



Teacher Research Programme 2007/2008

Effective Primary-Secondary Transition
Arrangements for Pupils with Social,
Emotional and Behavioural Needs

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Many thanks,

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2. SYNOPSIS

In this piece of research I identified transition projects for pupils with Social, Emotional and Behavioural Needs (SEBN) in Peebles High School (PHS), Selkirk High School and High Schools in the East area of Edinburgh.

Although there already are robust formal transition arrangements for these pupils in Peebles High School, I felt that the pupils would benefit from a longer transition project to familiarise them with the High School and the academic expectations. Activities to promote self esteem were also part of the project.

The project ran over a six week period in collaboration with one of the primaries in the cluster and was evaluated by myself, parents and pupils at the end. The feedback was very positive although in order to see the long term benefits of the project, in terms of easing transition to the High School, the pupils would need to be interviewed and tracked through-out the transition period. This might be the aim of a future research project.

3. INTRODUCTION

Effective primary - secondary transition arrangements for pupils with SEBN.

BACKGROUND

Research by the Scottish Executive Education Department (SEED), Jan. 2007 identifies the transition from primary to secondary as an area of weakness. Key issues which exist around the transfer are lack of curriculum continuity, pedagogical differences and insufficient pastoral care.

Research also suggests that some pupils become more disaffected and demotivated during the first 3 years of secondary education and that the negative effect of school size is more pronounced on students of low socio-economic status. These research findings also support the importance of early intervention work and targeted transition arrangements.

Having read these research findings, as an SEBN teacher, with a background in both primary and secondary education, I wanted to develop an early intervention project which would ease the transition process for targeted pupils in P7.

The General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTCS) Teacher Researcher programme allowed me 10 days out of the class to develop and run a pilot project with West Linton Primary School pupils, a local cluster school for Peebles High School.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The overall aim of this research project is to develop and pilot a 6 week pre-transition course for P7 pupils with SEBN and to evaluate this with parents and pupils. The main objectives of the course are to initiate a relationship between the pupils and one of the key workers at PHS, to ascertain how effectively a transition project could aid curricular continuity and to promote confidence and self esteem in pupils prior to starting S1.

As this is a pilot project, I am using a variety of resources and will evaluate the perceived usefulness of them at the end of the pilot. I will do this through my own observations and pupil/staff feedback.

However, an evaluation of how successful this pilot is in terms of preparing pupils for a positive and successful transition to S1 cannot take place until the end of the first term in PHS and will unfortunately not be reported in this research project but perhaps could be the objective of future research.

4. LITERATURE REVIEW

There has been a considerable amount of research, including Galton et al. (2004), on the transition from primary to secondary school perhaps because there is evidence which suggests that many students experience some decline in their average grades.

The Scottish Executive tried to address this by implementing a pilot literacy and numeracy project, The Eastbank Network for Academic, Behavioural and Learning Education (ENABLE), at Eastbank Academy in Glasgow. The pupils targeted were low achieving vulnerable pupils in S1 and S2 who were taught by primary and secondary specialists in separate classes. Only pupils who did not have serious behavioural difficulties were chosen.

Although there were problems associated with the stigma of being taught separately, the evaluation showed that by the end of S2 many ENABLE pupils had mastered basic literacy and numeracy skills and the drop out rate prior to S4 were reduced. Furthermore analysis of Standard Grade performance in 2005/2006 showed that ENABLE pupils had done better than the comparable group who sat exams in 2004.

However in the transition process it is not just attainment levels which focus concern. There is a wide range of worries amongst pupils prior to transfer including getting lost, homework, bullies, being the smallest in the school and strict teachers. The movement from primary to secondary is therefore more than just an academic transition; it is also an emotional and social one.

Despite these challenges, Chedzoy and Burden (2005) confirm that many students look forward to transition. The high level of positive anticipation is largely due to ongoing links between the schools, taster lessons and being shown around by older pupils.

Galton et al (2004) warn however of disillusionment setting in at the end of S1 due to lack of friendliness, feelings of anonymity and boredom with what is on offer. It is important therefore that pupil progress is tracked through-out the initial years at High School.

The most vulnerable at transfer are those with poor self image (Summerfield 1986). Anderson et al (2000) identified particular at risk groups including those with prior problem behaviour, low academic attainment and low socio economic status .Their concerns relate to issues such as school size, the departmentalisation of subject knowledge, the introduction of setting, the new code of behaviour and higher academic standards and expectations. There were also social concerns including reactions to changes in the diversity of the student population and the need to establish new friendships. Awareness by teachers of the importance of social relations in the lives of young people, particularly girls, is crucial as friendship provides a critical role in giving support, reassurance and security in times of change. Stability of children's relationships across the transfer was related to school adjustment and children who had more stable relationships were more popular and more sociable. Pratt (2005) suggests that these concerns are sometimes overlooked by schools that focus on the behaviour, curriculum and academic issues paying little attention to the critical importance of making friends for enhancing self esteem and confidence.

If Summerfield is right that the most vulnerable are those with poor self image then any transition programme should also contain an element of self esteem and friendship skills.

Furthermore, Galton et al (1999) claim that pupils who want to change from being a 'dosser' [pupil's word] in primary school find it extremely difficult to shake off their old image and many decide to give up rather than catch up. A transition programme could also contain an element of solution focused goal setting to be reviewed regularly in High School in order to assist pupils in making a fresh start.

Finally Hargreaves (1986) says that difficulties in growing up reside in having less confidence in what you are moving towards than what you have left behind. This supports the idea of giving pupils as many opportunities as possible to experience the academic and social expectations of High School prior to transfer.

Homerton College, Cambridge, carried out research into transfer and transition projects in 2003. Though the web link to its report is currently not operational, some information can be found on the GTC England website at <http://www.gtce.org.uk/newsfeatures/features/103690/?view=Print> . Examples of projects include catch up programmes, extended induction weeks, the use of bridging units, teacher exchanges and the mentoring of younger pupils by older ones.

Current education policy reflects the research evidence on transition. It highlights the need to develop good practice around transition points in order to maintain curricular continuity and progression. In How Good is Our School, The Journey to Excellence (2006), it states that a school is excellent to the extent that staff ensure that individuals

and pupils, including the most vulnerable are well supported and that their needs, in particular, are addressed through-out transitions. It says that young people should experience coherent and progressive curricular programmes, consistent learning approaches and appropriate levels of challenge when they transfer from one establishment to another. It recommends adjusting the school timetable to enable cross curricular learning when, where and in ways in which it most benefits pupils.

A Manual of Good Practice in Special Educational Needs (SEN) (The Scottish Government Publications Feb 27 2004) highlights the need to select and use strategies most suited to the assessed needs of the individual. As these needs are assessed in primary it makes sense to develop cross sector links and continue these strategies in Secondary.

The vulnerability of pupils at transition points is also documented in Support for Learning - Promoting Inclusion in Scottish Borders Council (SBC), Policy and Guidelines for Secondary Schools. It recommends a whole school approach to support for learning at all transition points which focuses on information being communicated to and used by all relevant staff as learners move from one educational setting to another. This information is used to encourage continuity and progression. It also recommends individual strategies supporting inclusion for those learners with SEN and those at risk of social exclusion. The use of peer support, collaboration with outside agencies and the teaching of core skills (literacy, numeracy, Personal & Social Development and study skills) are also to be encouraged.

The key issues to arise from this literature review are firstly that transition to High School is not just an academic one, but also a social and emotional one and that secondly a

positive regard about transition is due to ongoing links between the schools, taster lessons and familiarity with what High School will offer. The third key issue is that some groups are more vulnerable than others and that pupils with SEBN fall into this category.

The literature review supported my idea that intervention prior to transition for SEBN pupils could be beneficial. It also supports the importance of cross sector activities to continue strategies which have worked in primary school. The literature review influenced the objective of the project and the resources I used as the evidence highlighted the need for a holistic approach to transition to address academic, social and emotional issues. The project and the lesson plans reflect this.

5. THE METHODOLOGY.

The research has been broken down into 3 specific objectives. These are:

1. To identify specific transition arrangements already existing for SEBN pupils in different schools, including Peebles High School (PHS).
2. To evaluate the extent to which a transition project can assist in the gathering of academic/pastoral data and early planning of an Individual Education Plan (I.E.P.).
3. To identify resources /activities to meet the needs of primary pupils, with SEBN, transferring to PHS and evaluate their usefulness using parent/pupil feedback.

Specific Objective 1

To identify specific transition arrangements already existing for SEBN pupils in different schools, including Peebles High School.

In order to answer this I read the literature sent to prospective parents around transition and talked to members of the Integrated Pupil Support Team (IPST) about current practice at PHS. I also designed a questionnaire (see appendix 1) around social and academic transfer issues and used this to interview a sample of the vulnerable pupils in the current S1 cohort. The pupils were selected after consultation with the Principal Teacher of Behaviour Support. After feedback from the GTCS I reworded some of my questions to ensure they were open questions rather than closed. I also visited Selkirk High School, in the Scottish Borders, and Edinburgh East Area to discuss their transition arrangements for pupils with SEBN and to see if it could give me some good ideas for my own project.

Specific Objective 2

To evaluate the extent to which a transition project can assist in the gathering of academic/pastoral data and early planning of an I.E.P.

To evaluate this I began by sending a questionnaire to staff (appendix 2) at PHS about the current usefulness of transfer information and possible areas for development. I gave them to 50 staff and received 26 completed questionnaires. Although only 50% responded it gave me an idea of the strengths and weaknesses of the current system as perceived by staff. If I were to repeat this exercise I would think more carefully about the design of the questionnaire to make analysis of it easier. For example, the analysis would have been easier if I had framed the questions, on a scale of 1 – 5 what do you think about....?. Instead the feedback I got was descriptive which I think made it harder to draw conclusions.

Specific Objective 3

To identify resources/ activities to meet the needs of primary pupils with SEBN transferring to PHS and to evaluate their usefulness using pupil/parent feedback.

I developed and ran a transition group for 6 pupils from West Linton Primary School. The aim of the group was to prepare pupils for PHS and some of the challenges they may encounter. I used my feedback from the current S1 interviews and research evidence to devise my programme which included lessons to promote self esteem, develop friendship skills, and to introduce pupils to study skills and the academic work at PHS.

In order to engage the primary schools in this transition project I presented my research proposal at a Head Teachers' Cluster meeting which was met with particular enthusiasm by the Head Teacher of West Linton Primary School. It was therefore in collaboration with this school that the project was developed.

At a subsequent meeting the Head Teacher of West Linton identified 6 pupils that she felt would benefit from involvement with the project. There were 6 boys with differing needs ranging from SEBN to personal organisation skills. I sent an outline of my project including lesson plans to the parents and received permission for all 6 boys to attend the group. The parents volunteered to transport the boys weekly to and from PHS.

Transport would have been problematic without the support of the parents and is something that needs to be considered at the start of other projects particularly in a rural area.

Prior to the start of the project I made arrangements to meet the boys on two occasions to begin to develop a relationship with them. The first meeting took place at PHS when the boys attended A Curriculum for Excellence day (ACE day) for all P7 in the cluster. My second meeting with the boys was at West Linton Primary where I observed them in class for an afternoon and had an opportunity to meet the class teacher. The meeting allowed me to observe their behaviour in class and the P.E hall and also meet the class teacher. The teacher was however still in charge of the class so consultation time with her was limited.

Copies of the lesson plans used in the project can be found in Appendix 3. Not all of them were used due to time constraints but I tried to offer a balanced programme. The

lessons I chose to use were on self esteem, developing social skills, study skills and reading a core text from the S1 English curriculum. I chose this combination because it allowed me to cover some of the emotional, social and academic issues highlighted as important by my literature review.

The long term benefits of this project will only be seen as the group progress through S1. However I carried out an initial evaluation of the project with the boys (appendix 4) and parents (appendix 5). I received 4 returned questionnaires from parents.

6. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION.

Specific Objective 1

Current practice in Peebles High School.

Transfer meetings take place in the Spring term between Primary and PHS staff to obtain reading, writing and maths levels and to decide on an appropriate curriculum and the practical arrangements for achieving this. Parents and children are also invited for a short visit to the learning support department in addition to the 2 day visit. Copies of the primary Individual Education Plans are transferred to PHS by June and a review date is set for the autumn term.

At the start of S1 all pupils are teamed with senior school buddies and through Social Education S1 pupils are also introduced to the anti-bullying council. All S1 pupils have an individual interview with pupil support staff by October and an interim report is sent to parents by the beginning of November. Where necessary a key worker may be assigned to individual pupils and all communication and decision making is focused through them.

S1 pupil transition experience - analysis of interview data.

Ten of the current S1 pupils were interviewed. The first part of the questionnaire focused on their feelings about Peebles High School and the second part concentrated on their attitude to the work.

When asked what surprised them about Peebles High School 8 out of 10 pupils were surprised by the size of the school and the number of pupils. Other surprises included secondary school tests which in general were longer and contained more questions than

tests in the primary. One of the pupils interviewed said that she found this off-putting. Four of the pupils were surprised by how pleasant the teachers were and one boy said he didn't get into trouble here and was able to make a fresh start. Out of the 10 pupils interviewed 9 said that they have been made to feel welcome in school by the teachers and prefects.

When questioned about what worried them, 7 mentioned bullying. Forgetting to do homework was also a worry for 5 of the pupils and the consequences of this. Reassuringly all of the pupils named someone in school they could talk to about their concerns. These named teachers were mainly Principal Teachers (PT) of Pastoral Support and Key workers.

Only 3 take part in lunchtime clubs. All the pupils interviewed had made new friends and kept up with some of their old primary school friends.

As to bullying, 5 claimed to have been bullied and one said although he hadn't been bullied he had been involved in a lot of fights.

Only one reported having to meet set behaviour targets. This was to disrupt less in the English class.

When asked about their best experiences so far 9 reported it was meeting new friends. Specific subjects were also mentioned as being good experiences and these included technical, drama & P.E. Two mentioned going down the street for lunch and one felt there had been no good experiences so far.

For the worst experiences 5 mentioned bullying and fighting. Two mentioned maths which they found too 'hard'.

In the second part of the Questionnaire I focussed on pupils experiences of the academic work at Peebles High School. Almost all reported that they found the work was appropriate for their level. One boy was told in Primary that he would find the work really 'bad' [i.e. difficult] at PHS but this has not been the case.

It should be mentioned that of the 10 pupils interviewed, 7 benefited from a variety of support. This included ANA support in classes, after school help in Maths, scribed support for tests and being out of French to do back-up in the Pupil Support Dept. The subjects pupils found hardest were Maths, English & Science.

Particular English tasks were mentioned as being hard. These included persuasive writing, big essays and longer novels. Two reported that language in primary was much easier and included tasks such as handwriting, spelling sheets and copying out of books. Nine pupils reported they had opportunities in PHS to complete homework.

Finally, when asked what they missed about primary school pupils said friends, some teachers, being in the one class and choosing time for completed work and good behaviour.

The key points I learned from this exercise were that bullying was a concern for the majority interviewed and that specific academic tasks were hard, for example more demanding test papers and higher expectations in English, with less scaffolding. All felt the work was appropriate for their level which reflects positively on the support in place

at PHS. However, I was surprised that only one had behaviour targets to meet and I thought that a transition project would be a good forum to set goals for High School.

The transition experience in Selkirk.

The formal transition arrangements for ASN/SEBN pupils were similar to those at PHS.

Selkirk High School had 2 interesting transition arrangements in addition to these.

1. **Self esteem raising exercise:** The P7 teacher asks her class to draw up a list of questions that pupils want answered about coming up to the High School. A small group of vulnerable pupils bring these questions up on an `extra sheltered visit` and are able to feed the answers back to the class on their return.
2. **Art Project:** This is open to every pupil but a maximum of 16 can attend at any time. The class also includes a tour of the High School and runs over the Spring and Summer term with each pupil coming twice. Almost 80 pupils attend over the course of the project. There is an issue in transporting pupils to The High School but parents help out.

The experience in Edinburgh

I was invited by Trisha Bell from Edinburgh City Council Social Work Department to attend the review and evaluation of transition arrangements for vulnerable pupils in Edinburgh East as an observer. This was attended by Social Workers and teachers from Liberton, Castlebrae, Holyrood and Portobello High Schools and feeder primaries. It was an excellent opportunity to get an overview of their transition arrangements and listen to their feedback on whether they were meeting the needs of the most vulnerable.

Initially the participants outlined the initiatives which were in place in their respective school. In addition to the transition arrangements open to all P7 pupils there were targeted programmes in all schools for referred pupils. These programmes included

- A summer term programme where primary pupils are brought up to the High School.
- Capro Programme - outdoor education programme run over the summer holidays
- Summer holiday programme called Head start aimed at pupils with learning difficulties.
- 1-1 multi agency work for the very vulnerable
- Children First funded programme beginning in January P7
- Hooves Project - horse riding, social focus.
- Life experience at High School with vulnerable pupils visiting from P5 onwards taking part in classes.
- High School teachers deliver Art, Music & Modern Languages in Primary School
- Hopes & Fears ½ day visit to High School.
- Instep programme - work with vulnerable parents.
- Proposed pilot at Castlebrae High School - Pupils stay in classes and teacher moves to foster primary atmosphere.
- Group work starting in Primary summer term and continuing into S1 with a focus depending on the needs of the group e.g. taking instructions, losing friendships, working together with strangers.
- Meeting of professionals to review targets. 3 monthly. Solution focused and requires the full support of Educational Psychologist.

In the second part of the meeting the current transition options were evaluated and a `Way Forward` was proposed.

There was a general feeling that the transition programmes on offer were so complex and varied that it was hard to have an overview of what was on offer. All agreed that there had been little evaluation on the success of the programmes and that more tracking was needed of pupils in P6 through to High School. Clear criteria needed to be set out for each project, what is it, who it is for and what are the expected outcomes. There was also agreement that the most successful programmes were when extra funding/staff was available. It was also felt that most money went into the noisy pupils and that the quieter ones did not get the same opportunities. Finally it was agreed that early transfer of pupil profiles at Easter would help planning. Some felt that short programmes don't solve problems but help to establish relationships.

Participants brainstormed the way forward using the transition policy for vulnerable pupils as a start point.

The Edinburgh Transition Policy for Vulnerable Pupils

Aims

- To work with young people needing additional support with their transition from primary to secondary
- To work constructively on identified issues enabling the young person to develop strategies for coping better in secondary schools.

Objectives

- To develop a group work programme to encourage confidence and enhance self esteem.
- To promote self awareness by focussing on aspects of behaviour within the class and other settings.

- To encourage the young person to make positive changes to improve their relationship with peers and adults in authority.
- To familiarise the young person with the School's code of conduct , routines and expectations.
- To ensure the young person knows the options available to them during periods of difficulty.

Suggestions from brainstorming exercise.

- Projects starting in P6 to establish relationships with pupils and key secondary staff.
- Early engagement with parents and programmes of support for them
- Summer transition programme
- Big School Pack - same for all in the cluster.
- Monitor and evaluate programmes and get feedback from parents/pupils
- Cluster residential in P7
- Clear idea of programmes on offer , criteria and outcomes
- Teacher link. P7 teacher to meet with S1 staff to discuss strategies.
- Tracking of pupils from P6 on.
- Mentoring buddies
- Investment from Council to fund transition work
- Foster closer links between Primary - Secondary through book days and sports events.
- How do we deal with chronic non-attenders?
- Universal transition work with specific provision for more vulnerable.

Discussion

In the first part of this research I have described some of the targeted transition projects for SEBN pupils. There exist a number of different projects and research evidence, pupils' own experiences and the review of transition in Edinburgh support the conclusion that all pupils should experience a transition programme but that vulnerable pupils can benefit from targeted transition arrangements. This view is also encouraged in policy documents like How Good is Our School.

Analysis of the literature on effective transition in particular Brian Boyd (2005) shows that effective transition programmes should contain 4 main elements.

1. Comprehensive and early exchange of academic information.

There should be a comprehensive exchange of academic information that all staff can access to plan a progressive and challenging curriculum. Brian Boyd (2005) warns that despite efforts to achieve this, building on prior attainment of pupils when they transfer remains a major weakness in the system. He says this is maybe because secondary staff feel they do not have adequate information from primary schools or because they believe in the fresh start approach. This information should be transferred early on to allow planning of I.E.P.

2. Cross sector work

Cross sector work is encouraged to ensure curricular continuity but in his research Brian Boyd claims that cross sectoral meetings of teachers vary in their frequency and usefulness. Any cross sector work should have clearly defined objectives and built in evaluations to ensure success.

3. Tracking pupils

Good transition programmes should contain an element of tracking as research shows it is in the first 3 years where demotivation is at its strongest.

4. Targeted transition projects.

Research highlights the vulnerability of particular groups in the transition process including those with poor self image, challenging behaviour, parental drug & alcohol misuse and young carers. Transition for these groups should involve a targeted programme to address their specific needs including self esteem work, core skills, and regular visits to High School to build confidence in what they are moving to. Pratt in his research advises schools to include a social and emotional element to transition work and not to focus solely on the academic. However in offering separate transition arrangements for vulnerable pupils care should be taken not to stigmatise them.

Assessment of current transfer procedures at PHS against the research evidence

1. There are formal meetings built into the transfer process to ensure information is exchanged. However this information arrives late in the term leaving less time to plan a programme of work.
2. Cross sector work. This tends to be ad hoc, dependent on funding, individual staff motivation and time availability. However 2 new elements in transition are to begin this year at PHS, an ACE day run by S6s for the P7 cluster group and peer mentoring of vulnerable primary school pupils by S5s. It will be interesting to see the impact of these two initiatives.
3. There is good tracking of pupils at PHS. All S1s interviewed felt supported and could name a particular member of staff who could support them. Careful consideration is given to class composition in S1 to ensure all pupils know some-one from their primary. Review dates are built into the S1 calendar for pupils with additional support needs (ASN) which allows adjustment of the curriculum and support arrangements. Also S1 interviews highlight settling in issues early on. The Anti-

bullying Council and buddy systems ensure an element of peer mentoring. There are also self esteem groups that run throughout S1, S2 & S3.

4. Targeted transition projects for vulnerable groups are not part of the formal transfer arrangements. The projects that have run, for example this pilot and a study skills group using Feuerstein principles, are dependent on extra funding and staff availability. A transition policy like the Edinburgh example might focus resources in this direction and ensure transition projects for SEBN pupils become a regular part of the process involving all schools in the cluster.

Implications of S1 interview feedback for planning my transition project

Analysis of the S1 interview data highlights their concerns and experiences and suggests what a transition project for vulnerable pupils might involve.

The experiences of the S1 interviewed were largely positive and they clearly felt support was in place for them in school.

Pupils were still surprised by the size of the school (over 1000 pupils) despite the 2 day P7 visit prior to transfer. Perhaps extra visits for SEBN pupils focusing on orientation activities would be beneficial given the size of PHS.

All P7s are given a homework diary like the one in PHS and are encouraged to use this through-out P7. Half of the pupils in the sample were worried by homework at High School and the consequences of not doing it. Having the opportunity to do homework in school alleviates some of the concerns but a transition project for SEBN pupils might include showing a sample diary from an S1 and discussion around how the pupils would

fit the set homework into their own schedules .Activities to develop study skills might also benefit this group.

Care is taken in establishing new S1 classes at the transition phase. Meetings take place between PT Pupil Support Teachers and P7 teachers to discuss good work/social combinations and this ensures that all pupils know at least one person from primary school in their new class. All pupils interviewed had friendships in place. It is also reassuring that they could name one member of staff they could ask for support. Despite this bullying was still a concern for the majority of the group although only 50%had experienced it. In order to prepare SEBN pupils for the possibility of bullying a transition project should include activities to promote self esteem, develop social skills and assertiveness training.

There are good transition procedures in place to ensure ASN/SEBN pupils get the support they need in order to access the High School curriculum. All reported that they felt the work challenging and appropriate for their level. However the core subjects, English and Maths caused most concern. The teaching of these subjects, resources used, scaffolding and expectations are very different in the two sectors. A transition project could prepare pupils for these subjects by taking course materials, novels, tests etc. and working on S1 type tasks. These completed tasks could be forwarded to teaching staff at The High School to help plan work and I.E.P.

To conclude, the transition project for SEBN should include samples of work /resources used at High School, study skills exercises and self esteem and assertiveness resources. These activities may help address the two main concerns about coming to PHS - the work & bullying.

Specific objective 2

Of the 50 staff interviewed, 26 returned their questionnaires. Their response to current transition procedures were as follows.

1. How do you use the transition data to plan your work?

Responses included differentiating in lessons, behaviour management, to make referrals for additional support, to know which level they are working at, to set classes and make up form classes, to choose resources, to write I.E.P.s, to identify medical issues, to get to know pupils, plan seating, to know when pupils have back up time in pupil support and to seek advice from Learning Support staff. However, despite the usefulness of this information some new members of staff were still unaware of where this information was stored in the computer network.

2. What do you perceive to be the weaknesses of the system?

Staff commented that more readily available information was needed. 10 staff felt that primary levels can be incomplete and misleading although 3 felt that this lack of information allowed pupils to make a fresh start. Some felt that they would benefit from knowing pupils' spelling and reading ages, from more information on topics covered in specific subjects e.g. P.E & Modern Languages and from putting S1 information on the system earlier. Finally one teacher commented that although the information can flag up concerns, these are difficult to assess until the pupils are met.

3. Do you have adequate information on the programmes of work used by pupils in P7 including those with ASN?

Fifteen replied no to this, although a member of the Integrated Pupil Support Team (IPST) commented that this information is readily available from them as required.

One teacher wrote that although English and Maths information was passed on sometimes pupils may have been coached through the levels.

4. What information might help you plan more easily?

More specific information on how far into the 5 – 14 level each pupil had reached, access to I.E.P.s, more case conference meetings on individual pupils, advice on how to adapt materials and a more detailed knowledge of pupils causing concerns.

Discussion

One of the shortcomings of this questionnaire was that out of 50 staff only 26 completed it. However it still gives an indication of staff perceptions on transition. It is clear that all staff use the transition data to plan teaching for the session. Many felt that this data was not detailed enough to allow curricular continuity, that they needed more specific information on maths, language levels and reading ages and that it did not reach staff early enough. More cross sector work would encourage curricular continuity.

Also a transition project in March could address some of these weaknesses. It could enable the gathering of more detailed academic information early on and ensure that an I.E.P was in place for the start of the academic session. This I.E.P would also be shared with teaching staff at the information meetings held on the first day of term. However in order to gather this information consultation time with the P7 class teacher would need to be built into the project.

In his research Brian Boyd emphasises that curricular continuity is encouraged by cross sector work but that these cross sectoral projects/ meetings vary in their frequency.

In my questionnaire to staff I asked if they had visited primaries as part of the transition process and in what ways they had found the experience useful. Most of the visits were by PTs of Pupil Support who visited in a pastoral capacity. One subject teacher from science commented that her visit had allowed the department to push for funding to develop cluster wide P5, 6, & 7 courses to ensure all primaries covered the same science material. Other positive comments included allowing P7 pupils to become familiar with a face from the High School, it enables a dialogue with class teachers and you can see the classroom strategies a teacher uses.

Fifteen said that they had never visited the primaries as part of the transition process. Of these 15, only 5 expressed an interest in visiting primaries. The reasons for visiting were to meet pupils in their familiar environment, to get a feel for the children's previous learning experience, and to find out more about the ICT curriculum. Very few of the subject teachers could see value in visiting primaries despite evidence which stresses the importance of such events. It would be interesting to find out specific reasons for this lack of interest.

Specific objective 3

The transition project ran for 6 weeks starting in term 2 and finishing 2 weeks into the summer term. Initially, I planned to run it in term 3 but on reflection there were too many commitments for the P7s at this time.

The lessons, outcomes and observations

In the first lesson we looked at Fears and Hopes about coming to PHS. The Hopes and Fears session identified that bullying was a concern for most of them, work was a concern for half of them, friendships for 2 of them and 3 of them felt anxious about

talking in groups. It was evident from the Hopes & Fears session that 2 of the boys were worried about friendships and were unsure how to go about making new friends. I was able to explain to the group that we would be looking at all these issues and discussing strategies to deal with them.

We also set personal goals and identified small steps we could take to achieve these. An example was completing homework on time and the steps to achieve this were writing down homework in a diary, thinking about other commitments, planning a little bit each night and rewarding yourself. All the boys were able to identify a goal and I have recorded these to re-visit and re-enforce in S1. One advantage this project offers is laying the ground for future work in S1 particularly setting achievable goals which could be regularly reviewed and used to help track pupils.

In this session I asked them how they felt about talking in groups. One boy who has Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and will have an I.E.P said he needed to control other people as it made him feel comfortable. Working and listening to him in this session I was able to identify a target for his I.E.P.

The aim of the second lesson was to look at what self esteem means and how it influences the way we see ourselves. We also explored ways of boosting self esteem and 2 strategies to do this, being aware of things that make you feel good and looking after our health.

I observed in this session that 2 of the boys were very quiet in the group. When I analysed the self esteem questionnaires the same boys showed low self esteem and also the boy with ADHD. The school runs self esteem groups for pupils so the transition

project enabled me to identify at a much earlier stage three pupils who can be referred to these groups.

In the third lesson we explored ways of establishing and maintaining friendships. This was a good interactive lesson with lots of movement and a lot of discussion around how to make new friends at PHS. Again it highlighted difficulties some of the group had and the work covered in this lesson can be used as a basis for future work in PHS. Pratt's research on the importance of friendship for support in times of change highlights the importance of addressing this.

I had more resources on personal and social development e.g. Assertiveness and personal projects that the boys would have benefited from but due to time constraints I decided to focus the remainder of the lessons on preparing pupils for the academic expectation at PHS. In future it might be possible to run two separate groups each with their own defined objectives i.e. one social and one academic rather than trying to focus on both these objectives together.

Lesson 4 focused on homework and it started with pupils looking at my daughter's used homework diary to show that each day different homework is set. This opened up a discussion on fitting in other activities around homework and making sure that deadlines were met. The boys also drew a picture of their ideal study place. I have kept these in case there are homework issues in S1 and they can be used to generate discussion on ideal settings and solutions.

In lesson 5 we read a chapter 'Boy' by Roald Dahl, part of the S1 curriculum, and I observed that all the boys had age appropriate reading skills and would cope with this

aspect of work in secondary. However I know from parent feedback that although one boy outwardly appeared competent he does have a specific reading and spelling difficulty and I can pass this information on to the subject teacher. I hope that this introduction will give them confidence when they are introduced to the book in S1 – the feeling of being slightly ahead of the game.

We also drew a spider diagram to sum up the chapter and we discussed how and when this skill could be transferred to other subjects. One of the boys, who showed low self esteem in an earlier session finished his work very quickly and enjoyed the prestige of being first done. However on marking his work much of the information was incorrect. Again a useful observation.

In the last lesson I asked the pupils to complete an evaluation. In the final 20 minutes they logged onto the PCs to complete a quiz on Roald Dahl. I had booked PCs in the Learning Resource Centre (LRC) but unfortunately they were being used for exams at the last minute. Otherwise, this would have given me the opportunity to show the group the library, the resources, how to book PCs, how to behave in the LRC (noise level) and to meet the librarian.

The transition project was a very positive experience for me, the boys and the parents. The group has covered some of the issues that research and feedback from current S1s identify as transition challenges. The boys have also had 6 extra visits to PHS and met some of the Pupil Support Team and Senior Management Team. It has given me the opportunity to gather evidence that I can use to plan my work with them in S1 and to set targets for I.E.P.s.

If the project were to be repeated I would like to involve more of the primaries in the cluster. The added advantage of this would be that pupils would get the opportunity to meet others. Transport might be an issue for some of the schools however and another issue may be my time. However a lot of the planning work has now been done thanks to funding from the GTCS research programme so I would need considerably less time to run the groups again. It would be important to have clearly defined objectives for the groups based on the needs of the participants. These objectives might be raising self esteem, improving personal organisation skills, or familiarisation with the school and academic expectations. It would be important to identify pupils who would benefit, perhaps using a Questionnaire to P7s on perceptions of the move to High School taking care not to overlook the quieter class members.

Pupil Feedback

I asked the boys to complete an evaluation of the project. There were 5 questions (see Appendix 4).

When asked on the best thing about the group, the responses included talking about stuff (x2), getting to know each other properly, learning in a fun way, the snack, and discussing hopes and fears. 50% of the boys felt that the small group size and the resources enabled them to talk about issues they don't feel able to do in a bigger setting.

When asked how the group could be improved the feedback was different varieties of food all the time, getting S5 – S6 to come and talk to us about what it is like to be in High School, playing games at the end, the ability to use computers in every lesson, more time to discuss things and talking more about the subjects in High School.

They said that the group had helped them to express themselves clearly in front of others, to feel more confident (x3) about going to High School and to feel that they are not alone without friends.

I asked how the group had helped them prepare for High School. The feedback included being confident about other things like working with others, knowing that not all teachers are horrible, feeling confident (x2) and making new friends, and getting more familiar with school (x2).

My final question was what their classmates thought about them joining this group. The answer to this included they were curious to know what the group was about, glad to get rid of us and they thought I was a bit weird. This last comment highlights the need to be aware of stigmatization when withdrawing pupils for additional support. Perhaps arranging a feedback session to the P7 class about their experiences at Peebles High School (like the session at Selkirk High School) would help resolve these issues.

To sum up, the pupil feedback demonstrated the advantages of running transition groups and gave me ideas on how to improve it. The small group encourages talking and listening around sensitive issues which is not always possible in a mainstream setting. The group clearly felt very comfortable and familiar in High School and I feel I have already established a working relationship with them before the start of the academic year. Finally, I can use pupils' comments from this pilot project to encourage other primaries and PHS to take the project on in the future.

Parent feedback

I tried to involve parents as much as possible in the project. As it was the parents who dropped off and collected I informed them briefly what we had looked at on a weekly basis. Each pupil had a file with a copy of the week's lesson plan which I encouraged them to share with their parents. At the end of the course I asked all the parents to return the evaluation (appendix 5). Four out of 6 did this.

I asked how difficult their child's time at primary had been. The responses were mixed (x1), difficult (x 2) and positive (x1).

In response to what they thought the main differences between primary and secondary school would be they said having to be more self- reliant (x3), gaining experience of children with mental health issues and how to cope with them positively. (x1)

When asked what their main concerns were about the move parents said that their child will be lost in the system, they were anxious about personal organisation skills, road safety at lunch times, getting into trouble with peers and coping with homework.

What they felt their child had enjoyed most about the group was being praised, being able to discuss topics with each other and being listened to. Other comments included finding out what the High School pupils wear, how to do homework has given him more confidence and they got used to the school and the atmosphere.

All the parents agreed that the transition project had been an excellent idea and that it had prepared the boys well for Secondary School. They said that they felt more confident about going to a larger school, they better understand how the classes work

and who is who. One parent said that the boys had also benefited from going to the group together forming closer friendships and that she herself had become more familiar with the High School and its surroundings. Another parent felt that praise from a Secondary school teacher was very valuable in increasing a child's self esteem.

My last question was, "On a scale of 1 – 5 (1 = not worried and 5 = worried) how worried were you about your child starting Secondary school?" 3 responded 4 and 1 responded 3. When I then asked, "How prepared do you think your child is for the move having now attended the group?" (1 = not very prepared and 5 = very prepared) 3 parents wrote 4 and one wrote 3.

All the parents agreed that the transition project had prepared the boys well for Secondary School. Again the small group setting was mentioned as a good forum for talking and listening. One advantage of a transition project is that it establishes home-school links at an early stage which I felt the parents of this pilot group had found reassuring. It gave them an opportunity to become familiar with the school, meet some of the staff and ask about any concerns in an informal setting prior to the formal transition programme. They also have copies of all the resources we used which can be re-visited at home.

7. CONCLUSIONS

Specific Objective 1

To identify specific transition arrangements already existing for SEBN pupils in different schools, including Peebles High School.

There exist a variety of transition activities for SEBN pupils in PHS and other schools in and out of the Borders and visiting these schools gives inspiration for new ideas. The Edinburgh experience highlights the importance that these have clearly defined objectives and are evaluated and that everyone knows what is on offer. Some of these projects are ad hoc dependent on staffing and resources.

Perhaps a transition policy in the Borders, like the one existing in Edinburgh, would help focus resources in this direction and make transition projects for SEBN pupils a permanent part of the process.

All primary pupils benefit from transitional work but specific transition arrangements should be in place for pupils with SEBN. A 6 week transition course, run each year, like the one developed in this project is one possibility. As the initial planning and evaluation has been done in this pilot it would take considerably fewer teaching hours to run in the future.

The Edinburgh Schools found that despite transition work being carried out in P7, many SEBN pupils moved out of the catchment area for the local High School. PHS has the advantage of being the only High School in the area and most P7 pupils transfer here. This makes it easier to plan long term transition work and is a distinct advantage over city schools.

Specific Objective 2

To evaluate the extent to which a transition project can assist in the gathering of academic/pastoral data and early planning of an I.E.P.

Current transition data is available and used by teachers but not all new staff know where to find this information. Also, levels from primary school are not detailed enough to be reliable. Information from the primaries did not elaborate on the length of time pupils had been working at this level nor about how much support they were receiving.

A transition project for SEBN pupils would perhaps give the key worker a greater insight into pupils working styles and capabilities, reading and spelling ages. This information would be available early on to plan I.E.P.s and disseminate to staff prior to the start of the academic year.

Fifteen staff felt that they didn't have adequate information on programmes of work used in P7. Again a transition project may give PHS staff, particularly support staff, greater insight into the resources/ strategies used for the less able.

Specific Objective 3

To identify resources/activities to meet the needs of primary pupils with SEBN transferring to PHS and evaluate their usefulness using parent/pupil feedback

Parent and pupil evaluations demonstrate that a transition project is a good way to increase confidence in the transition process. This is also supported by the evidence gathered in the literature review.

An evaluation of its long term impact can only be done by tracking pupils in S1.

For future groups I would focus on one objective e.g. raising self esteem as time is limited.

There is a social benefit of having mixed groups from different primaries and if the project runs again it would benefit from the participation of other schools.

Research and pupil feedback highlight the issues of concern to P7s – bullying, friendships, academic pressures and the size of the school.

Pupils enjoy the small group as it gives the opportunity to talk about issues that might be difficult in a bigger class.

Transport can be an issue in rural areas but parental support can overcome this.

The next step in this project is to feedback the results to the IPST and to decide if these groups are to be run in the future.

Pupils need to be selected carefully taking care not to overlook the quieter class members and also to avoid the possibility of stigmatisation. Perhaps adopting one of the ideas from Selkirk High School, `sheltered visits`, would resolve this.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

Further research on the benefits of transition groups in the long term. This could be done by tracking pupils through-out S1-2 and comparing the SEBN pupils from previous years who have not been involved in a transition project.

9. INFORMATION FOR OTHER TEACHERS

The feedback I received from this project was very positive. Parents and pupils felt that they were more prepared for the transition to PHS after the project than they had been before. Research also supports the benefits of these additional transition arrangements for pupils with SEBN.

The project took 10 days to plan, deliver, evaluate and write up. This time was funded by the GTC Teacher Research Programme. There follows a brief outline of the stages involved.

Develop the project, aims objectives and target audience,

Think about transport arrangements and location for project.

Present the idea at a Head Teacher cluster meeting.

Collaborate with partner primary school

Put together possible resources/activities.

Meet with Head Teacher of the primary to discuss potential pupils.

Decide on suitable resources

Send out permission slips to parents including copies of lesson plans.

Deliver the project.

Evaluate with pupils and parents.

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Appendix1

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR PUPILS ABOUT TRANSITION EXPERIENCES.

How are you feeling about Peebles High School?

1. What surprises you about Peebles High School?
2. What makes you feel welcome in school?
3. What worries you about coming to Peebles High School?
4. Who in school and at home can you talk to about this?
5. What extra-curricular activities have you taken part in?
6. Are you able to take part in after school events?
7. Are your friends from primary school or have you met new friends?
8. Have you ever been bullied in school?
9. Who supports you in Peebles High School?
10. What if any behaviour targets have you to meet?
11. What has been your best experience at Peebles High school so far?
12. What has been the worst?

How is the work going?

1. How easy do you find the work at Peebles High School?
2. Are there any subjects that you find particularly easy or hard?
3. Are you able to do homework during the day and is there any-one who can help you with this?
4. Who do you work well with in your classes?
5. What, if anything do you miss from Primary School?

Appendix 2

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR STAFF ABOUT PRIMARY AND SECONDARY TRANSITION.

1. What transition data is available to you?

2. How do you use this data for planning your S1 work?

3. What do you perceive to be the strengths and weaknesses of this system?

4. Do you have adequate information on the programmes of work used by pupils in P7 including those pupils with additional support needs?

5. What information might help you to plan more easily?

6. Have you visited primaries as part of the transition process?

7. If yes, can you describe the experience and in what ways was it useful?

8. If no would you be interested in a visit, and for what purpose?

9. Any other comments you would like to make about the transition process?

10. Which department do you work in?

Appendix 3

LESSON ON SCANNING TEXT.

AIM

This lesson aims to teach students a new technique which will enable them to gather accurate information more quickly, and give them the skills necessary for making revision notes.

LESSON CONTENT

Ask pupils if they have noticed how some people appear to read quickly. Explain this is because they are scanning the page for specific information/ words instead of reading the whole page.

Talk about pupils own reading experiences and all the things they have read this week.

Show pupils examples of textbooks from PHS e.g. Science & Modern Studies and select paragraphs.

Ask pupils to read one paragraph at a time and write down the words and phrases that they think are important.

Now look at a friend's list. Have you both chosen the same words and phrases?

Discuss why you think the words you have chosen are important.

Does your list help you learn about the subject?

LESSON ON SKIMMING

Explain that skimming is the word used to read through something very quickly. It is similar to scanning but instead of looking for key words, the reader glances through everything to get a rough idea of what the passage is about.

Write a list of when you think skimming might be useful (show picture)

Skim through topic paragraphs from PHS text books (History) Give 2 minutes for this.

Try to write down the information from the pages from memory.

Check with your partner if you remembered everything.

LESSON ON INFORMATION SKILLS

AIM

Helps to prepare pupils for elements of teaching & learning they might expect to see at Peebles High School.

To develop skills which will encourage independent learning

LOCATION

Ideally at Peebles High School Learning Resource Centre depending on transport arrangements.

LESSON CONTENT

Research a topic that all the group agree on e.g. Natural disasters or a topic linked to Environmental Studies P7 curriculum and present our findings as a team.

Each pupil will chose an aspect of the topic to find out about.

We will draw a spider diagram to plan the project. Who does what & how?

We will discuss the different ways of researching e.g. Skimming & Scanning text books, using search engines and selecting appropriate key words, using index and content pages of books & note taking.

We will decide how to present the information.

LESSON ON STUDY SKILLS – MAKING NOTES

AIM

To emphasise the importance of note taking and to show how this skill can enhance the learning process in all subjects through the use of spider diagrams.

LESSON CONTENT

Complete the spider diagram on me

Read a chapter of `Boy` by Ronald Dahl (Read in many S1 English classes)

Pupils make their own spider diagram describing a scene from Roald Dahl's childhood.

Pupils then make a spider diagram to show a scene from their own childhood.

This plan is used to write a short essay (Which can be forwarded to English teacher in S1)

LESSON ON STUDY SKILLS HOMEWORK

Aim

Students examine the best conditions for study, and look at the importance of organising their own study area. They also look at alternative places in which to work if their home environment is not conducive to good work. (Discuss PSB at PHS as an option)

Lesson Content

Discuss homework at PHS. Bring an example of a used diary. Emphasise that deadlines need to be met and it is their responsibility to meet these. Also different teachers will set different homework. Some will issue detentions if homework is not complete. Discuss pupils current homework pattern – how much, how hard, who helps and where is it done.

Complete the exercise `Where to Study` (see photocopy)
Draw a picture of their ideal place to study and write down what are the 5 most important factors which are conducive to producing good quality work.

SELF ESTEEM

AIM

To look at what self esteem means and how it influences the way we see ourselves.

To explore ways of boosting our self esteem and teach 2 strategies to do this.

- 1. Be aware of things that make you feel good.**
- 2. Look after your health (healthy snack)**

LESSON CONTENT

- What is self esteem? Discussion. Brainstorm**
- Self esteem assessment. Questionnaire & feedback**
- High / low self esteem situation cards**
- Things that would make me feel good**
- Healthy snack to finish**

MAKING NEW FRIENDS.

AIM

Pupils will see that moving to PHS will give them the opportunity to meet new friends.

To explore ways of establishing and maintaining friendships.

CONTENT

- **Icebreaker (you are wonderful because, or are you a loner or my circle of friends)**
- **Discussion about friends. Who they are & why do they make good friends.**
- **Flower of friendship – looks at qualities of a good friend. Display.**
- **Brainstorm – How do you make new friends? Smile, good personal appearance, good talking & listening skills, join in, have things to talk about e.g. Hobbies and things you have done at the weekend.**
- **Conversation skills. What are they?**
- **How can I start a conversation?**
- **How can I keep a conversation going?**

ASSERTIVENESS

AIM.

**To explore the meaning of assertiveness and discuss why it is important to be assertive. (Link to experience at PHS)
Through role play and worksheets practice assertive behaviour.**

CONTENT

- **Discussion – what does assertiveness mean.**
- **What am I like at it – assessment sheet**
- **Examine differences between being passive, aggressive & assertive.**
- **Talk about how we complain, disagree, apologise and request explanations in an assertive manner.**
- **Role play situations - be aware of tone of voice, choice of words and body language.**

www.roalddahl.com

Click on the icon Roald Dahl, then the icon Roald Dahl biography and try to answer these questions about Roald Dahl's life.

1. How old was Roald when his father died?
2. Who was the character of 'the grandmother' in 'the witches' based on?
3. Where did Roald Dahl's write his diary?
4. What were Roald Dahl's hobbies?

Now click on the icon school to the left and answer these questions.

5. Was Roald happy at school?
6. Are you happy at school?

Now click on the icon Family Tragedy and answer the last question.

7. Describe what happened to Roald's son Theo?

If you have time left, make up 2 or 3 of your own questions to ask each other

Appendix 4

FEEDBACK FORM

The best things about the group were.....

I think the group could be improved by

The group has helped me to

The group has helped me to prepare for secondary school by
.....

What did your classmates think about you joining this group
.....

Appendix 5

QUESTIONNAIRE TO PARENTS

1. How has your child's time at primary school been?

2. What do you think will be the main differences between primary and secondary school for your child?

3. Before your child started the transition project on a scale of 1 – 5 how worried were you about your child starting secondary school. 1 = not very worried and 5 = very worried?

4. What are your main concerns about his move to secondary school?

5. What would you say your child liked most about the group?

6. How prepared do you think your child is for the move having now attended the group? 1 = not very prepared and 5 = very prepared.

7. Any other comments about the group or the transition process generally?