

A Transitions Guide for Parents and Carers



Information, Top Tips and Strategies to support children moving from Year 6 to secondary school with Special Educational Needs (SEN).

This guide is intended to be read in addition to Year 6 and Year 7 Transition Programme, Redcar and Cleveland Schools. The link for this document can be found here, alternatively you can scan the QR code:

https://informationdirectory.redcar-cleveland.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2024-03/2023_master_redcar_and_cleveland_transition_offer_version_3_final%20%282%29.docx



This guide has been produced to provide important information, strategies and some top tips for parents of children with Special Educational Needs (SEN) transitioning from Year 6 to secondary school (Y7).

Starting Secondary School

A child with SEND may take longer to get used to the new school environment and may need additional help to support them throughout this period.

Your child might be moving up to a local secondary school where they already have older siblings or moving with friends from their primary school which may ease some worries for you and your child. However, as a parent you may be worried about how your child will cope as the secondary school may be much bigger than their current one or that staff may not be as understanding of your child's needs.

Here are some of the changes that you may notice in your child or some of the worries they may come to you with:

- Classes may be larger.
- Need to move around the school between different lessons.
- Different teachers for each subject and being split into sets, which means you may not be with friends in every class.
- Bigger school environment and not all teachers will be aware of your child's difficulties.
- Coping alone in the playground at break and lunchtimes, with fewer teachers supervising.
- No personal desks.
- The use of lockers to store belongings.
- Independent travel to school.
- Homework – greater volume and increased expectations.
- The need for greater organisational skills and meeting deadlines.

As a parent or carer, spend time talking to your child about all of these things so that they can understand what to expect and have a chance to ask questions about anything that may be worrying them. Refer to the transition information regularly in the period leading up to the move, to help refresh the information and trigger questions.

Smooth Transitions

For a smoother transition it is a good idea to look round local secondary schools when your child is still in Year 5. There are a few benefits for visiting schools this early which may help your child when it comes to transitions in year 6. These can include:

Getting a “feel” for the school

Meeting key staff and making introductions

You can look at the layout with your child. Are there any areas they might struggle with?

Finding out about specialist subjects or after school clubs that your child might enjoy and want to attend

Collecting information about the school to take away and read at home.

As well as visiting the local secondary schools, do any of your family and friends have children in that school or that have recently left? What are their opinions of the school? Asking for family and friend recommendations can also help when looking at schools to get a different perspective and if they have or had a child with SEND in that school, what their experience has been.

It is worth baring in mind that every child is different and unique in their own way and what one child and family’s experience has been of a certain school, does not mean this will be the same for your child.

Gathering as much information as you can will help you and your child make an informed choice.

Choosing a secondary School – What to consider

Most secondary schools advertise their open days on their social media platforms and schools websites and it is a good idea to “follow” or “like” secondary schools on their Facebook or Instagram pages to be notified of upcoming events. Your child’s current primary school may also share when these events are happening and it would be a good idea to make a note of these to visit.

When you are visiting the schools it might be beneficial to have a list of questions to ask on the opening event such as:

- How big are the classes?
- What additional support is available in the classrooms?
- How can the school meet my child’s needs? Are there other children in the school with similar needs?
- Do you offer Elsa, Thrive, Mental Health support or something similar?
- How are children grouped together? Ability, age or mixture of both? Are SEN pupils taught in separate or smaller classes?
- Depending on the needs of your child, what reasonable adjustments can be made for uniform, movement breaks and/or break / lunch times?
- What system do you have in place for school lunches and free school meals?
- How is homework set and how much on average will they receive in year 7?
- What policies do you have in place for SEN, uniform, bullying or behaviour etc?
- What after school clubs and trips do you offer?

It is also a good idea to think about how your child will be getting to and from school and whether you need to reach out for any travel training or bus pass requirements. If your child can walk or ride a bike to school, do they know the safest route and to cross via a zebra crossing or traffic lights? Would you need to walk this route with your child a few times so they are familiar with the walk? If the school is a little further away, will your child be getting a bus to and from school? Do they know what bus to get and what time it arrives at the closest bus stop to your property? Could you take a few trips on this route with your child to make them familiar with the route and where they need to get off at school and back on to come home? This would be useful to carry out during the 6 weeks holidays.

If you feel your child would need some assistance with this, Redcar and Cleveland Local Authority offer free independent travel training. You can find more information about this on Top Tips for Parents section.

Once you have looked around the schools and got an idea of which school your child would like to attend it is then a good idea to start finding out about the school policies and what support can be put in place for your child.

The school website would be the first port of call to find copies of the policies, if you cannot locate these you can contact the school to ask for a copy. It would be beneficial to reach out to the SENCo and discuss your child's needs and what primary school are currently doing to support your child, and how this can be adapted or incorporated into their secondary school routine to meet their needs. If you have a copy of their current SEN plan and any reports it would be helpful to take these with you to discuss with the SENCo.

When considering a school can you tick all these boxes:

- ☐ My child can make their own way to and from school?
- ☐ The school can make reasonable adjustments to meet my child's needs?
- ☐ I am happy with the policies on SEND and Inclusion, Behaviour and Uniform and that reasonable adjustments, where applicable, will be made?
- ☐ I know who to contact if I have an issue or query and have this persons contact details saved?
- ☐ My child knows who their key person is, where applicable, and where to find them or they know where to go when they are feeling overwhelmed?
- ☐ My child has seen the lunch menu's and is happy with the choices?
- ☐ I know where to purchase the uniform from?
- ☐ I know what equipment my child will need?

"I bought a cheap whiteboard and wrote out the timetable for the next day so that my daughter could see it when she woke up."

Choosing a secondary School – What to do next.

Once you have read all the information about the school and talked through and agreed a school with your child, you need to select this on your secondary school application form. This can be completed online and you need to register your details before you can apply online. We would suggest parents try to put down 2 to 3 options for schools they would like their child to attend. If you only apply for one school or name the same school 3 times, and that school cannot offer your child a place, your child will be offered a place at the nearest appropriate school which has places left only after all other applications have been dealt with. It is important to try and list at least 2 schools so you are not placed in a school far away from home or not of your choice. **It is always best to accept your school offer as quickly as possible.**

You can find more information on the local offer on the following link or by scanning the QR Code

<https://www.redcar-cleveland.gov.uk/schools-and-education/school-admissions/school-admissions-faqs>



Once you have selected a school it is a good idea to think ahead and how you can support your child during this period.

A lot of the groundwork in preparing your child to start secondary school can be done at home or with the family

- Ask for a map of the school – spend time with your child learning where everything is. Colour-coding can be helpful: you might highlight each subject's classrooms in a different colour, and use clear symbols to mark important facilities like toilets and the lunch area.
- Ask the school for a checklist of all the equipment – Knowing what your child needs and on which days can be useful to help them organise themselves. Could you laminate this and stick it on your child's wall or diary, so they can tick off what they need each day
- Key Person – If your child will have a key person, can they put their name and/or a picture in their planner in case they become overwhelmed and cannot find this person?

- An extra copy of timetable – Can you ask for an extra copy of your child's timetable so you can keep a copy in a handy place for your child to check they have everything before they leave or you can prompt them?
- Visiting the school – Have you visited the school multiple times and at different times of the day to prepare your child for their transition? Redcar and Cleveland Local Authority offer an enhanced transition for some pupils. To request this your child's current primary school would need to make a referral to Resource and Support Panel. If this is agreed either the Specialist Teacher Service or the Educational Psychology Service provide a bespoke transition support depending on the needs of the student and the complexities of the case.
- Teach your child the skills they'll need for secondary school. Many of these, such as tying a tie, reading a timetable and ordering their own food in the lunch hall, may be new to them, so start early so they have time to practise. If your child will be getting to and from school independently, rehearse the route a few times, together at first, and then following them at a safe distance. If you feel your child would benefit from independent travel training this can be requested by contacting the Independent travel trainer on 01642 304500 or SEN@redcar-cleveland.gov.

During your child's last year at primary school, your child's teacher and SENCo will be having meetings with the secondary SENCO and learning manager for the year and passing over all relevant information. This will include:

- Informing your child's new school of their SEN needs and diagnosis (if necessary)
- Sharing a copy of the SEN plan
- Sharing what reasonable adjustments have been working in primary school so secondary school can either put the same support in place or something similar depending on their resources and staff

This can help to ensure that the same or similar support is in place ready for child starting in September or how the school can best meet the needs of your child.

It is also a good idea to think of any relevant information you can provide to the school that they might need to be aware of. This could include:

- if your child is adopted,
- if there has been a significant event in the family such as the death of a family member or a breakdown in family relationships (i.e. mum or dad separating)
- Having older siblings recently diagnosed with SEND (such as autism, ADHD etc)

If your child is receiving support from an external agency such as The Junction or The Link for example, ensure copies of any reports are also sent to school. If your child is on the pathway for an assessment, it is a good idea to send copies of all reports to schools to help them build a picture of your child and what other services are supporting them. This can be particularly useful if your child has not yet gone down the pathway for assessment but school are starting to make the arrangements.

The more information you can provide to the school about your child, their needs and your home life the better. This ensures school are aware of all factors and can help and support your child and yourselves as much as they can.

First few days at Secondary School

The first few days can be tricky as some things may not go according to plan such as a bus being late or getting lost and being late for their next lesson. These are natural incidents that can occur and preparing your child for these is a great way to help learn them some independence and for them to take responsibility for themselves.

There are also some things you can do at home to help your child after a day at school which can include:

Helping them to get things ready the night before.
Is their bag packed with PE Kits or books they need?

Set a bedtime routine.

Organise your morning routine.
A set time to get up, have breakfast and get ready before having to leave for school. This can help your child to feel less anxious and rushed on a morning setting them up for a good day.

Let your child have time to chill after coming in from school, Try not to ask how there day was as soon as they come through the door as they might have had a tricky day and need time to process it.

Top Tips for Parents

Who are my main contacts at school:

Name

Dept

Phone No

Email

.....

Name

Dept

Phone No

Email

.....

- ☐ Has all the information been forwarded to the SENCO? SEN Plan, EHCP
Another other documentation?
- ☐ If my child is travelling to school by themselves, we have travelled the route
together and my child is familiar with this?
- ☐ If my child is travelling to school by themselves, I have accessed Travel
Training from Redcar and Cleveland Council?
- ☐ If needed, I have applied to Redcar and Cleveland Local Authority SEN
Department for an enhanced transition?
- ☐ I know where and how to send lunch money for my child for school?
- ☐ I have a copy of my child's last SEN Plan from Primary School?
- ☐ I have the details for my child's SENCo and will make an appointment with
them to go through my child's SEN plan during the first half term?

Top Tips for Student

My Form Tutor is:

My Class Number is:

☐

I know how to get to school and back home safely?

☐

I know where my classes are and how to get from one class to another?

☐

I know how to put money on my dinner card and where to buy my dinner from?

My key member of staff is:

Where can I find them?

Below are some ideas of things you can do if you start to feel overwhelmed at school.

