



“The transition between phases of education – notably early years to primary and primary to secondary – is a risk-point for vulnerable learners. Schools need to diagnose pupils’ needs as soon as possible in order to put in place effective support to help those falling behind to catch up.”

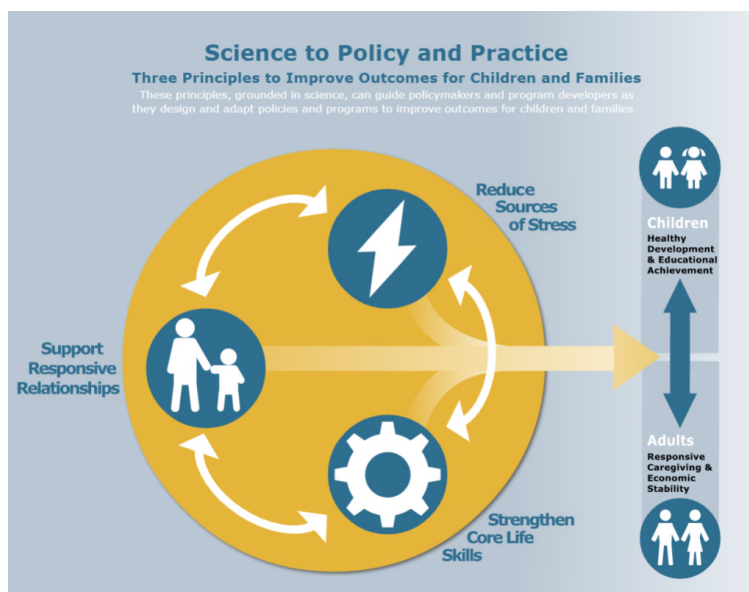
Education Endowment Foundation, “The Attainment Gap” 2018

The vast majority of children look forward to moving on in learning and in life, but for some children, transitions can be challenging. We all know that when transitions work well, children are assisted to develop confidence and acquire skills, to manage future changes in their lives. Support from parents/carers and staff at school can help transitions to be more successful. Some children may need particular help, including from other agencies, to ensure that their transitions are as smooth as possible.

Research suggests that transitions are central to young children’s development and emotional wellbeing. The way in which the first transitions are handled can have a significant impact on a child’s capacity to cope with change in the short and long term, and impact on the progress they make from their starting points.

Key scientific concepts underpinning effective transition

There are three core principles that lead to healthy child development, which it is helpful to understand, because they underpin some of the activities that are part of the project. (Reference: Centre of The Developing Child, Harvard University, <https://developingchild.harvard.edu/>)



One of the most important aspects of supporting smooth transitions, is ensuring that the kind of information that schools receive about children, prior to them joining their setting, is useful in helping shape the way teachers think about effective plans to receive them into their classes. This is because the science is informing us that:

1. Responsive relationships and positive experiences build sturdy brain architecture.
2. Toxic stress disrupts the development of brain architecture and other systems.
3. Core capabilities for school, work and life are built over time.



1. Responsive relationships and positive experiences build sturdy brain architecture

To be as effective as possible, teachers and practitioners need to fully understand and know each individual child, by finding out about their life experiences to date. The way we interact is crucial to building warm and positive relationships so that emotional support can be provided in the timeliest way, to help children manage any anxiety or stress factors that transition may cause. For most this will be positive, but there is a significant proportion of children that has complex and challenging home circumstances, which can affect the way they attend to learning at the best of times.

2. Toxic stress disrupts the development of brain architecture and other systems

It is important that teachers and practitioners understand the impact of stress on individual children and how this can be exacerbated at the point of transition. Being equipped with information, which may indicate that some children have already experienced stressful circumstances prior starting school, will enable them to plan and reduce any further stress factors for the child, or work to buffer any stress response.

3. Core capabilities for school, work and life are built over time

Developing a process that enables earlier sight of the needs of an incoming cohort by teachers and practitioners aims to help get children off to a better start. It is important to highlight those at risk of delay so that they can be supported promptly, to be ready to learn. Pertinent professional development opportunities will equip teachers and practitioners with the skills to build children's ability to focus, sustain attention, make decisions, solve problems, control impulses, follow rules, and cope better with delayed gratification.

What is transition?

Transition is the word given to explain the movement of children from one phase of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) to the next. This could be within the same setting, or from one setting to another. Transition has a definite effect on a child's development and is always about how they adapt to change. Transition has been described as a journey rather than a destination. Therefore, practitioners must consider what this will entail for children joining their setting and why it is important that these transitions are successful.

Vision

Schools will be well prepared to receive every child at the point of entry, through effective information sharing. As a result, all children, regardless of their background or circumstances, will have a successful transition into school so they can get off to the best start possible, to build the foundation for future learning.

'Cultural capital is the essential knowledge that children need to prepare them for their future success. It is about giving children the best possible start to their early education.'

Ref 187, Cultural Capital, 'Early years inspection handbook for Ofsted registered provision' Ofsted 2024



'Some children arrive at an early years setting with different experiences from others, in their learning and play. What a setting does, through its EYFS curriculum and interactions with practitioners, potentially makes all the difference for children.'

Hertfordshire supports UNICEF's description of 'school readiness', which states that three elements working together will ensure a child's best start to their school life. ('School Readiness: A Conceptual Framework', UNICEF 2010)

- Children's readiness for school impacts on their future learning and development.
- Early years settings and schools' readiness ensures the learning environment is child-friendly and reflects the diverse needs of young learners and their families.
- Families' readiness for school promotes a positive and supportive approach to education, their children's learning and the transition from home to school.



Supporting Smooth Transitions

Aims

Transition procedures in Hertfordshire have been developed to further improve the early identification and support for all children, particularly those with potential barriers to learning, so that they can get off to the best start possible, to build on current good practice and encourage consistency across schools and PVI settings.

Procedures are based on the three elements identified in UNICEF's description of 'school readiness'.

Ready Schools

- To develop a universally shared and understood approach to transition, underpinned by research, that enables Nursery and Reception class practitioners to identify earlier those children at risk of delay prior to them starting school.
- Develop a pathway that will help schools receive pertinent information about a child's level of need so that they can adapt provision to accelerate progress from the earliest opportunity.
- To identify schools who would benefit from additional support because the context of the cohort presents high levels of needs.
- To provide professional dialogue opportunities for teachers receiving children with high levels of need and contact with specialist professionals who can offer advice with cohort needs.



- To encourage synergy between PVI providers, families and schools, to get children off to the best start in their education.
- To provide a toolkit of resources to support transition processes and practice.

Ready Families

- To provide information and age-appropriate materials for schools, which they can share with parents/carers to help them support their child's learning at home.

Ready Child

- The combined efforts of the procedures will bring schools, parents/carers and other professionals together, to help children get off to a good start in their education.

Supporting Smooth Transitions (SST) toolkit

This toolkit will support practitioners, children and their families with the transition process, from pre-school into the nursery/reception setting. The toolkit provides advice and strategies, to ensure best practice is established, and should be used alongside the **Transition Level of Need Pathway** and **Transition Level of Need tool**, to help early identification of all barriers to learning that children may have.

Resources are organised to support practitioners within three elements:

- Ready School materials to support practitioners
- Ready Families materials, for schools to support parents/carers/families
- Ready Child materials to support learning at home

