

## **EIS Advice on Transition Arrangements from Nursery to Primary (Special Education) (April 2022)**

The importance of planning and supporting children through transition periods is well recognised in early years education, particularly in the context of Special Education. Teachers and early years practitioners play a vital role in sensitively supporting children as they encounter new arrangements.

The updated [Scottish Government Guidance](#) on Reducing the Risks in Schools now provides that there are no restrictions on visits to school buildings, although visitors will be expected to comply with the school's routine protective measures. Transition visits to support those children, who will be starting school in the next academic session, can therefore be resumed, **provided they are appropriately risk assessed**.

The guidance makes it clear that 'schools should operate in line with their own circumstances and risk assessments as they do in all areas of school life'.

In devolving more autonomy in decision-making to local authorities, the guidance recognises 'the importance of local dialogue, including with LNCTs and other recognised trade unions, in reaching local decisions'. Collegiate practice should underpin the risk assessment process and the decisions made about the mitigation measures required to manage risk at a local level.

**The EIS would recommend that decisions about the level and nature of the transition support should, therefore, be made on a collegiate basis, with full involvement of the school and ELC staff involved. Decisions should follow joint risk assessment with due regard having been given to COVID prevalence in the locale in which each setting is based.**

### **Transition Visits to Primary (Special Education) Schools**

In planning transition visits, regard should be had to the Scottish Government Guidance on school visits, with the routine protective measures, identified in the guidance, being adopted, as well as any additional mitigations considered necessary following a thorough risk assessment process.

Given the increased transmissibility of new variants of the virus, we would recommend that careful consideration is given to the arrangements for such visits and to who should accompany children on the day, having full regard to local circumstances. Although the updated Scottish Government Guidance removes the restrictions on parents, carers and other visitors entering school buildings, Head Teachers will require to review and update suitable and sufficient risk assessments, before finalising arrangements for these visits.

The EIS is clear that decisions about the format of these visits and the nature of transition support, should be based on collegiate discussion, with Head Teachers continuing to work jointly with the trade unions to reach agreement regarding the arrangements for such events.

Adults accompanying children on a visit, whether ELC staff or parents/carers, should comply with the Scottish Government Guidance in relation to visitors to schools. It recommends that they adhere to physical distancing arrangements with regards to Primary staff and pupils, where possible, and wear a face covering while on school premises. Where the visit takes place indoors, the meeting space should be well ventilated and appropriate hand hygiene measures in place.

**In the context of Special Education, the individual needs of the children involved would also require to be considered in determining whether an enhanced transition is necessary and factored into the assessment of risk.** Appropriate risk mitigation measures should be identified to address the risks presented and appropriate arrangements made on this basis.

#### **Transition Visits to ELC Settings by Primary (Special Education) Staff**

The [Scottish Government Guidance on Early Learning and Childcare Service](#) also removes the restrictions on visitors attending ELC settings. Primary class teachers and senior staff can, therefore, attend ELC settings

to meet children who are making the transition to Primary school. These meetings may be especially important to ensure appropriate support for children with additional support needs.

Such meetings must be risk assessed, with appropriate mitigation measures being adopted in line with the ELC guidance for visitors to settings.

The expectation is that Primary (Special Education) staff attending these settings should comply with physical distancing requirements with regards to ELC staff in the setting and where the visit takes place indoors, the meeting space should be well ventilated, face coverings worn and good hand hygiene practices in place.

### **Review of Risk Assessments**

Risk assessments should be reviewed regularly and should reflect and be adapted to respond to local issues, such as local increases in cases of COVID-19 or local outbreaks. ELC settings, schools and local authorities should pay very close attention to any evidence suggesting the potential for emerging bridges of transmission between ELC settings and schools.

### **Support Materials**

Education Scotland has developed two resources to support transitions at this time: [Transitions in the context of COVID-19](#) and Wakelet on [Supporting young children at points of transition](#)