Developing successful transitions Year R to Year One

Action Research Project
Developing Successful Transitions
Year R to Year One

Foreword

This publication arrives with you at a particularly exciting time as we begin the implementation of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). The primary intention of the EYFS is to strengthen the continuity of learning experience for children from birth to five and from the EYFS to KS1.

Many of you will be familiar with the HMI and OfSTED reports which highlighted the discontinuities between the experience of children in reception classes and in Year 1. In Gloucestershire, schools have responded positively to the challenge of supporting children’s transition into KS1 and we can be justly proud of some high quality transition practice.

This publication showcases the learning journeys of the schools which have been involved in a year-long action research project and offers insights into the changes made to improve the conditions for learning for children in Year 1. You will also find useful guidance and tools to support your own self-evaluation of transition practice, procedures and systems.

I would like to thank the schools for their enthusiastic participation in the action research and for their contributions to this publication. I hope that the evident benefits for Year 1 children will inspire and motivate you to continue to reflect on your provision for transition from the Foundation Stage to Key Stage 1.

Elizabeth Fee
Primary and Early Years Adviser
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Introduction

This booklet is an outline of the main findings of the Gloucestershire Transition Action Research Project. The project was funded by the Primary National Strategy to explore effective transition practice between Reception and Key Stage 1.

The booklet contains the research findings of those involved in the project. It also identifies a developmental model for effective transition and offers support materials for you to use in your schools.

About the project

In Excellence and Enjoyment: A Strategy for Primary Schools (DfES 2003) the government set out its intention to ensure continuity between the areas of learning in the Foundation Stage and the Key Stage 1 programmes of study. A recent NfER research study (2005) suggested that there are still issues that present challenges for children, staff and parents during children’s transition to Year 1.

In 2006 Head teachers of primary and infants schools in Gloucestershire were invited to join an Action Research Project focussing on Transition Issues. A group of 13 schools, representative of the many types of schools in the county, were selected to form the research group.

The project was designed to build on the transition training that most schools had already attended in 2005. Each school was asked to nominate a core learning team comprising of the Head teacher, a Year 1 teacher and a Reception teacher.

The project aimed to support schools in:

- Understanding the aims and principles which underpin the Foundation Stage and KS 1 curriculum
- Developing a transition policy
- Developing excellent and effective transition procedures and practice
- Evaluating curriculum provision at the point of transition and beyond
- Reviewing teaching and learning strategies across key stages
- Embedding assessment for learning
- Ensuring clear and effective communication between all involved
Funding was provided to enable each learning team to access three development training days over an eight month period. In addition teams were given time to complete action research tasks between each development day.

Training and practical tasks focussed on:

- Exploring the commonalities between the principles that underpin the Primary National Strategy and the Early Years Foundation Stage
- Writing a policy for transition
- Developing the use of peer observation
- Using observational assessment
- Using analysis of the Foundation Stage Profile to plan children's learning in Year 1
- Sharing organisational and management strategies
- Reviewing the learning environment and resources

On completion of the Action Research Project each school in the research group put together a case study to reflect their learning journey. This booklet is a compilation of the findings from these case studies. Quotes are used throughout to illustrate the thoughts of those involved.

The publication of this booklet concludes the final stage of the research project. It is hoped that it will provide you with the tools to begin a reflective analysis of your own school's transition practice. The support materials that the learning teams used are reproduced within this booklet for your use.
Project report

Within this section the cases studies from all of the schools have been collated and summarised to give an overview of their Action Research.

As a result of their involvement in the project the core learning teams identified a range of issues that they wished to address:

- Stress for children at point of transfer
- Insufficient time allocated to discuss individual children and Foundation Stage Profile data
- Insufficient knowledge of the Foundation Stage Profile
- Insufficient understanding of how to create challenging play opportunities
- Tracking systems that identify hiatus in the progress of some children on entry to Yr 1
- Parental anxieties often compounded by lack of opportunity to meet their child’s new teacher and lack of information
- Concerns about discontinuity of teaching styles
- Layout of the Y1 learning environment
- Location of YR/Y1 classrooms
- Lack of outdoor learning opportunities for KS1
- Inaccessible resources
- Inappropriate resources

“The process of transition may be viewed as one of adaptation. This study has shown that the best adaptation takes place where conditions are similar, communication is encouraged, and the process of change takes place gradually over time.”

A Study of the Transition from the Foundation Stage to Key Stage 1

NfER 2005
Strategies to support transition

The learning teams devised a range of strategies to develop transition practice in their schools.

It quickly became apparent that in most schools organisational strategies that supported the children on a practical level were relatively easy to introduce. However, all schools recognised that until wider curriculum issues were addressed the process of developing effective transition practice would not be complete.

The strategies that the schools in the project developed are reproduced here to support your school as you identify priorities for action.

Curriculum Strategies

- Write Transition Policy
- Identify commonalities between the principles of the Primary National Strategy and the Early Years Foundation Stage
- Review the curriculum to promote a greater continuity of provision from YR to Y1
- Introduce play based enquiry experiences in Y1

Assessment Strategies

- Make systematic and frequent pupil observations
- Establish use of observational assessment in Y1 for all staff
- Make observational assessments the basis for planning
- Develop the use of peer observations – YR/Y1 teachers/TAs

Planning Strategies

- Use Foundation Stage Profile data to inform planning in Y1
- Use Early Learning Goals not achieved as a starting point for learning in Y1
- Encourage a thematic approach for YR/KS1
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- Mirror YR summer term planning in Autumn term Y1
- Plan for continuity of teaching styles
- Include opportunities for child initiated, play based learning in Y1

Communication Strategies
- Systematically canvas views of parents and staff on transition through questionnaires/meetings/discussions
- Provide opportunities for children to discuss their feelings and anxieties about transition
- Hold a meeting for YR parents to meet Y1 teachers in summer term
- Produce a transition booklet for children/parents
- Discuss transition at a whole school staff meeting
- Involve governors in the review of transition practice

Organisational Strategies
- resources, routines and classrooms
  - Ensure YR and Y1 classrooms are together
  - Develop shared outdoor area for YR and KS1
  - Develop similar routines and timetables in Y1 to YR
  - Transfer peg, drawer, group labels, planning board with class
  - Encourage shared use of resources across the two year groups
  - Purchase play based resources for Y1
  - Organise Y1 learning environment to support play based learning
  - Use same format and language on teaching and learning displays
  - Develop themed role-play areas in all KS1 classes
Organisational Strategies
- staffing
  - Arrange for Y1 teachers to work alongside YR teachers in the summer term to consider practices and expectations
  - Arrange for Reception teachers to observe and work alongside Y1 teachers in the autumn term
  - Develop KS1 understanding of Foundation Stage Profile – the year long process and how the data should be used
  - Organise YR TAs to support children in Y1 at the start of the autumn term
  - Provide opportunities for Y1 TAs to work in YR classes at the end of the summer term
  - Visit Y1 classes in other schools
  - Visit other schools to review transition practice

Organisational Strategies
- the children
  - Organise transition days/sessions for children to meet new teacher and visit new classroom
  - Allow children to mix socially between year groups at mealtimes
  - Introduce Y1/YR buddies
  - Encourage children to make a memory box over summer holidays
  - Create a display of YR children’s work in their new Y1 classroom at the end of the summer term
  - Establish joint activities between year groups; shared reading, trips, events

The strategies listed are indicative of the work currently being undertaken by the Gloucestershire schools involved in the Transitions Action Research Project.
The impact of the project

The review of the case studies shows that there has been significant impact on:

- Children
- Staff
- Parents
- Whole school

The results are collated into a series of tables.

“Excellent schools are themselves learning places – the staff learn to develop, and the curriculum changes and improves over time. They use all the resources available flexibly and imaginatively, especially their staff.”

Excellence and Enjoyment 2003
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YR children are happy, confident and enthusiastic as they transfer to Y1</th>
<th>Y1 children have access to a more experiential curriculum that suits their individual needs</th>
<th>Children have additional opportunities to visit their next class and time is given for them to share their feelings about transition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Children in Y1 classes are encouraged to take greater responsibility for their own learning</td>
<td><strong>The impact on children</strong></td>
<td>Y1 children are able to continue learning through play based activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At the point of transfer children’s needs are accurately identified by analysis of the Foundation Stage Profile data</td>
<td>YR and Y1 have shared access to outdoor learning areas. Outdoor learning opportunities are now planned for Y1 children</td>
<td>Observational assessment is the main tool for identifying the needs of the child</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

“I thought I’d be scared but I wasn’t. I love it!”

“We played with toys in Reception and we can still with play with toys now.”

Y1 child
Parents are more relaxed about year group changes and feel a greater sense of involvement in the transition process

Parents have a clearer understanding about how their child spends his/her day

Through meetings, literature and events parents are more informed about transition

Parents have additional opportunities to meet their child’s new teacher

Parents have opportunities for parental involvement in Year 1 classes

Parents have an increased understanding of play based learning and its role within the KS1 curriculum

### The impact on parents

Parents are more able to support their children through transition periods

Parents are given increased opportunities to express their views and opinions

Parents have opportunities for parental involvement in Year 1 classes

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“We were so clearly informed. It was nice to feel involved.”

“He loves his new class, he’s so happy to be in Year 1. Thank you for making it all so easy!”
All staff have increased knowledge of transition issues and understanding of each other’s key stage | Staff have become actively involved in peer observation | Greater continuity between year groups i.e. teaching styles, formative assessment, routines |
---|---|---|
Staff demonstrate an increased confidence and assertiveness in their role during transition | **The impact on staff** (YR, Y1 and mixed age teachers, TAs) | Staff now use observational assessment to determine next steps in children’s learning |
Staff more confident about using FSP to inform planning | Increased opportunities for staff professional dialogue | Staff have greater understanding of play based learning |

“Transition planning is about making the curriculum flexible and adaptable to the needs of the children – not the other way round!”

“The project has enabled us to analyse our practice and think creatively to consider the needs of our children. It will be a continual cycle of evaluation and reflection.”
Whole school has clarity about the commonalities between the principles of Early Years Foundation Stage and Primary National Strategy  

Clearer and broader understanding of transition issues. Transition Policy discussed, written and embedded in school practice  

Formative assessment consistently used throughout the whole school

| **Development of a creative, experiential learning curriculum** | **The impact on the whole school** | **Transition issues between other Key Stages now being considered ie Y2-Y3 and Y6-Y7.**  
Also pre-school to school |
|---|---|---|

Peer observations established across the school as a tool for self reflection and school improvement  

Closer working and improved communication between staff, key stages, SMT, governing body  

Within the school the profile of the Foundation Stage has been raised. Understanding of play based learning is developed for all staff

“We all want the children to have confidence to look forward to future year groups with enthusiasm.”

“There is a spread of good practice and more coherent approach to learning and teaching.”
Conclusion

The schools reported that the quality of teaching and learning at the point of transition had been enhanced. Staff had developed a deeper understanding of the commonalities between the principles of the Foundation Stage and the KS1 curriculum. This exploration of pedagogy promoted a more effective transition from YR to Y1.

Schools reported that staff had an improved knowledge and understanding of the Foundation Stage Profile. As a result they had increased confidence in their ability to successfully meet the individual needs of the children at the point of transfer and beyond.

All schools felt that communication was the key to successful transition. Within all of the case studies there was a clear focus on developing communication between all involved; children, staff, parents and governors.
A developmental model for transition

The analysis of the case studies clearly demonstrated that all schools were at different points on the same journey towards effective transition practice.

The research findings provided by the teachers enabled us to develop a model of transition that all schools can use as they develop effective transition practice.

The five stage model enables schools to:

- identify
- develop
- embed
- review and
- improve

their own transition practice.

Throughout each of these steps it is important that a core team consisting of a senior management representative, the Reception and Year 1 teacher/s are involved. In addition a number of other people may be included eg teaching assistants, governors, parents and children.
A developmental model for transition

Identify

New strategies
- Develop
- Embed

Existing strategies
- Review
- Improve

Review
The stages

1. Identify
At this stage all areas for development should be identified.

The following key elements have been shown to have the most impact on developing effective transition practice: policy, curriculum, teaching and learning, assessment, communication and organisation and management. These elements should therefore be considered by the core team during the identification stage.

How do you………

- define your whole school approach to transition – is your Transition Policy in place?
- offer appropriate curriculum provision at the point of transition and beyond?
- ensure clear and effective communication between all involved?
- provide continuity and challenge in your teaching and learning between key stages?

Consider………

- use of assessment for learning across the key stages
- organisation and management of the day
- learning environment and resources

Some of the key elements may already have been considered and addressed, it may now be appropriate to review them. These are existing strategies. Other elements will be identified as areas for development. These are new strategies.

2. Develop
Having identified the areas for development the core team should now decide upon their priorities. The team must agree the actions they will need to take to achieve their priorities. It may be useful at this stage to draw up an action plan.

The implementation of new strategies begins.
3. **Embed**

By this stage the priorities for action have been successfully implemented and have become an established part of school life. As a result transition practice has significantly developed.

4. **Review**

At this stage the core team reflect upon practice that has become embedded. New initiatives and research may need to be considered. New staff will need to be included and opinions sought from key people e.g. parent questionnaires. As a result adaptations to practice will occur.

Although this model suggests that a formal review should happen at this point it is recognised that informal review will occur naturally and regularly throughout the process.

5. **Improve**

Embedded transition practice is further enhanced as a result of the adaptations to practice.

“The journey is ongoing and exciting”
Support materials

This section includes the different materials that the teachers and head teachers in the action research group were given to support the tasks that were set during the course of each training day. They are reproduced here for your use.

Resources

1. Audit of current transition practice
2. A framework for policy writing
3. Managing peer observations
4. Peer observation: time/events log
5. Peer observation feedback
6. Continuing the Reception / Year 1 peer observation process
7. Audit of observational assessment
## Resource 1. Audit of current transition practice

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Reception teacher:</th>
<th>Year 1 teacher:</th>
<th>Head teacher:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What procedures do we have in place to promote effective transition?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is my role in these procedures?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What additional strategies are we already aware of that we would like to implement?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Final Reflection**
What will we work on next?
## Resource 2. A framework for policy writing

### A Framework for a Transition Policy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key areas to consider</th>
<th>Notes/ideas</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Context</strong></td>
<td><em>Why is a policy on transition needed? What does it address?</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Aims of the Policy</strong></td>
<td><em>What does your school want the policy to achieve?</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Principles that underpin the policy</strong></td>
<td><em>What principles underpin the policy? Consider the Foundation Stage Principles and the Primary national Strategy Principles</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## A Framework for a Transition Policy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Areas to consider</th>
<th>Notes/ideas</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum</td>
<td><em>eg</em> Links between ELG’s &amp; NC, Planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of assessment</td>
<td><em>eg</em> FSP, Obs ass</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organisation &amp; management of the day</td>
<td><em>eg</em> routines, implementation of Lit/Num hour, independent play</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environment and resources</td>
<td><em>eg</em> role play, zoned areas, independent play resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td><em>eg</em> with parents, governors, subject co-ordinators. Assessment co-ord</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equal opportunities and inclusion</td>
<td><em>eg</em> consideration of children with special needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implementing, monitoring and reviewing the policy</td>
<td><em>eg</em> responsibilities, impact on all involved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other policies that complement/support this one</td>
<td><em>eg</em> any policies that can be cross referenced?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Resource 3. Managing peer observation

Before the observation
Decide:
- On an identified focus.
- When and where the observation will take place.
- How long the observation will last.
- On a code of behaviour during the observation.
- When and where feedback will be given.
- Who will be party to the information?

During the observation
- Use the agreed format to log notes.
- Adhere to the agreed code of behaviour.

After the observation
- Complete feedback sheet.
- Leave the agreed action/s section to complete together.
- Give feedback.

Remember

When giving feedback
- A.s.a.p. after the event, in a place and at a time appropriate to both.
- Allow those being debriefed to say something about their session first.
- Deliver positive feedback first.
- Be sensitive, honest and empathetic.
- Be constructive rather than general. Use examples to support statements.
- Base feedback on personal observations not hearsay.
- Areas for development must be manageable and achievable.
- Ensure the receiver has understood the messages being given.

When receiving feedback
- Remember the purpose is to develop your professional practice.
- Don’t take offence.
- Listen carefully and seek clarification if necessary.
- Celebrate your strengths.

Now consider
- What aspects of teaching will you now work on to improve?
- What do you need to do in order to improve?
- Who might be able to help you?
- What timescale will you set yourself?
- How will you know when you have improved?
Resource 4. Peer observation: time/events log

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Observer</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date/time/length</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus of observation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Notes/description of activities in the classroom</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Resource 5. Peer observation feedback

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Observer</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date/time/length</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus of observation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Strengths
- 
- 
- 

### Area for development
- 

### What did I learn today (the observer)

### Agreed action/s
**Resource 6. Continuing the Reception/Year1 peer observation process**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How will you plan in the continuation of peer observation throughout the year?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How could the process be improved next time?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How could you involve Teaching Assistants in peer observation?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Resource 7. Audit of observational assessment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Observational Assessment</th>
<th>Reception</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Year One</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Often</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>Never</td>
<td>Often</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observation of whole class adult directed activity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observation of small group adult directed activity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short anecdotal observations, post-its, labels etc</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Time out focussed observations</td>
<td></td>
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</table>

Next Steps?
Suggested reading

- Continuing the Learning Journey – a training package from QCA
  Order ref: QCA/05/1590 ISBN 1-85838-720-5

- A Study of the Transition from the Foundation Stage to Key Stage 1
  DfES publications ref SSU/2005/FR/013

- Seamless Transitions – supporting continuity in young children’s learning
  DfES publications ref 0267-2006PCK-EN

- Making Links – Supporting Transition from the Foundation Stage into KS1
  Birmingham City Council Education Service. Phone 0121 303 8081

- Key Elements of Effective Transition – Foundation Stage to Y1
  North Somerset Council. Phone 01275 884115

- Smooth Transitions – Building on the Foundation Stage

- Meeting the Challenge! A practical approach to transition from Reception to KS1

- Transition from the Reception Year to Year 1 – an evaluation by HMI
  Ofsted: ref HMI 2221

- The Continuous Curriculum – Planning for Spontaneous Play
  Kirklees School Effectiveness Service. Phone 01484 225793
Acknowledgments

This guidance has been written by members of the Foundation Stage Team using case studies provided by Learning Teams from thirteen Gloucestershire schools.

We would like to thank the following people for their involvement in the project:

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