

Early Years Transitions Toolkit: Supporting Children and Families Through all Early Years Transitions



Contents

Introduction	3
Transitions into early years settings	4
Transitions throughout the daily routine	5
Transitions to and from the setting (daily)	6
Transitions from one room to another	7
Transitions from a setting into Reception	9
Receiving children into Reception	10
Ready Children	11
Ready Schools	12
Ready Families	13
Transitions into Year One	14
Considering children with emerging or identified needs: settings	15
Considering children with emerging or identified needs: schools	16
Useful websites and resources	17
Model documents – ‘All about me’	18
Professional to professional conversation guide: transitioning to Reception	21
Professional to professional conversation guide for children with emerging or identified needs: transitioning to Reception	22
Suggested transition form	23
Suggested transition activity calendar for settings	25
Suggested transition activity calendar for starting Reception	28

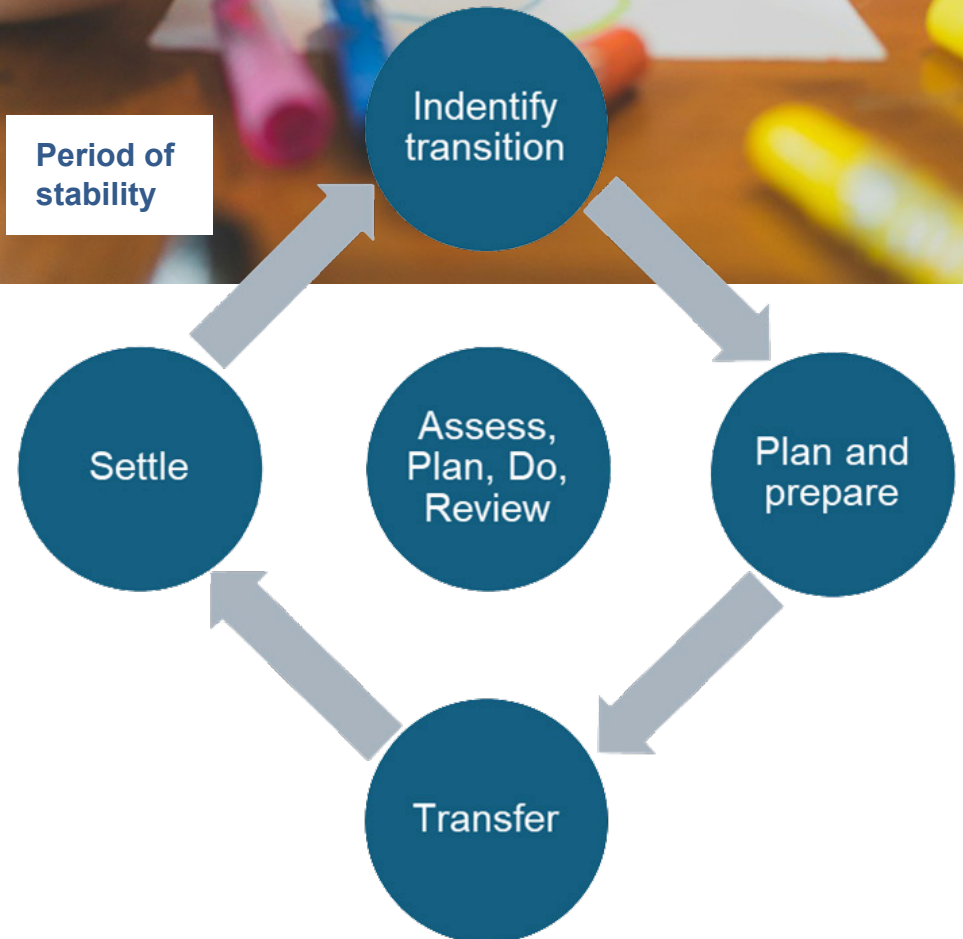
Introduction

Transitions are commonly seen as an event that involves change. Viewing transition instead as a process allows us to provide more effective support for children as they navigate the many transitions that occur in their daily lives. While some transitions may be small, others, such as beginning at a new early years provision or moving into a new room, can feel much bigger. These experiences will require varying levels of support for children and their families.

“They are times of exciting change certainly and times of new opportunities and growth for every child. They can also be times of uncertainty where surroundings are not the same, expectations and procedures different and faces yet unfamiliar. Getting transition right is vital for every child and is not a single event that merely ‘happens.’ Transition should be viewed as a process rather than an event that involves children, practitioners, and parents together. Transition has been described as an ongoing journey rather than a destination.” – Early Years Matters 2023.

Key points

- Transitions describe the changes that occur as children moved from one context to another.
- High quality transitions prioritise emotional well-being and ensure that children feel ‘known’ before they are expected to ‘do’.
- Some children are particularly vulnerable to at times of transition.
- Transitions are opportunities for learning and development for both children and adults.
- The key person makes essential connections.
- Transition is always a process, not an event.
- High quality pedagogy matters for all children at every transition – Birth To 5 Matters.



Transitions into early years settings

Positive transitions are vital for young children's well-being and development. Children experiencing childcare for the first time is a huge adjustment. This transition, as with all transitions, should be seen as an ongoing process. It is important that this is adapted to meet the needs of the individual child, to support their emotional wellbeing.

Children will feel more secure when the provision they are entering has been tailored to meet their needs and interests. It is important that we ensure that we are supporting children to be ready for transitions both mentally and emotionally. This initial period of induction for a child can be very overwhelming, and it is crucial they are provided with time to adjust. Every child is different and will need different levels of support during this transition.

It is vital to consider the whole family. Parents often need support when their child is first starting to attend a setting. They may need reassurance and should be kept very well informed. The key person approach is a useful tool during this time. The relationship between a parent/carer and child's key person is central to the child feeling settled. Children will feel safer if they can see that their parent or carer trusts their key person.

Helpful strategies

- Add a new page to your website or welcome pack, 'starting at our setting' to make it easy for new families to find the relevant information.
- Before a child starts at the provision, share booklet or information sheet with the parents that includes pictures of staff for them to show their child.
- Ask families to complete an 'all about me' form or booklet for the child to support you to provide activities they enjoy and support their emotions.
- Arrange visits to the provision. It can be scary and overwhelming for a child to start at a setting if they have never seen it. Children may find it helpful to have multiple visits to the setting to become comfortable. These visits should be agreed with the family on an ongoing basis whilst the child settles, and the number of visits and duration should be flexible to meet the needs of the child.
- Provide opportunities for children to get to know their peers and learn their names.
- Help children learn to identify their feelings, develop emotional literacy, so that they can talk to you about how they are feeling and why.
- Follow the child's lead, enable them to access their comforter, if they have one, when they choose to.
- Suggest to parents to make the journey to your setting several times before their child attends so that the route and the building becomes familiar to them.
- Check your transition booklet or information. Does it explicitly explain the routines, organisation, and expectations for families who have never sent their child to a setting before? Is it accessible for families who speak English as an additional language or who have lower levels of literacy?

Reflecting on practice

Ask yourself...

- Are children's induction periods flexible to meet the child's needs?
- How does this experience feel for a parent?
- How are parents supported throughout this time?
- Are children provided with time to explore at their own pace?
- Are parents kept accurately well informed about their child's emotional reaction whilst transitioning into the setting?
- Are children supported to develop an understanding of the setting's routine?
- Are the youngest children's own routines supported effectively within the setting?
- Are children provided with time and space to share their emotions and be supported by adults?
- Are staff well supported to manage their own emotions whilst supporting children with theirs?



Transitions throughout the daily routine

Often when we consider transitions, we overlook the significance of transitions throughout the day. Routine is helpful for children to make sense of the world around them and learn about time, but transitions throughout the routine can also create very busy periods that can be overstimulating, confusing or scary for some children.

These types of transitions might include moving from indoors to outdoors, getting ready for lunch, moving to a different area such as visiting the sensory room and going to the bathroom. Any significant disruptions to free flow play where children are asked to or need to move or change their activity is a transition of this kind. It is crucial that these transitions are kept to a minimum, to reduce disruptions to children's play, as otherwise this can negatively impact their perseverance and imagination.

Stopping play and tidying up can be difficult for many children, especially when they are deeply absorbed in their activities. Abruptly ending play can feel frustrating, and some children may find the noise and organisation involved in tidying overwhelming. It is inevitable that these transitions need to take place, and how these things happen should be carefully considered. Transitions can be seen as learning opportunities for children and made purposeful. Poorly planned transitional periods can also be busy occasions for staff and can be challenging.

Helpful strategies

- Use transitions as learning opportunities – when safe to, encourage children to take part in listening and attention games, such as creeping like mice whilst moving from indoors to outdoors or getting on the bus to go up the stairs and giving the adult a bus ticket. Songs and games are a fun way to support children's skills whilst safely transitioning from one space to another.
- Move children into small groups. This enables children to listen to staff more clearly and provides a calmer environment.
- Consider the different communication needs of children in the group, consider using visual cues.
- Pre-warn children that a transitional time is near, allowing them to gently adjust to the idea of finishing their play. Use a sand timer to show how long they have before transition.
- Provide children with opportunities to come back to their activity. For example, children may enjoy having a model shelf where they can put their creations to share with their peers or pick them up again after their lunch.
- Ask children for their thoughts around transitions.
- Provide children with resources to support them where needed, some children may find the noise of transitional periods overstimulating and may prefer to use noise reducing headphones to help them.
- Evaluate each transition to ensure it is necessary and effective. Ensure children are not expected to wait for prolonged periods of time and that expectations of children are realistic for their age.
- Consider whether children can have a role in the transition to enhance its purpose, that is, can children help get labels ready for lunch.

Reflecting on practice

Ask yourself...

- Are children supported to develop an understanding How does this feel for the child?
- Do children understand what they need to do?
- Have the children's views been considered?
- How many times do children transition throughout the day?
- Do these transitions feel calm or busy?
- Are children waiting unnecessarily?
- What are children learning during this transition?



Transitions to and from the settings (daily)

Transitions include not just movements 'horizontally' from one room to another within the same setting or moving to a more structured part of the day such as lunchtime. Transitions also occur in a 'linear' way by moving from home to childminder, home to setting, childminder to setting and back again all in the same day. This linear transition can be anytime of the day, after a morning session, or after lunch, or in the evening after wrap around or at the end of the setting day to go home.

When transitions are managed sensitively, they help children develop positive attitudes towards future changes. Some children are particularly vulnerable during transitions, especially when moving from a familiar place like home to an environment that feels new or uncertain. Children who have low confidence, limited English, or who have experienced significant change or loss may find these moments especially challenging. It can raise insecurities about having their entitlements and needs met. These children benefit from extra time, reassurance, and opportunities to adjust at their own pace, with a strong focus on supporting their emotional wellbeing.

Helpful strategies

- Strong, respectful relationships between parents and educators lay the foundation for positive transition.
- For the educator, a genuine dialogue with parents provides information, affording opportunities to extend ideas and educational experiences within the setting.
- As importantly, parents draw comfort from relationships with those caring for their child, while easy, visible conversations between significant adults are deeply reassuring to children.
- Separation anxiety affects both parents and children, and warm exchanges between educators and family members are hugely significant in easing this process.
- Getting to know parents' names is an important first step in building a positive professional relationship.
- It is vital to plan handovers between educators to ensure that children's needs are met, and new attachments are strengthened.

Reflecting on practice

Ask yourself...

- How do you prepare children for their time to go home?
- Is it clear to children what they need to do when they arrive or prepare to leave?
- Have the children's views been considered?
- How many times does the child have a linear transition during their day, that is, childminder, setting, wraparound?
- How busy does this feel for you, how would it feel for the child?
- How are we supporting children during the waiting time?
- How long is this transition taking?
- How are parents supported with these transitions?
- How calm is the transition time for the child, do you allow them to prepare for the transition?



Transitions from one room to another

Moving to a new room and adjusting to changes such as new educators, a new key person and a new environment are significant transitions for a child and need to be planned carefully, sensitively and implemented gradually. 'Young children desire to move forward and the challenge of transition can be highly motivating for them.' Bennett, 2006, cited in Barnardo's, 2016:2.

Children's experience of room-to-room transitions can be very positive when they are planned for appropriately by the key people in their lives. Providing continuity of care and ensuring a secure base for children can support children to predict and cope with change. Actively involving the child, parents and key educators in the process will encourage a smooth transition. When the process focuses on continuity of experience for the child between the different environments, this will lead to a smooth transition, allowing both child and family to transition between these worlds in a positive manner. Transitions or changes for children that are planned for and managed well lead to successful outcomes for the child and the adults in their life.



Helpful strategies

- Add a new page to your website or welcome pack, 'starting at our setting' to make it easy for new families to find the relevant information.
- Before a child starts at the provision, share booklet or information sheet with the parents that includes pictures of staff for them to show their child.
- Ask families to complete an 'all about me' form or booklet for the child to support you to provide activities they enjoy and support their emotions more knowledgeably.
- Arrange visits to the provision. It can be scary and overwhelming for a child to start at a setting if they have never seen it. Children may find it helpful to have multiple visits to the setting to become comfortable.
- These visits should be agreed with the family on an ongoing basis whilst the child settles, and the number of visits and duration should be flexible to meet the needs of the child.
- Provide opportunities for children to get to know their peers and learn their names.
- Help children learn to identify their feelings, develop emotional literacy, so that they can talk to you about how they are feeling and why.
- Follow the child's lead, enable them to access their comforter, if they have one, when they choose to.
- Suggest to parents to make the journey to your setting several times before their child attends so that the route and the building becomes familiar to them.
- Check your transition booklet or information. Does it explicitly explain the routines, organisation, and expectations for families who have never sent their child to a setting before? Is it accessible for families who speak English as an additional language or who have lower levels of literacy?

Transitions from one room to another

Helpful strategies

- **Transition Policy:** Have a robust transition policy in place that includes how the setting manages room-to-room transitions. Review, update, and translate the policy and procedure related to room-to-room transitions into practice, regularly. Ensure the policy is documented clearly and share it with staff and parents. This ensures continuity for children and ensures that everyone involved has a clear understanding of their role in facilitating a smooth transition for each child.
- **Key Person:** When a child is allocated a new key person, the educator can begin by visiting the child's current room. This helps the child get to know their new key person in a familiar and comfortable environment. From there, planned visits to the new room can take place, with some children needing several visits to feel secure. The previous key person may also spend time with the child in the new room to support their settling, offering a familiar adult while they adjust. Gradually, the child can spend increasing amounts of time in the new room until the full transition is made. If many children are moving up, you could offer times when the rooms are joined so they can become familiar with the new environment and staff.
- **Parents:** It is important to provide opportunities for parents and both key people to meet and plan the transition together. Parents should also be informed about when the transition will begin so they can support their child and talk to them about the change.
- **Transitional Objects:** Having a security object that children are very familiar with, such as a blanket or soft toy can provide children with emotional comfort during a transition. Provide children with access to a transition box with items they enjoyed playing with in their previous room such as books, small world resources, and so forth.

Reflecting on practice

Ask yourself...

- Do you give children opportunities to discover their new room and become familiar with new routines and people?
- Do you share visuals with families, such as photos of the new room and key person?
- Is there a transition teddy/toy you can use for the child to go to the next room?
- How are parents/carers supported through the transition process from one room to another?
- Are parents given the opportunity to visit the room with the child and new key person?
- Do you complete a new 'All about me' form on transition to a new room, to know the voice of the child?

Situations can change in time. Therefore, the new key person has updated information.



Transitions from a setting into Reception

Transition from an Early Years setting into Reception should be viewed as an ongoing process. Expectations of what children should achieve before starting school need to be realistic and relevant. Strong relationships between schools and feeder settings are essential, as they help agree key skills to focus on, such as toileting and getting dressed independently. Children's emotional well-being should remain central. Helping them understand the change and talk about their feelings builds confidence and supports positive relationships in Reception. It is also important that children know their time in the Early Years setting will end, as unexpected endings can be unsettling.

Each child should be supported as an individual, with time given to help them understand the transition in a way that makes sense to them. Support for parents and carers is equally important, as this can be an anxious period for families. Offering opportunities for parents to meet with their child's key person or attend a 'ready for school' session can help build reassurance and ensure clear communication.

Helpful strategies

- Host a 'ready for school' evening for parents in the spring term before they move up to Reception, where you can share the importance of supporting children in their independence and provide an opportunity for parents to ask questions.
- Ensure you view this transition as an ongoing process. This will support you to give them the best start in Reception – consider organising or attending a cluster group with local schools to discuss how to collectively support the transition. Contact eya.schools@cambridgeshire.gov.uk to find out where your local school cluster group is.
- Provide children with a 'starting school' booklet with pictures of their new school and teacher to support them in familiarising themselves with their new class.
- Invite the teachers into the setting to spend time with the children in advance to allow time for additional visits if possible.
- Role play going to school, provide children with school uniforms to dress up in.
- Share ideas with parents for activities to complete over the summer to support with the transition, such as making a map of the route to school.
- Refer parents to the '[50 Things to Do Before You're Five](#)' app for ideas.
- Promote conversations with children about starting school, write down their questions to ask their teacher when they visit.
- Share, with parents' permission, which children will be joining the same classes to support parents and children to build friendships.
- Ensure that the ending at your setting is marked and celebrated, in whatever way possible. This is particularly important to children in care (CiC) as most endings in their early life have been painful separations filled with uncertainty.

Reflecting on practice

Ask yourself...

- What is important for children to know about their school?
- Are we supporting children's independence enough?
- Are parents well informed about what we are doing to support children?
- Do we start considering this transition early enough?
- What do teachers need to know about the children?



Receiving children into Reception

UNICEF's [School Readiness. A conceptual Framework*](#), description of school readiness states that three elements together increase children's likelihood of future success. All these elements are important and must work together:

- 1. Ready Children:** Children's readiness for a transition affects their learning and development. This is related to aspects such as communication skills, personal, social, and emotional and physical development.
- 2. Ready Settings and Schools:** Early years settings and schools' readiness for children ensures learning environments are child-friendly and adapt to the diverse needs of young learners and their families. This is related to how early years professionals create learning environments that foster and support smooth transition.
- 3. Ready Families:** Families' readiness focuses on parental and caregiver attitudes and involvement in their children's early learning, development, and transition.

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Reflecting on practice

- Does your school have a transitions policy that is shared with parents and other professionals?
- Is there an agreed transitions timetable between feeder settings and school, to effectively plan for transitions?
- Is transition given priority at appropriate times of the year?
- Is the impact of a positive transition experience acknowledged by your school?
- Are all staff aware of how to effectively support transitions, including lunchtime staff and office staff, for example?
- Do you have well established links with your feeder schools and/or settings?
- Is there ongoing communication between providers and school throughout the year?
- Are preschool educators aware of the 'settling in' process for their feeder schools?
- Have you had discussions with your feeder settings about the format of the transition information you prefer?
- Is information shared with parents in a timely, accessible way, including for families with EAL?
- Are parents given opportunities to ask questions throughout the process?
- Do you use a range of transition activities to support individual children and their families through the process?
- Do you adapt your transitions activities depending on the children and/or families if required?
- Could your transition unintentionally favour some children over others?
- When planning your transition do you think about the changes for parents and carers too?

Ready Children

Positive transitions are essential for young children's well-being and development. Some children will have spent a long time in childcare, while others may have had much less experience in group settings. Transition should be viewed as an ongoing process that is adapted to each child's individual needs and supports their emotional well-being. This is especially important for children with special educational needs and/or disability (SEND), children from disadvantaged backgrounds, or those who have had a long period away from a setting. Children feel more secure when the environment they are moving into is thoughtfully tailored to their needs and interests.

Think about how we can help children develop an understanding of school and what it will be like for them. Consider a child who may feel anxious about leaving their parent on the first day. We often respond to the visible behaviour, such as tears or clinginess, rather than the feelings underneath. Reflect on how we can prepare children for the thoughts and emotions they may experience during this transition.



Helpful strategies

- Create a 'countdown to starting school' calendar showing the weeks in advance and noting when key events are taking place.
- Invite each child to create an 'All About me' book or box, provide examples and/or photos to support parents with ideas for this.
- Give children a Starting School book with photos and key information; personalise for children with SEND where needed.
- Arrange visits to school. Some children will find it extremely hard to start in a new setting without a visit to see where they will be attending. Where whole group visits are not possible, consider scheduling opportunities for children to visit individually with a parent to look around.
- Suggest stories to read at home that support with transitions – See Useful websites and resources.
- Provide ideas for summer home learning activities, for example, create an environmental print treasure hunt in the local environment, make a map of the route to school, sing songs and rhymes, play with numbers, send a postcard to school, refer to '[50 Things to Do Before You're Five](#)' app.
- If you use an online parent communication platform, give parents access before the summer so you can share photos of transition days and staff. Add updated classroom photos in the days before school starts.
- A Year 6 buddy system can help children settle. New Reception children meet their buddy during transition days, and the buddies can support them at playtimes when they start school.

Planning for transition is crucial, and it is helpful to map out the process across the academic year. Creating a transitions calendar supports viewing transition as an ongoing process, and the example in this toolkit can be used as a starting point. Gathering information from previous providers and other professionals will help ensure a smooth transition. This toolkit includes professional-to-professional guidance to help structure these conversations. Feedback from parents in previous cohorts can also support reflection on what is working well and what may need further development.



Helpful strategies

- Maintain close relationships with all feeder settings throughout the year. Consider organising or attending a cluster group with local settings to discuss how to collectively support the transition.
- Contact feeder settings to discuss information about children prior to transition and plan additional support for any children who might need it. Gather information about learning and development including the Characteristics of Effective Learning. Identify EYPP/PP, SEND and vulnerable children to provide the right level of support from the start.
- Add a new page to the school website called 'Getting Ready for School' – this will make it easy for new families to find all the relevant information without having to search the website.
- Think about how to share this information with parents who may not have a computer or internet access, for example, post information at home and consider translation and support for parents who cannot read or write.
- Create a FAQ document on the school website to support parents with the practicalities of starting school, for example, what do we need to bring on the first day?
- Begin building relationships with new families by planning a New Parents Meeting. This can be delivered in various ways— live online, through a digital platform, or as a recorded presentation shared on the school website or YouTube. This approach supports families who may feel anxious or have had previous negative experiences with education. Provide an email address for parents to send questions and consider what additional information may be needed for families of children with SEND or who do not speak English.
- Find out which children have never been to a setting before and consider what you are offering them and their families. Additional visits to the school in the summer term so that the child and parents are prepared for the noise, the systems, the routines, the expectations. Discuss how best to support their child over the summer to prepare them.
- Ask your current parents and children to evaluate your transition activities to understand how to improve this next time.

Ready Families

It is vitally important to build positive relationships with parents and carers from the start. Parents hold a wealth of knowledge about their child and are their first and most important educator. Many families feel anxious about the transition into Reception, so providing the right level of support and information helps them feel prepared without becoming overwhelmed. The move from a full-time nursery place to a shorter school day can create significant changes for the whole family, and these new routines need to be navigated thoughtfully.

Parents' own experiences of childcare and education may shape their expectations and influence how confident they feel engaging with the school. Some families may be completely unfamiliar with early years settings and therefore may not know what to expect in terms of routines, organisation, or expectations. It is essential to consider each family's individual needs rather than adopting a 'one size fits all' approach, particularly for children with SEND or medical needs.



Helpful strategies

Arrange home visits to each family when possible. Where this is not possible, calls could be arranged via a digital platform or telephone, or you could invite them in for a 1:1 visit to the classroom. Initial meetings could alternatively be held on neutral ground, for example, a local park, to begin to build positive relationships with families who may be anxious. Post any paperwork to families in advance so they have copies prior to the visit or call.

Record a series of 'Meet the Teacher' videos to share online, for example, read a story and share some information about yourself - What are your hobbies? Do you have any pets? How long have you been working at the school? Try and include all staff who will be working in the EYFS including Teaching Assistants and midday supervisors.

Check your transition booklet or information. Does it explicitly explain the routines, organisation, and expectations for families who have never sent their child to a setting before? Is it accessible for families who speak English as an additional language or who have lower levels of literacy?

Transitions into Year One

Positive transitions from the early years foundation stage (EYFS) to Key Stage One are vital for children's wellbeing and development. Transition should be seen as a gradual process rather than a single event. Individual needs must be considered, especially for children with SEND or medical needs. Knowledge of child development and both curriculums should guide transition planning. A focus on the Characteristics of Effective Learning helps children become confident, capable learners. Children should feel excited about moving into Year One, and meeting their new teacher in a familiar space, such as the reception classroom, can support this. Gathering information from previous teachers, about both the child and their learning experiences, helps ensure a smooth transition. Involving parents is also key, as they are used to contributing to their child's learning in Reception and need reassurance during this change.

Helpful strategies

- Provide opportunities such as circle time or stories for children to discuss their feelings and any anxieties about transition.
- Organise transition days/sessions for children to meet their new teacher and visit the new classroom.
- Provide opportunities for shared learning between Reception and Year One, for example, story swaps or joint projects.
- Create a display of learning from the reception children in their new Year One classroom at the end of the summer term.
- Provide a summer project or activity to be worked on at home and shared at school with the new teacher in September. Send a postcard to each child at home from the new teacher and invite them to send one back.
- Reception and Year One teachers need dedicated time to share and talk about individual learning journeys and cohort data so that it can be used positively to shape the next steps in learning. Remember to talk about children's specific foundational knowledge and any barriers, gaps or misconceptions that may affect their next steps.
- Consider what provision is in place for the children who did not reach a 'Good Level of Development' at the end of the EYFS. Ensure planning is closely matched to the needs of individuals, groups, and the cohort. Provide opportunities for EYFS and KS1 staff to plan learning together and work alongside each other in the summer term. Discuss similarities in routines and resources to promote continuity.
- Invite the Year One teacher to observe the reception routine, environment, and learning opportunities so they can incorporate aspects of play based practice into Year One when the children start.
- Consider how staff might be able to move up with the children to Year One, even if it is for a few weeks or the Autumn term.
- Produce a transition booklet for children and parents/carers to welcome them into Year One.
- Hold an information meeting for parents/carers to explain the expectations in Year One and invite questions.
- Provide opportunities for parents to visit the Year One classroom and meet the staff.
- Introduce a buddy system for children and families, linking them up with someone from the current Year One.
- Where there are concerns that a child may have an emerging need, an application to the Early Support Pathway should be made before May 1st cut-off.

Reflecting on practice

Ask yourself...

- Are there opportunities for previous parents and children to give feedback about their transition experience so that you can further improve?
- Are there opportunities for the Reception and Year One educators to observe each other's practice?
- Do transition conversations include the Characteristics of Effective Learning?



Considering children with emerging or identified needs: settings

Children with barriers to learning and special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) need to be considered carefully to ensure a successful transition into a new setting or room. Children do not need to have a diagnosis or a 'label' for reasonable adjustments to practice and provision to be made. These strategies offer examples of good practice for all children with barriers to learning, but it may be helpful to speak with your Early Years Adviser, book a [SEND surgery](#) appointment, or consult with external agencies involved to gain additional advice for individual children. Make use of the [Inclusion Without Labels](#) information to support your practice. Listen to and acknowledge the important role of parents and carers throughout this process. It is everyone's responsibility, including those in non-child facing roles and overseeing safeguarding, to ensure that children and families are supported appropriately.

Helpful strategies

- Arrange Team Around the Family (TAF)/transition meetings with parents, carers, and relevant professionals, in person, electronically, or by phone.
- Arrange visits for the child to their new setting or room, beginning with quieter times if appropriate.
- Discuss and plan practical details such as entry points, where their peg will be, and other routines.
- Consider how the child will arrive at your setting—whole group entry or a quieter alternative. Consider if the child needs early or slightly delayed arrival to allow for calmer transitions.
- Consider and arrange any staff training required for medical and physical needs before the child starts.
- Review staff knowledge and confidence in supporting children's emotions and behaviour, identify and utilise available Continuous Professional Development opportunities: [Professional Development Programme](#).
- Consider whether you may need enhanced staffing to support the child. You can find out more about Special Educational Needs Inclusion Funding or Exceptional Needs Funding here: [Special Educational Needs Inclusion Funding \(SENIF\) | Cambridgeshire County Council](#).
- Once the child has started and you have got to know them, ensure the whole team understands the support required to provide consistency.
- Contact the receiving school as early as possible once the place is accepted.
- Be an advocate for the child when they transition to school. Working alongside the family, you can support the school to understand the child's individual needs at this important time.
- Ensure updated SEND and Assess, Plan, Do, Review paperwork is shared and discussed with the receiving school, with time allocated for liaising and answering questions.
- Invite the school to visit the setting. Invite them to some of your transition events such as teddy bears' picnics or stay-and-play sessions.
- Share as much information as possible about the child, including current targets, effective strategies, such as transition prompts, likes/dislikes, and activities that help them. See appendix for professional discussion prompts.
- Share how the child communicates and ensure the receiving school has appropriate visuals and communication tools in place for day one.

Reflecting on practice

Ask yourself...

- Are there opportunities for previous parents and children to give feedback about their transition experience so that you can further improve?
- Are there opportunities for the Reception and Year One educators to observe each other's practice?
- Do transition conversations include the Characteristics of Effective Learning?



Considering children with emerging or identified needs: schools

When planning transitions into school, careful consideration must be given to children who experience barriers to learning, including those with emerging or identified needs. Inclusive adjustments should be made without the need for a formal diagnosis. The approaches outlined here reflect inclusive practice that supports many children, though some may need more tailored support. In these cases, practitioners may wish to seek advice from their Early Years Adviser, link SEND practitioner, book a [Reception SEND surgery](#) appointment, or work alongside external professionals already involved with the child and family. The [Inclusion Without Labels](#) guidance provides further support for inclusive practice. Expectations may need to be flexible for some children, as unfamiliar routines, environments, rules, and structures can present significant challenges. Listen to and acknowledge the important role of parents and carers throughout this process. Supporting children and families through transition is a shared responsibility across the whole setting, including staff in non-child-facing roles and those overseeing safeguarding.

Helpful strategies

- SENCO should attend any summer term Team Around the Family (TAF) and annual reviews for children with an Education Health and Care Plan before becoming the lead professional.
- Contact the setting as early as possible once the place is accepted.
- Visit and observe the child in their current setting. Ensure the class teacher or teaching assistant visits the setting prior to transition. Arrange visits for the child to their new environment, beginning with quieter times, for example, empty classroom. Remember to show them all the spaces they will be using including the lunch hall, playground and so forth.
- Discuss and plan practical details with the family such as entry points, where their peg will be, and other routines.
- Consider how the child will arrive at school (whole class entry or a quieter alternative). For children with SEND, consider early or slightly delayed arrival to allow for calmer transitions.
- Ask the child's current key person to model how to support the child, including any strategies and resources used. Talk to the family about what approaches work best for them.
- Maintain continuity by sharing routines, phrases and the way you work with the child's key person so that they can begin to prepare the child for these changes, for example if you get the class's attention by clapping, the current key person could do that in the summer term.
- Ask for all paperwork. See appendix for professional discussion prompts.
- Provide a social story about what they will do on their first day. Include photos of the school building, staff, the classroom, toilets, lunch hall, and so forth to the child to look at over the summer break so that these things are familiar to them in September.
- Organise an additional or longer home visit or 1:1 visit with the child and family to build up that relationship.
- Some schools may need to arrange staff training for medical or physical needs before September.
- Ensure all staff supporting the child, including midday supervisors, understand their needs and how best to support them.
- Suggest to the family that the child practices wearing the uniform to make sure it is comfortable and that it is adapted or modified if necessary.

Reflecting on practice

Ask yourself...

- Do you meet as a team (including the SENCo) to plan your transition activities?
- Is your transition process flexible enough to meet the needs of individual children and families?
- Do you plan additional time to support children and families with emerging or identified needs, as well as extra time to liaise with educators?
- Have you identified any training, skills, or knowledge that staff may need before any children start?



Useful websites and resources

Educators

- [Being school-ready | PACEY.](#)
- [High Quality Transitions.pdf \(birthto5matters.org.uk\).](#)
Size: 208KB File format: pdf
- [Transitions case studies.pdf \(birthto5matters.org.uk\).](#)
Size: 113KB File format: pdf
- [What to expect in the EYFS.pdf \(development matters.org.uk\).](#)
Size: 6.0MB File format: pdf
- [Transitions - Early Education \(early-education.org.uk\).](#)
- [Barnardos Key Person Booklet.pdf \(limerickchildcare.ie\).](#)
Size: 540KB File format: pdf
- [Starting Reception.](#)
- [Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Health Visiting and School Nursing Service.](#)
- [Best Start in Life.](#)

Families

- [Starting primary school - BBC Parents' Toolkit - BBC Bitesize.](#)
- [Being school-ready | PACEY.](#)
- [Words for Life | National Literacy Trust | Words for Life.](#)
- [Foundation years - 7 effective tips for supporting transitions in the early years.](#)
- [Potty training: how to start & best age to potty train - ERIC.](#)
- [Help for early years providers: Toilet training.](#)
- [Child and Family Centres.](#)
- [Starting Reception.](#)

Potential books to support transition

- 'A House for Hermit Crab' – Eric Carle.
- 'Great Big Book of Feelings' – Mary Hoffman and Ros Asquith.
- 'I Am Absolutely Too Small for School' – Lauren Child.
- 'Little Owl's First Day' – Debi Gliori and Alison Brown.
- 'Never Take a Bear to School' – Mark Sperring and Britta Teckentrup.
- 'Ruby's Worry' – Tom Percival.
- 'The Mega Magic Teacher Swap' – Rochelle Humes (Transition to Year One).
- 'The Way I Feel' – Janan Cain.
- 'Topsy and Tim Start School' – Jean Adamson.
- 'Whiffy Wilson: The Wolf Who Wouldn't go to School' – Caryl Hart and Leonie Lord.
- 'You Choose' – Nick Sharratt and Pippa Goodhart.
- Book Trust has a list of books for [Starting School.](#)



All about me

Name:

What I enjoy doing at home:

I can:

Experiences I have had with my family:

Ways I express myself:

Anything I or my family are worried about:

All about me

Child's name		Date of birth		Home language					
What are your child's favourite things to do?									
Are there any activities they do not like doing?									
Is there anything that causes your child high levels of anxiety, for example, loud noises, busy places, messy play?									
What would your child like us to do if they are upset?									
Does your child sleep during the day?									
How does your child communicate?		Gesture	<input type="checkbox"/>	One or two words at a time	<input type="checkbox"/>	Short sentences	<input type="checkbox"/>	Longer sentences	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do they like to play alone, with one other child or with a group of friends? This could change based on the activity, where they are or who they are with.		Alone	<input type="checkbox"/>	One other child	<input type="checkbox"/>	With a group of friends	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Can they listen to stories, and do they join in?		Do not listen to stories	<input type="checkbox"/>	Enjoy listening	<input type="checkbox"/>	Join in or knows what happens next	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Do they enjoy making marks with pencils, paint, mud, or other resources?		Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Can they draw a picture and tell you what they have drawn?		Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Can they understand simple instructions, for example, "can you get your shoes"?		Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sometimes	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Can they follow simple instructions, for example, "can you get your shoes"?		Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sometimes	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Can they pass you one or two of a requested object?		Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sometimes	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Do they play imaginatively, for example, with a kitchen?		Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sometimes	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Is your child toilet trained?		Yes – uses the toilet independently most/all the time	<input type="checkbox"/>	No – wears nappies/pull ups	<input type="checkbox"/>	Toilet training now	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Can your child:		Put on their own coat/shoes?	<input type="checkbox"/>	Wash their own hands?	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Do you have any concerns about your child's development?		Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Is there anything else you would like to tell us about your child?									

All about me

Name:

I was born on:

Medical needs, for example, glue ear, glasses, physio advice, equipment, allergies:

Self-help needs, for example, toileting, dressing, feeding:

When you speak to me it helps if, for example, you say my name first to get my attention, you keep your language simple, keep your voice calm, use Makaton:

Things you need to know about me, for example, my diagnosis, if I have one, I need adults to keep me safe, I cannot use my words to communicate, and so forth:

I live with:

Things that I like, for example, play, toys, food, people, and so forth:

Things that I do not like, for example, getting messy, being touched, loud noises, certain foods on my plate:

Things that help me, for example, first and then visuals, visual timetable, having a quiet space to go to, how to support their emotional regulation:

Top tips, for example, use visuals, tell me what to do and not what not to do, use a sand-timer to prepare me for transitions, and so forth:

Professional to professional conversation guide: transitioning to Reception

These questions and prompts will help structure conversations when a child is transitioning to a new setting. They provide a framework for building a holistic picture of the child and their family, and for gathering key information about their development and wellbeing.

Ready Children

- What helps the child to settle, feel safe, or regulate their emotions?
- Describe how the child demonstrates the Characteristics of Effective Learning.
- What are the child's interests and fascinations?
- What are this child's key strengths and barriers to learning?
- How does this child communicate their needs, emotions, or ideas? For example, gestures, single words, sentences.
- Are there particular situations, environments, or sensory experiences that cause the child anxiety or overwhelm?
- What is their current level of language and vocabulary?
- How does this child manage transitions between activities or spaces? Are any particularly challenging? If so, what strategies have been effective?
- How independent is the child with key tasks such as toileting, dressing, eating, and organising belongings?
- How does the child build relationships with peers and adults?
- Are there children moving up with them that they that they work or play well with or struggle to work with?

Ready Schools

- Are there misconceptions, gaps, or emerging needs that Reception teachers should plan for early?
- Is there anything the reception team needs to set up in the learning environment before they start?
- What routine is the child used to following at their current setting?
- Are there any group strategies used in the current setting that work well and would be helpful to share, for example clapping three times to gain attention?
- Transition paperwork might include:
 - Records showing the child's development across the seven Areas of Learning and Development.
 - Notes on the child's Characteristics of Effective Learning.
 - Updated information on the child's medical conditions, allergies, or care requirements.
 - Relevant details about the child's home language, family circumstances and additional support that has been given to families.
 - All about me document.

Ready Families

- Are there concerns or anxieties the family has expressed about school?
- What language(s) does the family speak at home, and do they need translation or additional support?
- What do we know about the family's circumstances, strengths, and any challenges they may be facing?
- Any tips for working with families?

Professional to professional conversation guide for children with emerging or identified needs: transitioning to Reception

Ready Children

- Can you describe the child's identified SEND, emerging needs, or medical requirements?
- What does the child need to feel safe, regulated, and successful in a new environment?
- What adaptations currently support the child's learning?
- What specific resource, for example visuals, sensory tools, quiet spaces, are important for this child?
- What are their main interests, motivators, or fascinations?
- Are there times of day that are more challenging? What seems to help?
- How does the child communicate their needs, feelings, and ideas? Are there communication resources that should be ready in Reception from day one?
- Are there particular triggers we should be aware of that a child is becoming dysregulated?
- How does the child respond to transitions between activities or spaces?
- How does the child engage with play and learning opportunities?
- Do they prefer independent play, adult-led activities, or structured routines?
- Which routines may need additional support in Reception, for example lining up, snack time, toileting?
- Are there sensory sensitivities or preferences for which we should plan?
- What self-help skills does the child need adult support with. for example, dressing, toileting, eating?
- Are there friendships or key peer relationships to be aware of? Are there any children that have a negative impact on the child?

Ready Schools

- What strategies or adaptations have been helpful?
- What professional reports, plans, or targets should Reception teachers be aware of?
- What SEND support or interventions are currently in place?
- What strategies must continue seamlessly into Reception?
- What training, resources or staffing considerations should be planned?

Ready Families

- What are the family's main hopes or concerns about the move to Reception?
- What has worked well when engaging and supporting this family?
- Are there routines at home that mirror or differ from school expectations?

Paperwork

[ADPR paperwork](#) (Assess–Do–Plan–Review) or equivalent SEND records, [Risk Assessments](#), [Cambridgeshire Development Journal](#). Any professional reports, plans, or targets from external agencies, for example, Speech and Language Therapy, Specialist SEND practitioner, Health Visitor, Paediatrician and so forth, that Reception teachers need to be aware of updated information on the child's SEND needs, medical conditions, or care requirements. Health care plans. Names and details of any professionals or agencies who are working with the child such as Paediatric medical specialists, Physiotherapists, Occupational Therapists, Speech and Language Therapists, or Sensory support services.

Suggested transition form

If you are unable to meet with the receiving setting, you may wish to complete this form to support a smooth transition.

Child's name:		Date of birth:	Receiving school/setting:
How many sessions do they attend a week? How is their Attendance?			
Languages spoken by the child			
Languages spoken at home and proficiency of parents/carers			
Summary of Prime Areas of Learning	They are doing well with:		
	They need more support with:		
Summary of Specific Areas of Learning	They are doing well with:		
	They need more support with:		
Describe their characteristics of Effective Learning			
How do they settle? What comforts them?			
How do they communicate?			
How do they interact with others?			
How does the child manage their personal care? Toileting, eating/drinking, dressing and so forth.			
What works well/not well with them?			
Does the child have any emerging/identified needs?			

Are they on the Early Support Pathway or has this been applied for?	
Is there an EHCP in place or an ECHNA application?	
Does the child have a diagnosis?	
Does the child have any medical needs or allergies?	
Is the child receiving any interventions or additional adult support? If so, describe frequency and type of support.	
Do you have any Safeguarding concerns? Yes/No	
Are any outside agencies involved? If so, who and what are their contact details? For example, Family worker, SALT, Social care and so forth.	
Is the child in receipt of any extra funding, for example, DAF, SENIF, EYPP and so forth.	
Can you provide any information about the family?	
How is the family's engagement?	
Person completing the form:	Role:
Contact details:	Current setting:

Suggested transition activity calendar for settings

	September - December	In place	Date	Actions
Curriculum Planning	<p>Get to know new children, build relationships, and gather information about their interests to feed into your planning. Focus on your boundaries and routines, reflect on how you support children to understand these.</p> <p>Adapting your curriculum plans to meet the needs of any new children. Ensure your environment and curriculum reflects children's home and lived experiences.</p> <p>Review continuous provision to support enhanced skills.</p>			
Leadership	<p>Sharing vision and aims with staff, parents, and settings. Have conversations with feeder schools to reflect on the transition this year.</p> <p>Support staff with children settling in.</p> <p>Make plans for supporting children prior to and returning from Christmas break.</p> <p>Contact schools to watch nativity performances or shared carol services.</p> <p>Hold meeting on school readiness for parents.</p> <p>Share Starting Reception guides and posters.</p>			
Networking	<p>Contact feeder schools to gather information for cluster group meetings between settings and schools.</p> <p>Liaise with local children and family hub to find out what is on and how you can promote this/signpost.</p> <p>Promote school application process to parents.</p> <p>Offer support to any parents struggling.</p> <p>Make child led festive cards/decorations and deliver to community.</p> <p>Complete open days and events for prospective parents.</p>			
Events	<p>Hold a curriculum evening – provide parents with the opportunity to learn more about your curriculum/have an input.</p> <p>Parent/Carer support group/coffee morning.</p> <p>Stay and play sessions.</p>			
Staff and/or Governance	<p>Share information on key children/vulnerable groups with staff, governors, or committee members.</p>			

Parental Involvement	<p>Send out curriculum information and newsletters.</p> <p>Home visits or parent meetings.</p> <p>Promote 50 Things to Do Before You're Five activities. Share ideas for half term holiday 50 Things to Do Before You're Five activity.</p> <p>Encourage parents to share interests and achievements from home – riding a bike and so forth.</p> <p>Ensure parents can access home-setting communication channels.</p> <p>Parent consultation evenings.</p> <p>Have discussions with parents around any emerging needs and put plans in place.</p> <p>Survey parents and carers about transition experience.</p>			
Monitoring	<p>Complete baseline assessments for new children.</p> <p>Review current children's progress, consider support needed to transition back into the setting after festive break.</p> <p>Complete summative assessments and cohort analysis.</p>			

	January - April	In place	Date	Actions
Curriculum Planning	<p>Settings to plan for independence skills – getting changed, using cutlery, personal hygiene and so forth.</p> <p>Review continuous provision to support enhanced skills.</p>			
Leadership	<p>Review transition reflections and begin to plan this year's transition.</p> <p>Identify which children have emerging or identified needs or may require additional support with transitions.</p> <p>Shared TAF/SENCo meetings with relevant representatives.</p>			
Networking	<p>Attend cluster meetings between schools and settings, focused on transitions.</p>			
Events	<p>Invite schools to join in events such as a book reading or craft session.</p> <p>Begin to liaise with schools regarding new intake.</p>			
Staff and/or Governance	<p>Plan schedule of transition events, including 'Starting Reception' event for parents.</p> <p>Plan for additional transition sessions for identified individuals.</p>			
Parental Involvement	<p>Send out curriculum information.</p> <p>Provide information for supporting preparing for reception, that is how parents can support children's independence.</p> <p>Share ideas for 50 Things to Do Before You're Five activity.</p>			
Monitoring	<p>Complete summative assessments and cohort analysis.</p>			

	April - August/September	In place	Date	Actions
Curriculum Planning	Plan for transition through provision such as uniform, bookbag, photos of school/new teachers. Using stories about transition/starting school. Review continuous provision to support enhanced skills.			
Leadership	Identify which schools' children will be attending (April). Contacting schools to find out information about their transition processes/information preferred in schools transition reports.			
Networking	Attend shared cluster meetings. Invite schools into the setting to meet children and their key person.			
Events	School SENDCO to meet with parents and setting.			
Staff and/or Governance	Key person complete transition information for children to be shared with school.			
Parental Involvement	Parent meetings for transitioning. New intake meeting for parents. Share ideas for 50 Things to Do Before You're Five activities.			
Monitoring	Complete cohort analysis. Complete baseline assessment for new children.			

Suggested transition activity calendar for starting Reception

	Autumn	In place	Date	Actions
Curriculum Planning	Gathering information on children's interests to feed into planning. Building relationships and establishing rules and routines. Adapting curriculum plans to meet the needs of new children. Environment and curriculum reflect children's home and lived experiences at first then begins to broaden children's experiences. Plans for this term should reflect that the Reception Baseline Assessment is also being carried out.			
Leadership	Induction for any new staff. Sharing vision and aims with staff, parents, and settings. Organise a conversation between feeder settings and school to reflect on the transition this year. What went well? What needs adjusting for next year?			
Networking	Share Reception on entry data with feeder settings to look at areas of development. Send out invitations for half termly cluster group meetings between settings and schools. Schools to promote open days and events to feeder settings for prospective parents. Schools to remind settings to promote school application process to parents. Make Christmas cards/decorations and deliver to community including feeder settings. Offer support to any parents struggling with the school application process.			
Events	Curriculum evenings. Parent/Carer support group/coffee morning after dropping off and so forth. Invite feeder settings to watch nativity performances or shared carol services. Offer to support feeder settings to hold a meeting on school readiness for parents. Share Starting Reception guides and posters .			
Staff and/or Governance	Share information on key children/vulnerable groups with staff and governors.			

Parental Involvement	Send out curriculum maps/newsletters. Home visits or parent meetings. Organise open days or events for prospective parents. Promote 50 Things to Do Before You're Five activities. Share ideas for half term/Christmas holiday 50 Things to Do Before You're Five activity. Check that all parents can access home-school communication channels. Survey parents and carers about transition experience. Sharing identified needs with parents. Complete open days and events for prospective parents. Stay and Play or Open Classroom events to share children's environment.			
Monitoring	Use feeder settings and parental transition information to support on entry judgements. Pupil progress meetings.			
	Spring	In place	Date	Actions
Curriculum Planning				
Leadership	Review transition reflections and begin to plan this year's transition. Identify which children have emerging or identified needs or those who may require additional support with transitions.			
Networking	Half termly cluster meeting between schools and settings.			
Events	Invite feeder settings to join in events such as a book reading or craft session. Schools begin to liaise with feeder settings regarding new intake.			
Staff and/or Governance	Plan schedule of transition events. Plan for additional transition sessions for identified children.			
Parental Involvement	Send out curriculum maps/newsletters. Share ideas for half term/Easter 50 Things to Do Before You're Five activity.			
Monitoring	Pupil progress meetings			

	Summer	In place	Date	Actions
Curriculum Planning	Provide feeder settings with relevant resources they may need to aid transition such as uniform, bookbag, photos of school/new teachers.			
Leadership	Organise transition information and packs to be sent out to new families. Contact families of children who need additional transition support to check their individual transition plan is appropriate. Shared TAF/SENDSCO meetings with preschool and school representatives. Collate permission forms and parental information to be able to access apps or online platforms, for example Tapestry. Set families up on apps or online platforms so that they can begin to share over the summer holidays.			
Networking	Schools and Settings to attend shared cluster meeting moderating assessment judgements.			
Events	School SENDSCO to meet with parents and feeder setting. Invite feeder setting families to summer fairs. Organise transition conversations between Reception and Year One.			
Staff and/or Governance	Teachers meet with feeder settings to share information regarding pupils. Primary school Buddies to visit or introduce themselves to new intake prior to the summer. Send letter/photo if visit is not possible.			
Parental Involvement	New intake meeting for parents. Share ideas for half term/summer 50 Things to Do Before You're Five activity. Invite families to visit their new setting. Send photos/information booklet or digital version for families to share during the holidays.			
Monitoring	Share transition data from settings to schools and GLD with Year One teachers.			