



*“The transition from preschool to primary school is an important phase in children’s lives (Packer et al., 2021), with a potential impact on children’s educational and socio-emotional wellbeing in the short- and long-term.”*

## **Children’s Experience of Transition from Preschool To Primary School: A Scoping Literature Review**

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 effective transition. <https://developingchild.harvard.edu/resources/report/three-principles-to-improve-outcomes-for-children-and-families/>

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 support children effectively, it is important to really get to know each child as an individual. The way we interact is crucial to building warm, positive relationships which create a sense of security and allow us to offer emotional support when it is needed most. Transitions can bring excitement, but they can also cause worry or stress. Whilst many children will manage well, some face complex home circumstances that can make learning harder. Being alert to these needs and responding quickly can help every child feel ready and confident for the next stage.

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

As teachers and practitioners, it is important to recognise how stress affects each child and how previous experiences may make them more vulnerable. Having background information about a child’s circumstances before they start school helps with future planning, reducing potential stress factors and putting strategies in place to support and buffer their stress response.



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

Creating a process that gives teachers and practitioners an early understanding of the needs within an incoming cohort helps every child begin school confidently. Identifying children who may be at risk of delay means support can be put in place quickly, so they are ready to learn. Ongoing professional development is essential in equipping staff with strategies to strengthen children's skills in focusing, sustaining attention, making decisions, solving problems, managing impulses, following rules, and coping with waiting. These foundations help children thrive in the classroom and beyond.

#### 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.

In the Early years section of the School inspection: toolkit, operating guides and information, it states: "In gathering evidence about inclusive practices in early years, inspectors consider the extent to which leaders and staff: Quickly and accurately identify children who face any barriers to their learning or well-being, including disadvantaged children, those with SEND, and those who are known (or previously known) to children's social care; they consider children's different starting points and stages of development and act judiciously to reduce the barriers that these children face."

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/690b26c69456634d9795fde0/Schools\\_inspection\\_toolkit.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/690b26c69456634d9795fde0/Schools_inspection_toolkit.pdf)

#### 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.

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

