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Bolton Parent Carer Consortium

Striving for a voice, choice
and equality of opportunity 0-25 years



**Parent / Carers
Handy tips guide
Transition to
Secondary School**

Transition

So what's this all about then?

Transition is about moving from one place/activity/time in a child's life to something else, and a big move for a child with a Special Educational Need or Disability (SEND) is the transition from primary school to secondary school, so we've developed this handy tips guide to help.

The following are useful tips:

1. Plan ahead and discuss transition at your child's annual review in year 5 (some parents want to start the planning earlier in year 4 and if that suits you, then do it).
2. Gather as much information as possible about the different schools. This will hopefully enable you to reach an informed choice.

The information that you could collect includes:

- **The school prospectus**
- **Parent handbook**
- **A copy of the school's Ofsted report**
- **A copy of the school's policies and procedures**
- **And any parents' comments on the school website.**

Read these documents and makes notes of any queries.

3. Visit the 'Local Offer' website which will continue to evolve and can be found at www.localdirectory.bolton.gov.uk/send.aspx If you do visit the website and don't find what you are looking for, please send a comment from the website page, telephone **01204 338756** or make contact with Bolton Parent Carer Consortium.
4. Try visiting a selection of schools and keep an open mind (you may have heard rumours - put them to one side whilst you visit). It may have been a school that you went to, but remember your main concerns will be for YOUR child and so much of the information you seek will centre on what each particular school can offer. See if you can see the school polices being put into practice during your visit.



If your child has a Statement of SEN, an EHC plan or is at SEN support (graduated response)

- Ask to meet with the SENCO (Special Educational Needs Coordinator) at the secondary school.
- Read and talk through the SEN Policy - and remember there is no such thing as a silly question, so just ask.
- Read and talk through the Behaviour Policy if applicable to your child and family situation.
- Ask about the type of support/assistance that might be available for your child.
- Ask about parent to school communication.

Things to consider before your visit

- Will you be taking your child with you?
- Do you want someone else to accompany you to take notes or just be there in support?
- When would you like to visit? We suggest going at different times of the day to get a real flavour for school life.
- Do you want a guided tour or is the school happy for you to wander around?
- It is unlikely you will be able to meet all of the staff involved in your child's life, but a good starting point is the Head of Year or SENCO.
- Write down all the things you are hoping to find in a secondary school, the things that you know will be beneficial to your child, the things that your child will be keen on, the things you're not sure of - this can help you to focus on making decisions. Sometimes it's easy to be swayed by something that in the long run might not play a key factor, e.g. a particular member of staff might leave before your child even gets there.
- Take their child's EHC/statement to the SENCO meeting to see if they can carry out the provision within it.

During the visit

- Use your senses; is it welcoming - do staff and pupils seem happy to you?
- Check the walls and notice boards - is pupils' work on display and do they have a parent notice board?
- Is there a hum of activity - just noise or silence?

After your visit

Discuss your thoughts and feelings about the school with someone else:

- Did you feel welcome at the school? Did the children seem friendly and helpful?
- Do you think your child would be happy at the school?
- Did the school answer all of your questions?
- Have you got further questions that you would like to ask the school?

Admission Criteria for Your Chosen School(s)

Consider the admissions criteria and transport arrangements, please don't assume that if your child has a statement of SEN or an EHC plan they will be offered transport to secondary school.

It is a parent's responsibility to get their child to school. If you select a school that is not the nearest one able to meet your child's needs, then you will be responsible for getting your child to and from school each day. If you are unsure about this, please discuss this with your named officer.

If your child has a Statement of Special Educational Need which will become an EHC Plan, parents have the right to state a preference for a maintained school, (not a PRU or Hospital Special School) and the LA will always give due consideration to your request.

- These factors are considered when determining whether to agree to your preference which includes whether the school chosen is suitable for your child's age, ability, skills and SEN.

- Your child's presence will not be incompatible with the efficient education of the other children with whom your child would be educated at the school.
- Placing your child in the school will be an efficient use of the LA's financial resources (refer to the Code of Practice).

Even if you are considering a place at a special school, you must still apply for a place at your preferred mainstream school until the outcome is confirmed.

Please take account of Admissions Criteria as shown in the Admissions to School Booklet. Remember that criteria are reviewed each year and may vary from school to school.

What if I am not offered the school of my preference?

Any parent can appeal against non-admission based on the grounds of non-admission or the school being full. If your child has a statement or EHC plan and the preferred school is named within them, then you have the right to appeal.

Parents of pupils with a statement of SEN or an EHC plan will be sent an amended statement or a notice of amendment letter by 15th February detailing the school to be named on the pupil's statement/EHC plan.

If a place cannot be offered at the school of your first preference, you will have been notified of this and the reasons why prior to the 15th February.



For Pupils with Special Educational Needs

CURRENT STATEMENTS ONLY - If you are not happy with:

- the description in Part 2 of the statement of your child's special educational needs
- the provisions set out in Part 3 of the statement
- the school named in Part 4 of the statement
- or you aren't happy with section I on your EHC Plan

You should discuss this with the Inclusion and Statutory Assessment Officer identified on the statement /EHC plan. You can also contact Independent Support and/or the Information Advisory Service (SEND) or Bolton Parent Carer Consortium. (**Refer to useful contacts at the back of this guide**).

If you are still not happy, you must consider mediation before you can lodge an appeal with the Special Educational Needs and Disability Tribunal.

Information relating to this will be included with the Final Statement or EHC Plan.

Primary School Liaison

Most secondary schools have a member of staff with specific responsibility for primary school liaison. Arrangements are often made for pre-admission visits. Parents are encouraged to speak to the relevant staff in school about any such arrangements which could ease the transfer to secondary school. Using a person-centred approach tool, e.g. a one page profile could be a good starting point.

Whether or not your child has a statement/EHC Plan, they may still have additional needs, for example a medical condition/impairments. You may still have concerns such as how the new school will support your child, how their progress will be monitored, whether your own expectations are too high or too low, how your child will settle, what your aspirations are for your child, and outcomes you want to see your child achieve.

These are all legitimate questions/concerns, so please don't hesitate to discuss them with the new school: they will be happy to reassure.



A one page profile is a useful tool.

This is a summary of what matters to the young person and how to support them well. Some might use it to show a child's strengths and weaknesses.

For parents/carers

A one page profile captures important information to enable parents to make others aware of the strengths, interests and specific support needs of their child.

One page profiles are also a way for parents/carers to share their knowledge and expertise on how best to support their child.

They can be customised so that when things change in a child's life, for example medical intervention, home life, changes in behavioural patterns when at home after school, returning to school after a school holiday, if a child is anxious etc., the profile can be amended to suit the situation.

One page profiles grow and develop over the school year and can be the basis for more detailed person-centred plans. Ideally, one page profiles should be prepared as a coproduced document including the young person, the parent(s) and the school staff.

A checklist for transition

So what should you do in Year 5?

- Give thought to likely preference of secondary school.
- Have some discussions at year 5 review.
- Go and start the visits, ask the right questions to get the right answer, and ask again and again if needed.
- Attend an open day if you want to start to plan early. Even though they may be aimed at mainstream children, it's a good opportunity to get a feel for a school; the SENCO is usually available for a quick chat too.
- Contact the schools of interest to arrange further visits (use the sample questions).
- Discuss options with your child: what are their priorities?
- Balance the advantages/disadvantages of your preferences.
- Discuss your options with the primary school staff.
- Consider the practicalities of your preference, e.g. would your child meet the admissions criteria and what would be the transport arrangements?

So what should you do in Year 6?

- Read the Booklet for Admissions to Secondary Schools. This is at your child's primary school or on the Bolton Local Offer - look for Schools and Children's section.....admissions.....secondary school places.....downloads....admission to secondary school.
- Attend open days and evenings and ask to attend at different times to get a feel for the place. Some parents have visited the school at the end of the day to witness the pupils exiting the school to get to the buses, and this was the deciding factor for them.
- Make an appointment with the SENCO and ask them to give you a basic idea of their summer term transition days - some schools do several before the end of year 6 once places are allocated. Maybe your child's SNA could attend one of them. Some secondary schools hold a summer school, so check these details.
- Are there other options/acceptable alternatives?

Remember

Complete and return the secondary school application form by the closing date. You may jeopardise your preference being met if the application is received after the closing date. If you are considering an application to an Aided school, e.g. C of E or RC, **you MUST also complete their own application form.**

In such cases, **BOTH forms must be returned by the closing date.** Also remember that as a parent/ carer you are able to express a preference for the school that you would like your child to attend. The primary school can be involved and guide and support you, but at the end of the day, once your child has moved on, the primary school is in the past and their job is done. So feel empowered to be in the driving seat when looking for a secondary school, as this is your chance to have a huge input into your child's future educational establishment. **GO FOR IT...**

Finally

At this stage in your child's education, it is quite understandable that you have concerns, queries etc., and given that your child may have specific requirements, you may be even more anxious about their transfer to the next stage in their education.

If you have any doubts please talk to someone, whether that's the Information Advisory Services (IAS), the local Independent Supporter (IS) or Bolton Parent Carer Consortium (refer to agencies to contact): they will be happy to offer support.

And you are not on your own. Many other parents will have taken this journey and will have empathy, so please don't think that no-one will understand; they will, so do some talking, ask questions and enjoy the next stage in your child's education...
It will fly by...

Sample questions

You don't have to ask them ALL or any; they are just for ideas

- ① What is the general structure and timetable for the school day?
- ① How many children would be in your child's class/lesson?
- ① How many members of staff would be in your child's class?
- ① How does the school support children with SEN, medical or care needs?
- ① Does the school have prior/current experience of working with others who have similar needs to your child?
- ① Are all areas of the school accessible to your child? (Are adaptations required?)
- ① How will your child be supported outside lesson times? (E.g. break time/ lunchtime/after school activities/sports events/trips away from school.)
- ① How does the school manage behaviour that challenges - does the school policy match practice?
- ① How is bullying, taunting and teasing managed at the school?
- ① How does the school help children mix and make friends? E.g. buddy systems in peer groups/forms. Remember they spend 5 years with their form group at secondary school - it's a long time to be without friends.
- ① What extra activities does the school provide before school, break times, lunchtime and after school that your child could be involved in?
- ① Are out of school sports just for gifted and talented children or for any child who shows an interest?
- ① How does the school communicate with parents - do they use the key-working system having one point of contact? This can be especially helpful at secondary school, e.g. text/email updates, face-to-face discussions, regular telephone calls at the end of the week.
- ① Will the school expect you to be at the end of a telephone call and come to collect your child immediately? Discuss the implications of this whether you are a working parent or not.
- ① How can a parent make contact with a school? Does the school use a key-working system in which parents decide on how the contact is developed through the time at the school? Also consider a 'single point of contact' that is agreed with parents and school, e.g. SENCO or the Head of Year, so make the arrangements that suit you and your family. This can have huge benefits all round.
- ① What opportunities are there to meet other parents? (E.g. PTA, SEN forums, organised events, key skills for parents.)
- ① Ask about what the school offers regarding 'independent careers advice' - it may not be a priority at year 7 but it will be by year 9.
- ① Ask if the school offers the opportunity for work experience in year 10/11.
- ① Ask whether they provide/design an orientation plan of the school for your child if needed.

So what happens when my child gets their place – what can I do to help?

Starting a new school means getting into a new schedule and routine. Although your child may have kept busy over the summer, starting at a new school can be tough.

- Wearing a new uniform - different textures might be distressing.
- Knowing the name of the new clothes, e.g. blazer.
- Travelling on public transport.
- Getting into a taxi.
- Travelling independently.
- Driving a new route.

Even if your child has attended the school over the summer period, they may be anxious about starting the new school year because it may mean being in a new building, having new teachers or making new friends.

However, if you take some steps to prepare yourself and your child for this new experience, you can ease some of the anxiety and get the school year off to a better start.

These include:

- Start talking early
- Uniform - wash it a lot, cut out labels, maybe use Velcro for the top button (always tricky to do), put your child's name labels in places where it won't irritate, if the school doesn't use a clip in tie - teach the skill of tying a tie

- Begin reminding your child that school is starting a few weeks before it actually does. Try to assess their emotions and record this information as it might be useful to pass this onto school
- Let your child know that it is OK for them to be nervous
- Try to get them excited by going shopping for a school uniform, stationery and a school bag
- If possible, try to visit your child's class before the first day. Some schools have a staff day on the first day of term so you can visit and meet the form tutor and SENCO if needed. This will help them become familiar with their surroundings, and it will also give them the opportunity to ask questions and express any fears so you can talk about them before the first day. If not, make sure before the end of year 6 that you have created a starting a new school profile by visiting the school and taking pictures. Some people call this an 'Orientation Plan'
- If your child will no longer be with the same group of friends, see if you can get the names of a few children in their class and maybe make contact. When your child has a moving-up day, you can always express your concern to staff and ask them to see who your child seems to talk to on that visit. Make a note of their names.

Get bedtime back on schedule

- A week or two before school begins, start adjusting your child's bedtime to what it will be on school nights. There is no right bedtime for any specific age group of children because each child's routine, metabolism and need for sleep is different.

Practise for a school day routine

- Have your child wake at the appropriate time for school in the morning, and do the things they will do on school days such as get dressed, have breakfast and put their lunch in their school bag. Explain to your child that this is so you can make sure your routine works.

- If your child will be taking lunch or a snack, involve them in planning and packing these.
- Make sure that any containers and packages are user-friendly.
- Go over the route to school, whether it involves going to the bus stop, taking public transport, or driving. (Remember though - give yourself more time as once the school holidays are over, the traffic increases).

Adjust to the academics

- Your child might not have been used to having a planner and/or doing homework; they will still need to be prepared to learn.
- Try to refresh their memory and go over some of the things they learned during the previous school year.
- Have your child practise homework time by setting aside time for them to read every day in the weeks leading up to school, then talk to them about what they have read.

Give it time

- The first few weeks of the school year can be an adjustment for everyone. As prepared as you and your child are, there may be ups and downs as you both get used to the routine and develop a new schedule for homework and other activities.
- If you haven't already set up a key-working system (a single point of contact) then do

that. Not every school will encourage this, but given that your child may have 15 different teachers, it makes life easier for everyone as you can pass and receive messages and get answers to any concerns or questions raised.

- Establish how you will be communicating with each other whether that's email, weekly calls, face-to-face visits etc. It can also be a stress reliever if you get to hear how well your child is settling, and it can also show a pattern if your child's behaviour starts to change at home. Even though school staff say your child is settling in well, it might be worth exploring whether their routines etc. can be replicated at home.

Look through the Post 16 guide which starts at year 9 but has helpful hints that might be useful for your child from year 7.

If you would like a copy of this, please email breakbarriers3@gmail.com or call 07717 434840.

Agencies to contact

Bolton Parent Carer Consortium

T: 07701 305782
E: enquiries@bpcc.org.uk
www.bpcc.org.uk

Information Advisory Services

T: 01204 848722

Independent Support

E: cheryl-ppsbolton@outlook.com
M: 07467 943495

LA Inclusion and Assessment Service

E: ea.sen@bolton.gov.uk
T: 01204 338653 / 01204 338612 / 01204 332207

Parents/carers passing on information about agencies/groups/practitioners that have been involved in their life may be useful.

So don't forget to pass on their details. Make a list here so you have the information to hand:

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