



curriculum for excellence pre-school into primary transitions





curriculum for excellence

SUCCESSFUL LEARNERS > CONFIDENT INDIVIDUALS > RESPONSIBLE CITIZENS > EFFECTIVE CONTRIBUTORS

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Introduction

Background

It has always been recognised that the transition from pre-school to primary school is a critical time of change for children, parents and practitioners – which is full of opportunity and potential. However, with the introduction of Scotland's *Curriculum for Excellence*, there is a need for re-examination of the challenges and innovative approaches required to ensure that every child has meaningful and progressive learning experiences across the sectors and within the early level.

Rationale

Transitions have been identified as a key current policy priority by Scottish Government and other stakeholders. This is highlighted throughout *Curriculum for Excellence*, the *Early Years Framework*¹ and *Getting it right for every child*². Practitioners across Scotland have expressed a clear and consistent need for additional practical support and guidance to help them take forward and strengthen transitions.

This document sets out the context for transitions and delivers key messages from Learning and Teaching Scotland's Pre-school into Primary Transitions Advisory Group. It aims to support practitioners and managers to take forward transitions by considering the following:

- the positive impact *Curriculum for Excellence* has had and will have on transitions from pre-school to primary
- the continuing challenges for transitions from pre-school to primary
- suggestions to facilitate progression in children's learning
- how do we provide opportunities for dialogue?

¹ Scottish Government (2008) *The Early Years Framework*, Edinburgh: Scottish Government.
www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/257007/0076309.pdf

² Scottish Government (2008) *A Guide to Getting it Right for Every Child* [online]
www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2008/09/22091734/0



Context

We know that the impact of transitions in the early years can strongly influence a child's future progress and development, and when supported well, transitions can provide opportunities for:

- meaningful and challenging learning experiences
- new positive identities
- broadening horizons
- collaborative working
- strong relationships to be formed
- families to be meaningfully involved
- children to develop both emotionally and socially.



Transitions offer opportunities for children to learn how to manage change in a positive way – an important skill to develop for life in the 21st century. Many practitioners across Scotland are capitalising on the opportunities opened up by *Curriculum for Excellence* to consider and enhance their current transitions practice.

*'Common as such experiences may be, we cannot assume that they are plain sailing. For some children the winds of change blow fair, for others the passage can be stormy, for others still they drift into the new, and for some they set off on a huge adventure, as explorers in search of something new. It is in this very variety of possible experience, including how parents experience their child's transition to school, and the educators working with them, that demand that we work together to support children to maximise the opportunities and learning at times of change.'*³

³ Dunlop, A-W and Fabian, H (eds) *Informing Transitions in the early years*, Research, Policy and Practice, Maidenhead Open University Press

The positive impact Curriculum for Excellence has had and will have on transitions from pre-school to primary

Curriculum for Excellence has provided a focus on transitions and has **raised expectations**. It provides a very strong message about 3–18 being a continuum and has created important continuing professional development opportunities.

Practitioners across the pre-school and primary sectors are developing a better shared understanding.

The emphasis on continuity in the early level provides primary schools with a renewed impetus to develop more active learning approaches and plan more responsively.

The early level provides more opportunity for building meaningful relationships between children, parents and staff.



The continuing challenges for transitions from pre-school to primary

Staff roles and expertise should be valued and respected across the sectors.

There is a need for practitioners to understand the nature and importance of all early learning experiences and learning, if meaningful progression is to take place. Effective transition approaches should be found which ensure progression for all children, particularly across multiple pre-school and primary settings. There is a need to make more effective use of individual children's profiles in Primary 1 and to create time for dialogue with children, parents and colleagues.



Active learning should continue to be developed and supported in order to ensure transitions are as positive as they can be. Increasingly, staff are embracing a wider view of developing effective early learning environments to create pedagogical meeting places between pre-school and primary school.

There may be fewer opportunities, due to adult to child ratios, for staff in primary to work as effectively with other partners and agencies. Primary settings should continue to strive to capitalise on the benefits of parental partnerships and develop this further where possible.

Relationships are key. Leaders are encouraged to support primary practitioners in creating the time and scope for opportunities to meet and engage in dialogue with colleagues across the sectors, to get to know children and to make effective use of transfer information (before and after the transition).

*'The importance of the role of the practitioner cannot be overemphasised; the challenges are great. However, an effective transition supported by a playful approach may reap the reward of a positive and lasting impact on the child throughout the rest of their life.'*⁴

⁴ Kevin, K and Lauchlan, L 'Thinking through transition, pedagogy and play from early childhood education to primary' In Moyles, J (Ed) *Thinking About Play: Developing Reflective Approach*, Maidenhead Open University Press

Suggestions to facilitate progression in children's learning

Transfer information/individual profiles must be carefully considered in order to provide information to enable progression and sharing of information must always respect issues of confidentiality. Transfer information could be recorded in an agreed 'learning vehicle' such as a 'learning story', 'e-profile' or 'personal profile' between parents, practitioners and children. This record could be continued for the first term (or longer) in Primary 1, to improve continuity. Transfer information/individual profiles should provide a holistic picture of the child and could include progression in relation to the four capacities and a focus on literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. Information may include some 'stepping stones', 'next steps' or 'suggested next steps'. Reference may be made to preferred learning styles, behaviour and social patterns.

Local authorities are encouraged to provide practical guidance and support on what information should be shared across the early level to ensure progression. They may support progression by facilitating opportunities for the development of relationships across the pre-school and primary sectors. They may encourage leaders and practitioners in early primary to prioritise time to get to know children and to engage in dialogue with pre-school staff, parents and the children.

A dedicated transitions co-ordinator in every pre-school and primary setting may help to ensure the transition process is managed effectively. The co-ordinator would not be the person solely responsible for transitions but might lead and manage networks, have an overview of the transition process for the setting, create a transitions calendar and provide a key point of contact for all partners.

Practitioners must develop a shared understanding of pedagogy and how children learn. Collaboration is encouraged across learning communities and working groups including parents and children, and dialogue through technology such as Glow and shared programmes of events.

A continued focus on CPD opportunities to develop active learning approaches and professional knowledge of play-based approaches is encouraged. It is crucial that all practitioners are able to articulate the philosophy behind a more active pedagogy in the early years and the positive impact an active approach has on enhancing transitions to early primary. National organisations, including LTS, and local authority CPD opportunities should continue to support practitioners, for example through video clips, podcasts and case studies.



Parent participation is vital in ensuring progression across the early level. It is important to support parents in developing realistic and positive expectations of what happens in Primary 1, including supporting an understanding of active approaches to learning. This will in turn impact positively on children's expectations of the transition.

Shared planning across the sectors can support continuity and progression through, for example, developing a shared project which can be continued from pre-school into primary. Staff roles should be valued and respected across the sectors.

Practitioners are encouraged to use the *Curriculum for Excellence* 'Supporting the Early Level' resource for further CPD, film clips and interviews.

www.LTScotland.org.uk/earlyyears/curriculum/supportingearlylevel/index.asp



How do we provide opportunities for dialogue?

Shared planning, for example by developing a shared theme/project from pre-school to primary, could enable dialogue and a shared understanding of roles and progression.

Passing an item of interest or sentimental value from the pre-school to the primary setting with the child to stimulate discussion and to provide continuity is suggested. For example, a cherished floor book to stimulate discussion, a personal profile document, a persona doll, or a personal object could all create positive opportunities.

Settings are encouraged to capitalise on the use of technology including online resources and support. Examples of opportunities for communication for children, parents and practitioners include: upper primary children creating a school DVD for pre-school children; sharing information via Glow discussions, document uploads or engaging in 'Glow Meets'; the use of email for dialogue across settings and sharing digital photography and film.

Local authorities, leaders and managers are encouraged to provide shared CPD across the settings when possible. A designated transitions co-ordinator in pre-school and primary will help to support opportunities for dialogue and building bridges.

Effective leadership is vital in creating opportunities, scope and time for primary school staff to engage with transfer information, to get to know children and to develop ongoing and meaningful dialogue with parents.

Transitions should be considered within a school improvement plan. This ensures that transition is a process – not an event.



Appendix 1

Pre-School into Primary Transitions Advisory Group (TAG)

Impact and Dissemination

The Transitions Advisory Group (TAG) was a short-life working group which met on 3 November 2008, 18 March 2009, 19 May 2009 and 1 September 2009.

They worked to identify challenges and priorities to support transitions in the early years, in light of the new early level. This work was crucial in providing expertise to support the development of the *Curriculum for Excellence* resource 'Supporting the Early Level'. This is a national resource which was distributed in September 2009 to all pre-school settings, primary schools and stakeholders including colleges and universities, HMIE and the Care Commission. Members of TAG were key contributors to the transitions film section and to the one-hour CPD activity included in the CD-ROM. The full resource was published online later in the year.

Learning and Teaching Scotland has taken the main messages from this group forward in a variety of forms. Dissemination to the early years community has taken place through: sharing the messages with Scottish Government; leading a transitions discussion group at the Scottish Learning Festival in September 2009; creating a 'Glow Meet', hosted by members of the Learning and Teaching Scotland (LTS) Early Years team and TAG in December 2009; and publishing an article in *Early Years Matters* Spring 2010 (edition 17), further highlighting main messages from the TAG.

The LTS Early Years team will continue to disseminate the main messages through forums, networks, materials, conferences and events that they undertake as part of their remit.

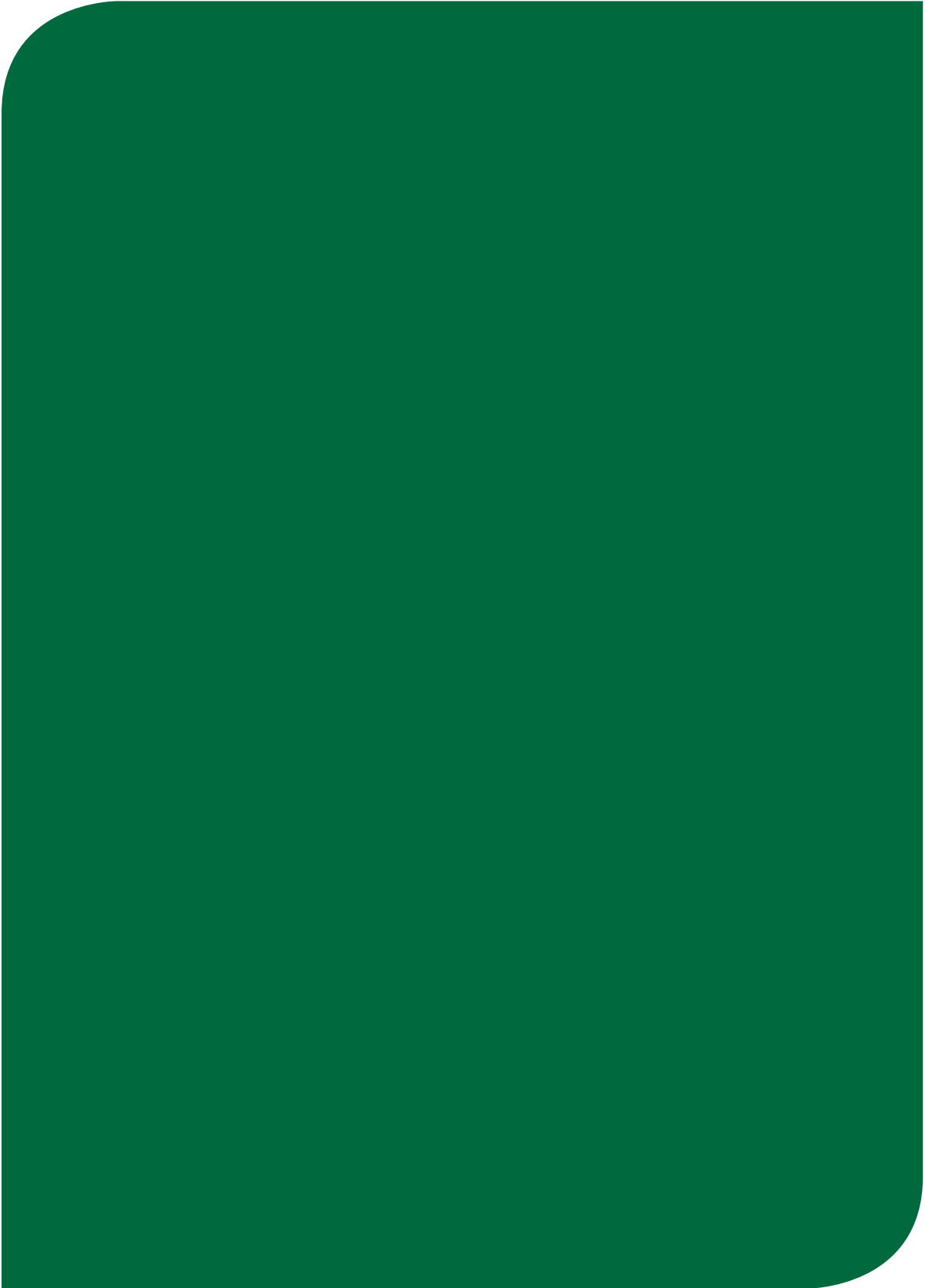


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