- 8.1 The committee are requested to consider the report.

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### **Background papers**

- Interim Evaluation of Medway TAMHS Project
- DCSF's Effective Pre-school, Primary and Secondary Education 3-14 (EPPSE) project
- Rose Review – independent review of the primary curriculum