

Case Study about the Transition Project between the Early Years providers and Plymouth Schools 23-25

Developing transitions between the early years and primary schools in Plymouth.

Following an Area SEND Ofsted inspection in 2023, it was identified that Plymouth needed to improve the transition support for children moving from the early years sector to the foundation stage. Within their reported findings Ofsted comment (amongst other points) that “Transition Arrangements for children moving between providers and services are not meeting the needs of all children...when pupils move from one stage of education to another” and “Leaders should use the information available to them to plan ahead, ensuring the right services and support are in place to meet the future needs of children and young people with SEND in Plymouth.”

Working in partnership with Plymouth Local Authority through the Placed Based Plan Partnership, the Early Years Southwest Stronger Practice Hub planned a series of network meetings between early years staff and foundation staff across the city to ensure children’s needs were met quickly and the transition process was more positive. The following areas were identified as needing to be improved:

- Children were often starting school before the new school had received any information related to the child.
- Children’s needs were not being met quickly enough.
- Children were dysregulated when they started their new setting and this meant valuable learning time was lost.

The project followed the success of another transition project for Y6 to Y7 across the city carried out early in 2023 which had used a software platform to enable staff to share information about students during the Spring term. The software package is called ‘Transition Portal’ and it is an online tool which supports and standardises information sharing between the early years setting and primary schools in order to support a child’s transition process to their new reception base. The Virtual School has funded a two-year subscription out of the Extended Role grant. It was recognised that children with an allocated social worker were often then most vulnerable children that needed a stronger transition in place. Information about these children is confidential, so therefore we needed a mechanism for tracking and sharing information. The LA commissioned the Stronger Practice Hub to facilitate the network meetings and work with the LA Early Years Officers to offer support for practitioners in developing best practice.

Supporting planning and transitions, the portal highlights children who may need additional support and helps to ensure that every child is well known by practitioners at their new school. Offering network opportunities has enabled SENcos from the primary schools to meet with their counterparts in the early years sector and built knowledge and understanding of their role.

The project supported the following evidence-informed outcomes:

- It was an effective way of streamlining and ensuring consistency of information between setting and primary school.
- It is a secure means of transferring key information from a child’s early years setting to their new reception base.

- It ensures a cohesive transition process between institutions, for staff and students alike.
- Practitioners spend less time undertaking paperwork and more time working directly with children.
- By developing network opportunities for staff across both sectors, we provided an opportunity for shared knowledge.
- Building knowledge in the EY sector through high quality conversations with SENDcos in schools.

There was a great deal of support for the Early Years Transition Project and 100% of Plymouth Primary schools joined in as did the vast majority of early years providers, including childminders. This helped the city to highlight 696 children who needed additional early intervention support.

Overall feedback about the online system was positive with strengths included: ease of use, everything in one place, better and quicker communication, better awareness of needs and everyone kept up to date more effectively. Overwhelmingly, it was positive for everyone to have shared ownership of enhanced transition work.