

A smooth move to your child's new school

This month thousands of children in Scotland started a new school – and next year, thousands more will do the same. It is a time of excitement, of opportunity for growth and development – but it is also a time of change, which can be daunting for some children and young people. In this issue we look at some of the ways to make sure starting a new school runs as smoothly as possible for children and is a positive experience for them. We hope you find this issue of *Enquire within* a useful

resource, but remember, you can call our helpline and speak to one of our trained advisers if you need any more information.



Anne Lennon and Sally Cavers
Enquire's managers

Open to centre pages to read the full feature

Email info@enquire.org.uk to receive this newsletter electronically

***NEW Involving children and young people in decisions about their education**

A new guide to involving children and young people in decisions that affect their education is now available. Visit www.enquire.org.uk



New Resource to increase understanding of dyslexia

A new resource to help teachers have a better understanding of dyslexia and its impact on children and young people will be sent to all schools this month.

It includes a booklet written for pupils to prepare them for the move to secondary and a "Parents' Insights" section.

Visit www.dyslexiatransition.org for more information.

Enquire helpline: 0845 123 2303

Opening hours: Monday 9am - 5pm • Tuesday 9am - 7pm • Wednesday 9am - 5pm • Thursday 9am - 7pm • Friday 9am - 5pm

Scotland's new government to examine how well mainstreaming is working

Scotland's new government has said it wants to examine how well the placement of children with additional support needs in mainstream settings is working.

It is likely that any review of mainstreaming will also examine how effective the new law relating to additional support for learning has been over the past two years. The Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act was introduced by the previous government to replace the law relating to special educational needs. It was a key piece of legislation because it reinforced the view that all mainstream schools should be inclusive and able to meet a much wider variety of children's learning needs. A review of the law will look at how well the legislation is working and ask questions about whether it achieves the aims that it intended to.

The new cabinet secretary for education and lifelong learning, Fiona Hyslop, told the education committee in June: "We intend to review the implementation and operation of mainstreaming – not to change the policy but to find out how it is working in practice and what is needed."

The new government came into office in May 2007 after the Scottish National Party won a majority vote in Scotland's national elections.

You can find out more about the law relating to additional support for learning at Enquire's website (www.enquire.org.uk) and also www.parentzonescotland.gov.uk

Good communication and information sharing

Good communication and information sharing between everyone involved in the move to school, including you and your child, have been described as “the bedrock” of effective transition.

Professionals in your child's new school or area should be told in advance what your child has been learning and what support they need. This should mean the new school is ready to support your child from the start. It should also mean you and your child don't have to keep repeating information about what your child needs, and your child shouldn't need to go through repeat assessments.

What information is held on my child?

An educational progress record must be kept for every child who attends an education authority school. It contains details on their educational abilities and attainment as well as information on their health, social and emotional development and previous schools attended. If your child has additional support needs, they may have a learning plan with more detailed information about the targets and support for them. Some children may have a coordinated support plan, a legal document used to manage support from multiple agencies over a long period of time.

How is this information shared?

If schools are working well together and planning effectively for the new school year, the transfer of your child's progress records should happen as a matter of course. This is also true for individual learning plans and co-ordinated support plans. There are also a number of legal duties on education authorities to ensure information about your child is shared.

If your child is moving to a new school

and has additional support needs, it is important to be aware that their education authority has a duty to start gathering information at least 12 months before the move (six months if the child is under school age). The education authority should decide who they should ask for information which could include professionals from health, social work or voluntary organisations. They should ask them for advice and information and take this into account before your child moves school. They must then decide what appropriate agencies need the information about your child's additional support needs.

Information about your child can only be passed onto other agencies with your consent. Sharing information will help ensure the new school has the necessary support in place from the day your child arrives. Information should be passed to the receiving authority or school six months before the move. You can help this process by making the current school aware that your child is moving schools and by giving them the name and contact details of the school your child is moving to.

These duties, though important, are not enough on their own. Good information sharing relies mostly on strong relationships between schools and between professionals from across sectors. Nurseries should work closely with their relevant primary schools, primary schools should work closely with their receiving secondary schools and all schools should have links with agencies outside education.

Don't forget that professionals should

involve you in planning for your child's entry to a new school.

I am concerned that information about my child is not being shared effectively. What should I do?

Speak to the head teacher of your child's current and new school. You could ask what information has been shared with the staff who are going to be working with your child and how your child's move is going to be managed so it is successful. You could suggest that you have a meeting with the relevant school staff to discuss your concerns. If a member of staff from the local authority has been involved, such as a support for learning manager, you could ask this person to arrange the meeting. Think about what information you can share with the school so that staff have all the information they need.



Informed, included and reassured parents

You have expert knowledge about your child, which professionals should draw upon at every stage, especially during times of change. You may be able to anticipate problems that professionals might not be aware of, and predict reactions that your child may have, which is very important in the planning process.

Your right to be fully involved in making important decisions about your child's education is supported by law. However, the quality of

your involvement in planning for any change in your child's education depends heavily on the quality of your relationship with staff at the school.

Professionals should make sure you are involved in any decision-making, keep you fully informed, recognise your knowledge and expertise relating to your child, respect your views even if they differ from theirs and find helpful ways to resolve any differences.

Your child involved in decision-making

Everyone has their own unique way of coping with change. Children and young people are no different and it is therefore vital that you and key professionals talk to them and make sure they are involved in planning for any change during their education.

Committed school leaders

Making sure that any changes to a child's education are as smooth as possible requires commitment from the whole school. This cannot happen unless school leaders are committed to bringing everyone in the school together to support new pupils. Your child's school should make sure that all staff have access to relevant information and that information sharing is a central part of how the school works.

Extra-curricular activities

Helping your child to settle into a new school goes beyond the school's four walls. Being involved in a range of extra-curricular activities such as sport and drama can do wonders for increasing children's confidence and overall wellbeing. Visit www.enquire.org.uk and click on 'iMap' to find out what is happening in your local area. Or contact your local authority or your child's school.

Your child at the centre

Professionals working with children need to be both flexible and creative to meet a wide range of needs. No child's needs are exactly the same and finding solutions may require some clever and unusual thinking. Any planning for a change to your child's education should focus on their strengths as well as their needs.



Different education authorities use different techniques to help children move into a new school

In some areas, meetings attended by representatives from relevant schools and nurseries are held well in advance of a new school year to share information about children with additional support needs with staff from receiving schools. Planning in advance is absolutely key. The receiving school might find, for example, that it is necessary for some staff to undertake training to enable them to meet your child's needs from the day they arrive. Primary school staff might also find that there are things they can do to help to prepare a child for their move. Other techniques include:

- Arrange early visits to a new school so that children can meet their new teachers and become familiar with the school
- Help children to produce their own 'personal passports' containing information about themselves (their likes, dislikes, strengths, hopes and worries), to take with them to their new school
- Set up a buddying system
- Identify a member of staff assigned to a child at the beginning of term in their new school and there to keep an eye on their progress and support them if necessary.
- Continue to support, and monitor if it is working after the settling-in period
- Give feedback to primary pupils about their work in their final year adapted to reflect the kind of feedback they would get at secondary school
- Secondary staff discuss with primary school staff what teaching methods have been successful in supporting learning in primary school



Enquire helpline: 0845 123 2303

Resources - 'transition'

Making Transitions work: supporting pupils learning during change.

Enquire's annual conference report 2007.

Going to Secondary School?

Essential information for P7 pupils – perfect for transition planning.

The Parents' Guide to Additional Support for Learning

A detailed and user-friendly guide to the education system

Enquire factsheets:

Planning children's and young people's learning

Outlines the ways that schools can plan for your child's education. Includes information on personal learning planning (PLP), individualised educational programmes (IEPs), and co-ordinated support plans (CSPs).

Placing requests

Explains how to make a placing request, why requests can be refused and what to do if this happens. Includes information on related transport issues.

Leaving school and deciding what to do at 16+

Explains how to involve young people in making choices when they reach school leaving age. Includes information on staying at school, further and higher education and starting work.

Getting ready to leave school

Details help that young people can get when planning what to do when they leave school, including good websites to visit.

Download or order all of these resources at www.enquire.org.uk/pcp/publications.php

Dad's the word - conference

How do dads cope when they find out their child has a disability? What impact does caring for a child with additional support needs have on fathers and what help and support do they need? **'Dad's the word', 25 September, Falkirk.** Visit:

www.childrenscotland.org.uk/dtw

New job-share senior manager for Enquire

Sally Cavers has this month taken up the post of senior manager for Enquire, sharing the job on a part-time basis with Anne Lennon.

Sally has worked for the Enquire service for over three and a half years, initially as a development officer with responsibility for representing the interests of children and young people in the service. More recently Sally rejoined Enquire as senior development officer with responsibility for the helpline. She has also worked in family support for a national children's charity and at a residential school for deaf pupils.

From a2b safely

A new road safety education resource for young people with mild to moderate learning difficulties will be launched by Scots author Ian Rankin in October.

'a2bsafely', developed by Road Safety Scotland (RSS), follows studies that found children with learning difficulties were more likely to be involved in road accidents. Other studies have linked particular behaviours such as hyperactivity to road risk.

a2b can be accessed via the internet or by ordering a CD-Rom. A support site offers parents advice and gives opportunities to feedback to RSS with ideas. Parents are encouraged to participate by teaching their children themselves, reinforcing what they have learned. 'You are your child's teacher and travelling companion'. www.a2bsafely.com will be launched on 9th October.

