

Positive Impact of Transition Teacher Work in Edinburgh

- TTs work across every Primary and Secondary school in Edinburgh, impacting every child in state school across Edinburgh, working together to create consistency across Edinburgh.
- TTs providing opportunities throughout the year for P7s to visit high school (such as weekly visits to work in the libraries) to develop relationships with peers from cluster school and key adults, which supports wellbeing and goes some way to alleviating anxiety and stress relating to transition.
- TTs working in a team-teaching capacity with secondary school teachers to support differentiation to support all learners in accessing learning and teaching and raising attainment.
- TTs working with primary and secondary teachers to develop a shared understanding of achievement of a level is having a positive impact meeting learners' needs.

Case Studies

These are taken from learning communities/clusters across CEC. They have been anonymised, but I am happy to share the originals with councillors on a confidential basis.

Case study 1

Parents:

'These posts are so valuable to our young people. We were fortunate enough to have had XXXS support our child through transition to Secondary School and she was invaluable. While there is little support for our young people from CAMHS and the mental health service for this age being massively underfunded, there should be more funding allocated to support these posts. Thus, allowing young people who need a little extra help and support during transition to have access to it. Jess made the whole process of the transition so much more manageable for our son and it's great she is still in school some days now for the continued continuity.'

Staff:

'The addition of the Transition Teacher job role has had a very positive impact on my class this year, both socially and emotionally, as well as academically.'

'The enhanced transitions were great and I felt they really benefited the children. Having a constant person that they associate with both primary and secondary school gave many the confidence they needed to go and enjoy the high school experience!'

There is now this continuous communication between Primary and Secondary schools, the Transition Teacher can find out about pupils who are now in S1, S2, S3... as they talk to the primary school who know the families really well and the teachers who have close relationships with the pupils. - Deputy HT

Thank you for all you have done to create this new role so effectively and to offer the incredible support for so many young people, parents and colleagues. Deputy HT

Case study 2

Myself and the CL of the well-being hub ran an enhanced transition project from Aug - Dec for the pupils that were part of the enhanced transition programme prior to starting S1. We recognised that transition didn't stop once the end of P7 came and once all the P7 transition events had taken place and that those first few weeks/months of secondary were so important in how well some of the more vulnerable pupils would settle into secondary school and their subsequent time beyond that. Each session had a health and well-being focus, eg resilience, communication, team work etc with an activity that they would all take part in.

The project was a huge success, and we had such positive feedback from parents in terms of how it supported their child with the transition into secondary, helping them to form friendships with others, giving them more confidence and linking in with key adults that would support them, and that had that support not been available it could have been very different.

During one of the sessions, I was chatting with one of the S1 pupils about the project and she said that the only reason she came to school today after waking up late was because it was Tuesday and she had the group and 'it was worth getting up for'. She said that if it had been another day she may not have bothered coming to school as she woke up at 8:20am and it would have been too much of an effort. She said she is really enjoying being part of the group and the activities that they are doing and that it has helped her settle into S1.

2. This year we have started working with S5 pupils who have keen to support the P7 transition. We have specifically done it with S5 pupils as they will go on to be the S6 helpers when the current P7s start in August so it allows for the beginning of relationships to be formed and familiar faces for when the new S1s do start. The S5s have already been down to the primaries to meet the P7 classes and do some activities with them and we also plan to have the primaries visit the secondary with the S5 pupils leading an activity within the school. This is something I have been able to facilitate due to the nature of my role, which without wouldn't have happened.
3. I'm currently working with an S1 pupil who has been struggling to attend secondary. In collaboration with the guidance team a plan was put in place where the pupil goes with me back to their old primary once a week to support with learning. The aim of this is to boost confidence and self esteem so myself and the primary staff have worked on a plan on how best to support this pupil which also bridges her confidence for attending secondary. The advantage of this role is that we are able to work in between the schools so this pupil is now able to be supported in a way that wasn't possible before and without it would have become a school non attender.
4. Being a point of contact for teachers, outside agencies, parents, etc has been hugely beneficial in terms of supporting transition. We have been able to bridge that gap and put supports in place prior to pupils starting S1 because we have that knowledge of their needs long before the move to secondary.

Case Study 3

My time in XXX since August has involved helping settle a lot of the S1s into high school. A lot of this has involved children from low SIMD, children with specific learning or medical needs, care experienced children, children with previous trauma or from minorities.

Having a point of contact who is already known to the student and the family has been very helpful. Impacting upon attainment and attendance. I thought I'd write a few anonymised case studies to hopefully provide some insight into real lived experiences of S1 students and families.

S	<p>S had very low attendance at primary school. S was very anxious about transition to high school and becoming increasingly aware of his own abilities in relation to his peers. Building relationships has been key to managing his emotions. Working in collaboration with social workers and getting parents to view me as a source of support has taken time. Working with SFL I've made a bespoke timetable to help S navigate the school day without becoming overwhelmed. This includes time to decompress and opportunities to raise his concerns. I've worked with S in small social groups to scaffold relationships with peers and provided support with organisational and other life skills. I've actioned referrals to partners including nutritionists, occupational therapist and third sector agencies to make a joined up approach. I've helped navigate relationships with subject teachers, communicate S specific needs and specific circumstances. Parents are now reaching out for help when S refuses to come in to school. Attendance levels are being maintained.</p>
S	<p>She had a primary school attendance of less than 80% and as a result was working at first level in numeracy and literacy.</p> <p>It's taken a lot of time to build relationships with S and her family and gain an understanding of the reasons behind her behaviour.</p> <p>I have worked in small nurture groups with S and others building resilience, addressing her concerns and working on her self-esteem.</p> <p>Transition has been very difficult for S ... did however disclose this to me which I think demonstrates the importance of having continuity of relationships across transition. I was able to speak to mum and direct her towards help.</p> <p>I've built strong relationships with her family and this has impacted on attendance. S has had difficulties managing relationships with her many new teachers and I've been involved in many restorative conversations helping S build relationships with her teachers and also helping them understand the reasons behind S often challenging behaviour. S attendance is higher now than it was in primary 7. She often seeks me out for practical reasons or when she is struggling with anxiety or emotions.</p>
R	<p>ASL services were extremely concerned about transition to high school. I worked with ASL teacher and began weekly individual visits to XXX, building relationships with R and framing transition positively, addressing R's concerns throughout.</p> <p>R had a very difficult time in his first few weeks at high school. Building relationships and slowly gaining trust has been critical for R. I have been able to help R with identifying and regulating emotions and managing his reactions to daily scenarios which previously would have spiralled. I have been setting clear expectations and also communicating R's specific needs with subject teachers. I have built strong relationships with mum and we have worked together to align home and school approaches to R's behaviour.</p>
J	<p>J had a one-one PSA in primary seven. Primary head teacher was extremely concerned about his transition to high school. Intervening early in primary seven, allowed me to build relationships with J. It became apparent it was really important that he felt someone 'had his back' and a safe person that he could 'offload to'.</p> <p>I was also able to build relationships with J's carer. There had been lots of interaction between J's carer and primary school which had been helpful and it was hoped that similar level of communication between home and school could continue for J whilst at</p>

	secondary. I've liaised with social work to facilitate supervised visits after school. J has had a few bumps in the road during s1 but having a trusted person with an already established relationship.
B	B attended a number of different primary schools, all with poor attendance. Early intervention with attendance in S1 ... Family support provided to help mum. Small group literacy and numeracy support has been offered and this has impacted upon literacy allowing B to access more of the wider curriculum. Keeping him in school, learning and out of trouble in the community.

Case study 4

Improving writing was collectively agreed as the priority for my work. Not all transition teachers have the same priorities, but this is a definite positive as it means that we can be responsive to the needs of our different learning communities and contexts. I have been leading and supporting the teaching and learning of writing in eight P7 classes across the four primary schools. Initially my work involved whole-class and team teaching with class teachers, to develop a shared understanding of different pupil needs. More targeted work with these pupils has now started, and my day-to-day work in the primary school consists of a combination of whole-class teaching and focused group work on specific targets for writing. [Just this week I have been exploring the concept of irony as a literary device with three P7 classes at XXX

The rest of my time is spent in the high school, where I liaise with our support for learning department, librarian, English department and senior leaders, with a view to improving our overall literacy strategy for transition. Our long-term objective is to create a bridging curriculum for the primary-secondary transition that will eventually encompass all subjects – ultimately helping to transform the way our pupils experience transition to secondary school, which can be very disorientating at present. Research evidence – and this is no surprise to transition teachers – consistently demonstrates an overall dip in attainment after transition.

Relationships are often a core concern for pupils as they move to secondary school: losing friends, making new ones and adjusting from having one teacher for all subjects to a different teacher for every subject. Relationships pose a core challenge for staff as well – how do you ensure the wealth of knowledge primary teachers have about meet pupils' needs is transferred meaningfully to secondary teachers? Getting to know pupils and their learning needs inevitably takes longer in secondary schools.

Since starting my post I have organised weekly transition visits for P7 to the high school. P7 pupils from different schools are meeting each other now, getting to know their peers who will transition with them, starting to build those new friendships. They are also meeting secondary teachers and moving about the school building, getting used to the new environment. One of the most unexpected but really positive outcomes of these visits has been the peer-to-peer mentoring relationships we are building between senior secondary pupils and P7s. P7 pupils say this is one of the things they appreciate most about their transition visit, while parents say the visits help ease their child's anxieties about high school.

An initiative I've been piloting is post-transition visits. Our primary teachers have visited the high school to reconnect with their former pupils in S1. Our primary colleagues have really valued these

visits, gaining a rich insight into what teaching and learning looks like in the high school. High school teachers will soon reciprocate with visits to our primaries, again building those pupil-teacher relations early and expanding their professional understanding of primary teaching, learning and pedagogy.

Transition teachers are not supplementary or additional staff, they are a core asset whose presence has an impact on every school in their learning community. Our role is unique – no other member of teaching staff traverses all schools across primary and secondary sectors. Our perspective offers a broader, community-centred view of teaching and learning. We are well placed to identify ‘what works’ and ensure that good practice is replicated across settings.

Our work is already transforming pupils’ experience of transition and is highly regarded by parents, teachers, senior leaders and young people across the city – and we are just getting started.

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