



Transition and beyond

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Aims of the project

The aims of this project were:

- To create a smoother transition across key stages for teachers, pupils and parents
- To improve collaboration across key stage transition
- To develop teachers' knowledge and understanding of each others' curriculum/routines/events/lessons

Dimensions of the study

Broadmeadow Infant School is a 2-form entry school with a 39 full-time equivalent place Nursery. The school serves an area with a significant level of social deprivation. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is roughly double the national average. The great majority of pupils are White British. Some children start in the school's Nursery class while others do not join the school until the Reception Year. This project ran over a period of 9 months and involved 56 Year 2 pupils, five members of staff and Year 2 parents.

Summary of main findings

Our findings showed that:

- effective professional development opportunities created a professional attitude of collective responsibility and accountability for a child's progress through school
- key staff valued opportunities to meet throughout an academic year and actively engage and collaborate in informal and formal discussions as an essential element of their 'professional learning journey'
- visits were an important ingredient of transition, but it was necessary for staff and pupils to be actively involved and to work collaboratively on an ongoing basis
- effective transition was supported by a process that enabled consistent and secure moderation of pupils' achievement by all teachers across Key Stages and Year groups

Background and context

Children start at the school with attainment which is well below

average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities is a little above average. Their difficulties vary widely in nature. The Infant School has formed a 'soft federation' with the adjoining Junior School. The head teachers of both schools have been seeking to bring the two schools closer together. The children transfer automatically to the Juniors and the previous transition programme has been limited to one visit by the children to their new class and one short meeting between Year 2 and 3 teachers.

Our project was therefore guided by three overarching questions:

- How do different groups perceive Key Stage 1 to 2 transition arrangements?
- What changes are necessary to improve current arrangements?
- How can we best design a transition programme that will provide a deeper understanding between Year 2 and Year 3 colleagues?

Teaching processes and strategies

The core group working on the project involved five staff including the head teacher, Year 2 teachers and a teaching assistant. We held regular meetings to discuss key areas we identified for improvement in order to create a smoother transition for both pupils and staff. This included joint moderation of writing, planning a transitional scheme of work and planning a timetable for visits of Year 2 children to Year 3 classrooms. The teachers in Year 2 and 3 collaborated closely to produce a timeline of key events and a programme to support the transition from Year 2 to Year 3.

Marking and moderation of SATs

Year 3 teachers were invited to observe the administration of Key Stage 1 SATs and were also involved in joint marking of Maths papers and joint moderation of levelling writing tasks.

Transition unit

Year 2 and 3 teachers designed a cross-curricular transitional unit of work to begin at the end of Year 2 and to continue into the beginning of the academic year in Year 3. This aimed to ensure that key objectives were covered across a variety of subjects. This also gave Year 3 teachers a current independent sample of children's work that reflected their attainment at the end of Key Stage 1. We intended our joint planning to guarantee progression and not repetition.

Children's visits

Year 3 pupils visited Year 2 pupils for a question and answer session that enabled peer support to be provided by Year 6 pupils in a supportive environment. The project broadened to involve children from Year 6 who produced an individual guide book for

Year 2 pupils and presented it to them in an informal joint lesson. Year 2 children visited the Junior School more frequently to become familiar with changes in routine. They had an extended visit to Year 3 and experienced Literacy and Numeracy lessons and a playtime session. In addition they also joined the Junior School for production afternoons and assemblies.

The findings

Planned meetings that addressed teachers' misconceptions about other Key Stage processes, including assessments, were identified as critical for professional development to support transition.

Teachers in both key stages improved their ability to make judgements in assessing pupils' work as a result of collaboration with each other and support from senior managers. As part of this process The Senior Management Team reviewed the evidence of the 2007 Key Stage 1 writing assessments. Year 2 and Year 3 staff took part in joint moderation sessions and Year 2 staff engaged in joint moderation with Local Authority staff. One Year 2 teacher said: "It has been nice to have more professionals taking part in the moderation process and as a result I feel more sure of my levelling. We have built a relationship where it did not exist before. Professional dialogue and joint judgements can only strengthen relationships. "

Evidence showed that active engagement of children in the project resulted in a more informed attitude to moving schools. Using circle time at the beginning of the project gave Year 2 teachers the opportunity to record their pupils' concerns.

"I am worried that I won't know where to go. I'm not sure what happens at lunchtime. The work is really hard".

After Junior children had supported Year 2 children through discussion, meetings and providing each one with a booklet of advice the children seemed to be less concerned. One child stated:

"Before I was worried about what teacher I would be having but now I know their name and what they like".

Staff concluded at the end of the project that the impact of working collaboratively on a transitional unit had been significant in improving transition for all pupils and teachers. A Year 2 teacher actively involved in all aspects of the project concluded that:

"The transitional unit of work has built a bridge for the children and provided an opportunity for Year 2 and Year 3 staff to work together".

The project identified that active collaboration between teachers in different Key Stages has the greatest impact on deepening the understanding of a child's 'learning journey'. Working together to plan, prepare, deliver and reflect on the learning outcomes was the most successful activity in providing staff with knowledge. In addition we recognised that a successful transition involves developing relationships of key staff throughout the year rather

than solely in the summer term. A Year 2 teacher said: "I have now seen what they will do in Year 3 and feel it has broadened my view of their future education – I can see the bigger picture".

A Year 2 teacher summed up her experience of the project saying:

"Over the last few years there have been attempts to create links but I feel they have been cosmetic. This action research project has tackled some deeper issues and has provided a springboard to greater involvement between the schools. We have developed professional relationships which were needed before anything else could occur".

Both Senior Management Teams recognised that a financial commitment needs to be made to provide opportunities for continuing and extending the work of the project in the future.

Research methods

In order to gain detailed insights into the inquiry questions posed by this project a range of views were gathered using a variety of data collection techniques, including:

- observation and feedback from meetings of teachers, pupils and parents
- parent survey
- observation record of pupils' circle time discussion
- mentor feedback
- observation of SATs marking by Year 2 and 3 teachers
- moderation of pupils' SATs work
- interviews with pupils

Conclusions

The findings from this project have a number of implications for maintaining and developing our future work and raised a number of specific issues. These include: transition between a separate Infant and Junior School; curriculum development and assessment and Continuing Professional Development.

Open and reflective discussion in an atmosphere of trust was a key feature in helping staff develop their knowledge and understanding of the expectations of routines, curriculum, and assessment procedures of staff and pupils in the other Key Stages. The working party meetings provided an opportunity for professional dialogue through a coaching and mentoring model that has impacted on staff's professional development.



The marking and moderation process in Key Stage 2 needs to be extended to involve Year 3 teachers so that all levels and judgements are made collaboratively, and consistency is maintained not only within but between Key Stages.

It is essential for staff to have a breadth of knowledge which encompasses all stages of a child's development. Whilst wanting staff to become skilled and expert practitioners in their Key Stage, we must also ensure that their pedagogy and knowledge encompasses settings beyond their experience into adjacent Key Stages.

To sustain successful transition our schools will need to develop a common language in policy documents, commonality in approaches to learning and teaching, a spiral curriculum and assessment procedures. We aim to produce a planned programme of CPD activities that will allow teachers to broaden their experience and repertoire initially through lesson study. This will lead to a rotation of teaching across year groups and where possible key stages. This will be possible through using resources from the federation and other external agencies. The professional development opportunities must also create a professional attitude of collective responsibility and accountability for a child's progress through school.

Suggestions for further reading

A Study of the Transition from the Foundation Stage to Key Stage One, DfES Research report SSU/2005/FR/013, London: DfES

Nicholls, G. & Gardner, J. (1999) *Pupils in Transition Moving Between Key Stages*. London: Routledge

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