

Transition to Primary School

Transferring from nursery to primary school can be both an exciting and anxious time for parents and children.

Planning well for transition, in partnership with parents, can ease a child's entry into Reception class.

Activities can be planned, over a period of time, that will help to reduce stress for a child, enabling them to settle more quickly and progress in their learning. Support can also be given to parents so that they feel more confident, know what to expect from school and stay engaged in their child's learning.

Transition may be particularly difficult for some children, especially those who are just four, are learning English as an additional language or have special educational needs.

Settings in the **London Borough of Camden** have found that clear transition support plans for some of these children (combined with Individual Education Plans for special educational needs) are particularly useful. Meetings with parents, existing and receiving staff and other relevant professionals, can be invaluable in the formation and execution of the plan.

To help parents and children prepare they also:

- share and lend home picture storybooks about starting school to encourage discussion of issues such as playtime, older children, lunch times and separate boys and girls toilets
- make videos of Reception classes to show children and parents
- visit new schools with families, taking photos together of new staff, entrances, toilets, the playground, and children working and playing (these can then be made into displays or books to borrow for home)

I am happy I am going to big school; it is by my Grandma's house. My sister goes to the same big school. I can play with my friends and my sister in the playground. (Annie, June 2004)



- encourage discussion, using puppets, about going to a new school (by, for example, saying *The puppet is in the playground with no-one to play with. What can she do?*)
- visit the new classroom 'in action' together with families or invite Reception teachers back to the nursery
- arrange, if the school allows, for nursery children to visit a few times for short sessions – perhaps joining them for lunch or storytime.

The **Camden Early Years Intervention Team** has developed a record book **All About Me***. Key workers talk through the pages with children and parents, recording a child's thoughts and feelings. The book is then ready to go to their new school. It gives an opportunity for parents and practitioners to listen to children – helping them reflect on how they feel; remember how they have changed since they started nursery; think about the skills they have developed and the friendships they've made.

Children can draw, use photos, ask adults to scribe and contribute their own writing. Widget symbols can help children who find communication difficult. Listening to children in this way, helping them record their memories and thoughts, enables them to make sense of the change and builds their confidence and self-esteem.

*All About Me is available on the CD-Rom in your pack.

At Konstam Children's Centre, London Borough of Camden, relaxed meetings are organised for parents, so that they can talk together and express any concerns they have about their child moving on to primary school. Reflecting on memories of their own first day at school is popular and can be helpful. Parents are often worried about the care of children, whether they will manage to cope with routines like playtime and using the toilet. Talking with children about the process of moving on to Reception is positively encouraged. In nursery, School Leavers' Groups are set up and children can talk and think about going to school in the context of story sessions, some with puppets. A puppet can tell the children what worries her about going to school and ask them to discuss some solutions. This helps children to express and work through their fears. The children are also taken to a lunchtime and two playtimes at the local school. Practitioners from the nursery will also accompany parents to meetings at the new school, if they feel the need for a little extra support.

“Mummy won't know which black gate to come and pick me up.”

