



Communication and Interaction Team

Supporting transition for pupils with SLCN – primary to secondary school

Speech, language and Communication needs (SLCN) in adolescents

The identification of children with SLCN by the time they finish primary can be variable and so some children may not be reliably flagged up upon transition. However, some children and young people may manage reasonably well in primary education, with their difficulties only becoming apparent when they reach the more challenging environments of secondary school.

Although the development of speech and language begins in the early years it is important to recognize that development continues for all children and young people throughout school, adolescence and into adulthood. **I CAN** estimates that around 10% of children and young people have SLCN which are likely to be long term or persistent and due to a difficulty learning language.

Implications for Secondary schools:

- Need for increased awareness/improved understanding of SLCN amongst secondary staff
- Understanding the potential impact for the CYP with SLCN especially upon transition.
- Communication friendly transition plan to support children with SLCN.
- Ensuring positive transition for children with potential 'hidden needs'.
- Identifying CYP that may have an undiagnosed SLCN

Transition Challenges for YP with SLCN

All children seem to have the same concerns around transition to secondary school, typically feeling 'scared, nervous and excited'. How able a CYP with SLCN copes with and adapts to the secondary environment and how long they take to adjust will vary. Research

shows that CYP with SLCN have higher levels of concern regarding their transition to secondary school compared to CYP without 1.

Potential challenges

The move from primary to secondary school means:

- Increasing vocabulary demands
- New subjects
- New curriculum
- New and many more teachers
- Different teaching styles
- Different organisation and structure to the day
- New rules
- Having to manage less structured social 'free' time
- Different or new friendship groups
- New environment

Strategies to support transition

A successful transition from primary to secondary school results in students being academically and behaviorally involved in their new secondary school and feeling a sense of belonging to school. The key to supporting a positive transition for the young person is to recognize and reduce their anxiety level, so that they can manage everyday language demands, enabling them to engage with a successful transition into secondary school.

Key strategies

- Primary and Secondary SENCO's to work together to identify potential at risk children.
- Ensuring a robust communication profile is in place and shared.
- Tailoring transition interventions around individual need, targeting specific areas for children with different language profiles.



- Ensuring communication friendly resources that enable access to the new curriculum are available to support scholastic confidence for new pupils before transitioning.
- Ensuring pupils have access to new rules and expectations that are differentiated using language friendly approaches, in advance.
- Supporting social communication and interaction skills in preparation for secondary and continued into secondary as part of a transition plan.
- Using visual supports such as scaling to unpick anxieties around transition and answer any questions a child might have.
- Work closely: schools and families together. Everyone will be a little anxious, so everyone needs to remember to be kind.
- Establish clear routines. Present new rules and timetables visually. Go over these many times. Send home beforehand if possible.

The C&I team can support you to meet the needs of any pupil with SLCN who has either been seen by the speech and language therapy team or who is waiting to be seen. Please use our usual referral pathway.

Useful resources, links and further reading:

Websites:

ICAN primary and secondary schools teacher support - <https://ican.org.uk/i-cans-talking-point/professionals/primary-and-secondary-school-teachers/>

Books:

Moving On! Activity pack for year 6 children- <https://ican.org.uk/shop/moving-on-activity-pack-for-year-6-children/>

Moving on! Teachers guide -

<https://ican.org.uk/shop/moving-on-teacher-guide/>

Further reading:

Tips for a communication supportive environment <https://ican.org.uk/media/1316/tips-for-a-communication-supportive-secondary-school.pdf?fbclid=IwAR3rw0tvuXSbwmIEaDcjVRYpZHopyTis7QoGaLXhJDmMuDOqoLn6xhT8BAI>