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## Transition to secondary school

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A guide for parents and carers

This guidance was co-produced in collaboration with a number of organisations including:



Access Through Technology



Family Voice Norfolk

# What is transition?

Our lives are full of change, during which we transition or move from one stage to another. A transition from one educational setting to another can be exciting, but it can also be a cause of anxiety for you and your child.

This guide is to help parents and carers of children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) who are preparing to move from primary or junior school (key stage 2) to secondary settings (key stage 3). Pupils transfer to secondary settings at the end of year 6, in the academic year following their 11<sup>th</sup> birthday.

Secondary settings are for children and young people aged from 11–16 (or 11–18 if the setting has a sixth form). They are sometimes also called high schools or academies.

# How do we plan for success?

## Effective transitions rely upon...

- ✓ Good planning
- ✓ Good communication

Good transition planning benefits all children. However, for those with additional needs, including SEND, additional planning will be required to ensure that transition is successful.

The year 6 to year 7 transition is a big step due to the size difference of secondary schools and the increasing need for independence.

When should I start to think about a school for year 7?

If your child does not have an education, health and care plan (EHCP)...

- ✓ Start to think about possible secondary settings during the summer term of year 5 (at the latest)
- ✓ Apply for a secondary school placement in the usual way
- ✓ Important dates and guidance for the admissions process are available here:

[www.admissionsonline.norfolk.gov.uk](http://www.admissionsonline.norfolk.gov.uk)



## If your child has an EHCP...

- ✓ You need to start thinking about the transition at least 18 months before it will happen
- ✓ You will be sent a parental preference form to complete in September of the year before your child is due to transfer
- ✓ The name of your EHCP coordinator will be on this letter
- ✓ Your child's plan will be reviewed and a school placement will be named on an updated EHCP, issued in February of the year they are due to transfer
- ✓ This will be sent to you by email. If you don't get the school of your choice, you have the right to appeal

## Am I able to visit possible schools?

- ✓ Yes. As well as holding open days, many schools will welcome a further visit. Contact the school directly to make an appointment.
- ✓ It is a good idea to ask to speak to the special educational needs and disabilities coordinator (SENDCo) at the school.
- ✓ You may want to take someone with you, so you can discuss what you saw and how you felt about the school.

- ✓ You may want to jot down some thoughts and feelings straight after your visit ('pros and cons'), particularly if you are looking around a number of different schools.
- ✓ If your child has an EHCP, you should take it with you to show the support that is written in the plan but bear in mind that the school may not have time to look at it in full.

## What should we discuss on the visit?

- ✓ Communicate any worries that you have and consider how they can be addressed
- ✓ Give a true reflection of your child's needs, remembering to be sensitive to when and where to discuss these
- ✓ There are some things that may not be appropriate to discuss in front of your child
- ✓ Consider how your child can be involved in the process
- ✓ Be prepared to consider other ideas that the new setting may have

# You may want to ask the school about ...

## The structure of the school day

- What will my child's day look like?
- What are the timings of the day?
- Where do they put their bag, coat and money?
- What are the snack and lunch arrangements?
- How are children supported at break or lunch times?
- How do toilet breaks for children work?
- Are there quiet areas?

## Teaching and learning

- What is the timetable like?
- What will they be learning?
- How is homework set?
- Is there an app where I am told about homework?
- What happens if children do not complete homework?
- What happens if children do not know how to do their homework? How can they get help?
- How does the pastoral support system work?
- What options are available in years 10 and 11?
- What are the experiences of children with SEND in Key Stage 3 and 4?
- Do all children have to do a certain number of GCSEs?
- What is the approach to behaviour? How is bullying dealt with?

## How they support learners with SEND

- How does your school support children with SEND?
- How is the curriculum adapted for children with SEND?
- How are teaching assistants used?
- Will my child have access to a key worker?
- How do you make adaptations for children with SEND?
- Are all the buildings accessible to children with disabilities?

## How you can communicate

- Who would be my main contact in school if I have any concerns or want to check something?
- How do we communicate and when?
- Is there a home/school diary or an app to support communication?
- How will you support me to support my child?
- English is not my first language. What support is available to help me access information?

## Transport

- If my child arrives by bus/taxi, how will they be met?
- Can they cycle?
- Where do the buses stop? What times do they run?



## What your child will need

- What equipment do they need to bring?
- Do they need to bring a snack?
- How do they pay for lunch? What do they need to bring?
- How affordable is uniform? Is there room for flexibility/adaptation, if required? Where can I purchase it?

## Wider aspects of school life

- What clubs or activities outside of school are available?
- What sort of trips and visits does the school do?
- How will my child be included in these?
- What opportunities will there be for me to be involved in school life?

## Transition arrangements

- How do you ensure a smooth transition between year 6 and year 7? Do you provide children with an induction pack?
- How will you know what support my child needs?
- What additional support can be provided to help my child transition successfully?

## Does my child need an EHCP to access additional support or funding?

No. All mainstream schools in Norfolk apply for any additional funding and request support for children with SEND, regardless of whether they have an EHCP or not.

Schools can request support from and/or apply to the Local Authority for additional funding.

## Once my child has been allocated a school place, what happens next?

For a smooth move junior/primary schools and secondary schools need to work together with you and your child to ensure a positive transition. They should:

- ✓ Meet to discuss the transition arrangements for children with additional needs
- ✓ Ensure that information about your child's needs is shared with the new setting in good time
- ✓ Invite you and any professionals involved with your child to a transition meeting where a transition plan can be recorded, and actions agreed


# What extra support might be available to help my child?

Additional support might include:

- ✓ Extra visits (before the main transition days for all children) to familiarise themselves with the new environment and new people
- ✓ Taking photos of the new setting
- ✓ Creating prompt cards or checklists as reminders of new people or new routines
- ✓ Using 'social stories' to help prepare your child for change
- ✓ Providing a 'My new school' booklet or induction/transition pack with information about the new setting, including new routines
- ✓ Providing clear maps of the site and/or timetables
- ✓ Identifying a 'go to' person for children and families to contact
- ✓ Working with health professionals to adapt the learning environment and ensure accessibility
- ✓ Organising specialist training for staff
- ✓ Providing specialist equipment or resources to facilitate access to learning
- ✓ Creating individual support plans for your child
- ✓ Extra support from the pastoral team

- ✓ Creating a 'one-page profile' so that the new school knows all the important information about your child (see resources and links)

This is what you need to know about me



<p><b>My name is:</b> John Smith</p> <p><b>I like people to call me:</b> Jonny</p> <p><b>My birthday is:</b> 6<sup>th</sup> November 2004</p>	<p><b>People who are important to me:</b> Grandma, Dad, Sam (brother), Sarah (step mum).</p> <p>School staff: Nicky and Mike</p> <p><b>I live with:</b> Dad, Sam and Sarah</p> <p>I stay with Grandma in the holidays.</p>	<p><b>Important things to know about me at home:</b></p> <p>I can be very social and enjoy playing games. I love to 'chat'. I like to play with my laptop. I really want to be independent.</p> <p>I have a muslim square called my 'noo noo' - this is my comforter.</p>
<p><b>This is how to communicate with me:</b> talk to me, use signs for key words, gesture or point, use facial expression. I understand most of what is said to me if short and simple sentences are used.</p> <p><b>I will communicate with you using...</b> gesture and points, facial expressions, I can say some words that sound like names, I can use PECs to make requests for my key motivators ('noo noo', computer)</p>	<p>PHOTO</p>	<p><b>Other people that work with me and know my needs:</b></p> <p>Mike, Sophie, Nicky, Jane (EP)</p> <p><b>People who are important to me at my setting:</b></p> <p>Nicky</p> <p><b>The person / people I can go to:</b> Nicky or Mike</p>
<p><b>Important things for you to know about me at my setting:</b></p> <p>I need clear routine and structure for my school day. I need to be around those who understand me with patience and tolerance. I can hit out; I need firm reminding of expectations. I can be demanding of staff attention.</p>	<p><b>People who live with me and look after me, want you to know:</b></p> <p>Jonny will always need adult support.</p> <p>He can demonstrate some challenging behaviour but this is improving.</p> <p>Jonny is very loving.</p>	<p><b>My future – aspirations:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To be as independent as I can</li> <li>• To communicate effectively</li> <li>• To build good relationships with those around me</li> </ul>

in:

[My SEN Support Plan](#)    [My EHCP](#)    [My Risk Management Plan](#)    [My Care Plan](#)    [My Boxall Profile](#)    [My PEP](#)



## What can I do to help my child prepare?

- ✓ Encourage a positive mindset when talking to your child about the changes ahead
- ✓ Talk to your child about what is going to happen
- ✓ Look at any information provided and explore the website of the new setting together
- ✓ Find out which of their friends will move to the new setting with them
- ✓ Arrange for them to have a visit or visits before they start
- ✓ Do you already know any other parents with children at the setting? Ask them to talk to your child about it
- ✓ Think about how best to explain things to your child and how they can communicate their worries to you
- ✓ If school transport is not provided, start planning and practising the journey to school during the holidays. Make contingency plans to pre-empt any possible difficulties
- ✓ Practise trying on the new uniform and packing their own school bag
- ✓ Use countdowns or calendars so that they know when the change is coming
- ✓ Consider the need for a mobile phone and discuss when it will be used and for what purpose
- ✓ Keep talking to the new setting. The more they know you, the better you will work together to support your child

# Key terms

**EHCP:** education, health and care plan. A legal plan for children and young people aged 0–25 with more complex needs, requiring a multi-agency approach.

**EHCP coordinator:** the person employed by Norfolk County Council to oversee children with EHCPs in a given area. EHCP coordinators will usually be assigned to schools so that all children with an EHCP in a school will have the same EHCP coordinator. The EHCP Coordinator may give advice to school and/or parents/carers as required.

**GCSE:** General Certificate of Secondary Education. Exams that most 16–year-olds take at the end of key stage 4 (year 11).

**Junior school:** a school for children in years 3,4,5 and 6. Some are called ‘academies’ but they are still junior schools if they have this age range of children.

**Key stage 3:** age 11–14 (year 7, 8 and 9).

**Key stage 4:** age 14–16 (year 10 and 11).

**Primary school:** a school for children in Reception (also called Early years Foundation Stage) and years 1–6. Some are called ‘academies’ but they are still primary schools if they have this age range of children.

**Secondary school:** a school for children and young people young people from 11–16 (or 11–18 if they have a sixth form). Some are called ‘academies’ or ‘high schools’ but they are still secondary schools.

**SENDCo:** special educational needs and disabilities coordinator. The teacher in a school who oversees the provision for children with special educational needs and disabilities. Some schools use the term ‘SENCo’ instead, but the role is the same.

## Resources and links

### Just One Norfolk - starting high school

Use this quiz to explore with your child some of the challenges they may face during transition

[www.justonenorfolk.nhs.uk/childhood-development-additional-needs/supporting-development/starting-high-school](http://www.justonenorfolk.nhs.uk/childhood-development-additional-needs/supporting-development/starting-high-school)

### Mental Health Foundation - Moving on

‘Top tips’ for parent/carers and children

[www.learningdisabilities.org.uk/learning-disabilities/our-work/employment-education/moving-on-to-secondary-school](http://www.learningdisabilities.org.uk/learning-disabilities/our-work/employment-education/moving-on-to-secondary-school)

### Norfolk SEND Local Offer

[www.norfolk.gov.uk/children-and-families/send-local-offer](http://www.norfolk.gov.uk/children-and-families/send-local-offer)

## One-page profiles

[www.norfolk.gov.uk/children-and-families/send-local-offer/local-offer-for-children-and-young-people/get-to-know-me/understanding-me](http://www.norfolk.gov.uk/children-and-families/send-local-offer/local-offer-for-children-and-young-people/get-to-know-me/understanding-me)

## Young Minds

‘Top ten tips’ for helping children cope with change

[www.youngminds.org.uk/media/2957/top-ten-tips-poster.pdf](http://www.youngminds.org.uk/media/2957/top-ten-tips-poster.pdf)

## For further advice and support...

Consider contacting Norfolk SEND Partnership Information, Advice and Support Service (SENDIASS)

Telephone: 01603 704070

Website: [www.norfolksendpartnershiass.org.uk/](http://www.norfolksendpartnershiass.org.uk/)

Other sources of help are available on the Local Offer.

[www.norfolk.gov.uk/children-and-families/send-local-offer](http://www.norfolk.gov.uk/children-and-families/send-local-offer)

This leaflet is part of a series designed to support and enhance transitions in all Norfolk settings. The guidance has been co-produced with input from education and Norfolk County Council professionals including SENDIASS and representatives from family groups including Family Voice Norfolk and SEN Network.