

## Quick Information Guides for Educators

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### **SNAPshot No 9** **Supporting Transition**

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## Supporting Transition


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Throughout our lives we experience transition. From an early age children and young people are managing change in their lives on a daily basis. Some of these changes are small changes and when these are managed and supported by adults, children will gradually learn that transition need not be a time of great anxiety and uncertainty. Inevitably life will throw up bigger changes and preparing young people to deal with these is very important.


The Standards in Scotland's Schools etc Act (2000) states that schools will develop the "personality, talents, mental and physical abilities of each child and young person to their fullest potential". It is crucial that educational establishments think about what this means for all learners. This SNAPshot will consider how schools, teachers and parents can best support one particular group of learners, highly able pupils, as they transition from one stage of education to the next.

## Things to think about at point of transition

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 At the heart of planned coherent and smooth transitions is good communication. This communication takes place between a variety of people and ensures that information that can assist with planning for this next stage of the young person's learning journey is shared. Gathering information about the young person in advance of the transition allows the teacher to prepare the classroom for learning. Resources may have to be located, the layout of the room may have to be changed or timetables may require to be altered to allow cognitive peer partnerships to be established.

 The learner has an important contribution to make to the information sharing process. Highly able learners, like many learners, can be very articulate when asked about what measures would support them in their learning. Interestingly, what adults think is important at point of transition can vary considerably from what the children consider important. To miss them out of the communication loop is to miss out on valuable information.

 Some parents we have worked with worry that they will be classed as a "pushy parent" if they tell the school about their child's abilities. Schools we have worked with are keen to hear from parents knowing that parents know their children well and have seen

their child in a variety of circumstances. Parents see their child in a variety of circumstances and therefore they can often share useful information with staff. Young people can behave in very different ways in school from home. When the home and school contexts come together in the transition process, meaningful dialogue can be established and in turn this will lead to conducive learning experiences for young people.

✿ Appreciate that young children are faced with transitions before they start formal schooling. For example, these transitions may include transferring from home to a child minder or pre-school setting. Children will respond to this in different ways and highly able children are no different. Some will skip into Nursery without throwing a backward glance at their parent or care giver. Others will be clinging on to their care giver or parent and refusing to step inside the building. With sensitive planning and preparation, transitions can maintain coherence and continuity.

## Transitioning from home to early years education

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- ✿ puts the wellbeing of the child or young person at the heart of decision making;
- ✿ takes a holistic approach to the wellbeing of a child or young person;
- ✿ works with children, young people and their families on ways to improve wellbeing;
- ✿ advocates preventative work and early intervention to support children, young people and their families;
- ✿ believes professionals must work together in the best interests of the child.

## Transitioning to Primary School

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Going to formal school is a “big deal” for children and parents.

✿ Self-esteem: highly able pupils generally have positive global and academic self-concepts but they may feel less positively about themselves in the realm of social domain.

Having high potential is not enough to strengthen children's self-esteem; they must be performing well too. This indicates that underachieving gifted children might have lower self-esteem than high achievers, which can be both a result and a cause of their underachievement.

✿ Social relationships with peers: this is the area that often presents most concern for highly able children. Highly able pupils might be emotionally vulnerable because they need to adjust socially to being different even when their difference is a source of pride and so feeds their self-esteem. Some highly able children might feel inner conflict between their need to achieve and their need for intimacy since outstanding achievements can lead to peer disapproval. Some may find it difficult to communicate with their age peers as they have little in common.

✿ Stress: some highly able pupils might be more vulnerable to stress reactions not due to being highly able as such but because their environments might not meet their atypical needs. Moreover, highly able children are subject to negative life events and accompanying stress in the same way as any other child.

The social and emotional adjustment of highly able pupils depends largely on the extent to which their environments are responsive to their needs. The GIRFEC approach indicates that by acting to support wellbeing as soon as needs or concerns are identified, and well before crisis points are reached, we can ensure that every child is supported in a timely and proportionate way.

## Transitioning to Secondary School

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Adolescence refers to the second decade of the life span, roughly from ages 10 to 20. The word adolescence is Latin in origin, derived from the verb *adolescere*, which means "to grow into adulthood." Like all learners, highly able learners enter this period and can display a range of emotions and behaviours arising from biological maturation, peer groups and friends and changes in the learning environment.

During this period, some highly able adolescents might:

- ✿ have self doubts about their abilities
- ✿ cover up their abilities to "fit in"

- \* be struggling to find friends that “are like them”
- \* be struggling with parental and teacher pressure to achieve

All of these things might add to their already fragile self-image. However, it’s not all doom and gloom! Some highly able adolescents might:

- \* be as well adjusted as any other group of learner
- \* be aware of their abilities and be eager to further develop these
- \* have a clear goal in mind and set about achieving this
- \* be able to relate well to adults and peers and so create positive relationships that impact on learning

## National Documentation

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Getting it Right for Every Child is a helpful way of thinking about how we might support highly able learners at transition. Looking at the Wellbeing Wheel, the My World Triangle and the Resilience matrix and will help to guide you as you plan the learning experience.

\* **Observing and recording:** the *Wellbeing Wheel* is used to identify areas in which children and young people need to progress in order to do well now and in the future. It allows practitioners to structure information (which may identify needs and concerns), and to plan. It is used to record observations, events and concerns. The *Resilience Matrix* and the *My World Triangle* are then used to gather, structure and assist in the analysis of information.

\* **Resilience Matrix:** is used to identify children and young people’s secure environment (base), self-esteem and self-efficacy.

\* **My World Triangle:** is used at every stage to think about the whole world of the child or young person. It is particularly helpful to gather more information from other sources (for example specialist), to identify the strengths or wellbeing concerns in the child or young person’s world.

Using the National Practice Model allows teachers/practitioners to construct a plan and take appropriate action to support wellbeing of highly able pupils.

## Support at Transition

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- \* create a cooperative/friendly setting
- \* find out as much as you can about the young person and their abilities
- \* promote the young person's autonomy
- \* encourage special interests
- \* teach coping skills
- \* teach self-control
- \* introduce fun
- \* be sensitive to a young person's stress
- \* be emotionally as well as cognitively supportive

## In Summary

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- \* Remember staff and parents both want the same thing – to do the best for the young person
- \* Well-planned programmes should be responsive to the changing needs and interests of the young person
- \* Young people will react in different ways to transition. Forming positive relationships and involving the young person and their family will help to ease transition for all.
- \* Gather information about the young person in a holistic way – covering cognitive, social, emotional, psychological and spiritual - then use it plan appropriate learning opportunities.
- \* Remember that we experience transitions throughout life. Learning to cope with these from the start will build up resilience and help us to move through life.