



**Review of the Transition Process
From Nursery to Reception in summer
2012**

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Review of the Transition Process From Nursery to Reception in summer 2012

Background

As one full year has now passed, since Nursery and Reception staff agreed the 'Guidelines for Good Practice in Transition when a child moves from Pre-school to Reception classes', it is appropriate to evaluate how practice has been influenced in the first year.

The collection of evidence

The views of three different set of people were sought: Private Sector Nurseries, Nurseries in Primary Schools and Reception Teachers in Primary Schools.

Fifty six practitioners' views are included in this review and Table 1 and 2 provide an overview of the numbers and percentages of respondents per sector.

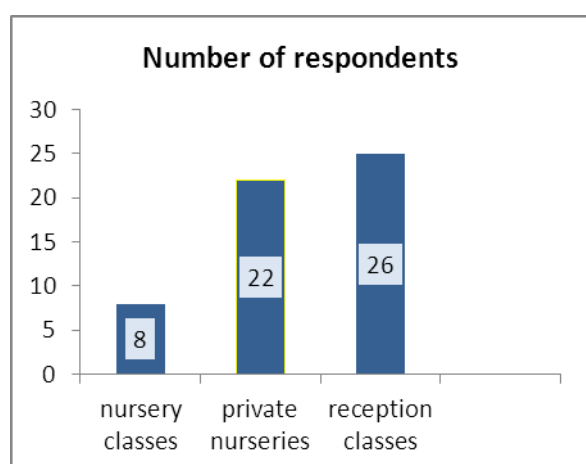


Table 1

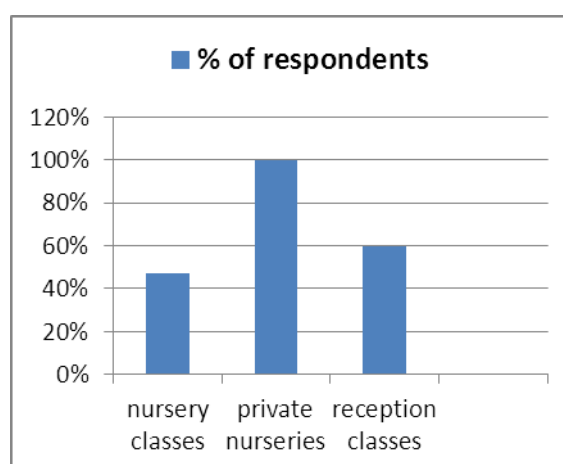


Table 2

It should be noted that the Private Sector gave 100% response as they were required to answer this on their Pre-school Self Evaluation Document which each Nursery completes on an annual basis.

The Private Sector completed these at different times between September 2011 and July 2012 so some of these replies were based on the transition process from the previous year, i.e.2011.

The question asked on the Pre-school Self Evaluation was 'What links are made between Pre-school and receiving Schools to ensure a smooth transition for children?' (*This links with Relationships 26 of the PSQF*).

The same question was asked of all Nursery Teachers via 'Survey Monkey' in September 2012. Unlike the private sector, this survey was not mandatory.

A survey was also sent out to all Reception Class Teachers in September 2012 and they were asked different questions to the Nurseries. These included the following questions:

- How many children in your Reception Class?
- How many children brought in Learning Journeys spontaneously?
- How many children/ parents needed a prompt?
- How many Learning Journeys have you **NOT** seen?
- How many children from your class were visited in their Nursery by Reception staff prior to admission?
- What other things have you done to ensure smooth transition for your children?

Four of the respondents were from private primary schools.

The information gathered was sufficiently robust to draw reasonable conclusions, however due to the time constraints and pressure of beginning a new academic year with a new cohort of children, some of the schools sectors were approximations. This is not a criticism of the practitioner as their priorities were rightly to the children.

What Nursery Staff told us about visits:

All nurseries invited teachers from Reception to visit their settings to meet the children and more teachers visited nurseries than in the same period last year. At least six private nurseries reported that in 2011 there were some difficulties trying to get all reception staff to visit the nursery. This was because the information was collected throughout the year and they were basing this on last year's experiences. Most nurseries reported that this year there was an increase in the number of their children who had received visits from the Reception staff. One private nursery reported that in 2011 only a few children had had a visit from their Reception teacher but in 2012 all of them had visits.

Evidence from several Private Sector nurseries show that some Private schools request information about children as early as October for the following September in addition to visiting children in the Summer Term.

One Private Sector nursery reported that staff from three States Nursery Classes have visited their nursery to share practice, and several private nursery staff have also visited States Nursery Classes. This shows that the partnership between settings has developed beyond sharing information within the transition process and is now about sharing practice at a much deeper level.

Other key observations were:

- *Private nursery staff have accompanied children with special needs to the school induction.*
- *Most of the Nursery classes join in with Reception classes, some on a weekly basis.*
- *Some key workers visited the school alone if it was not feasible to take the children.*
- *One Nursery Manager visited the previous year's Nursery children to strengthen the relationship with the Reception Teachers.*
- *When Reception staff visited Nurseries they looked at the children's Learning Journeys, with the child and talked to the key worker.*

What Reception Teachers told us about visits

The information provided by Reception teachers revealed a wide variance in the frequency of visits to nurseries. Fifteen out of twenty six said they had visited all or almost all in the nurseries. Many Reception teachers visit up to five different nurseries, and Reception staff in Schools with nursery classes still visited those children who came from different nurseries. However, there were two Reception teachers who said they didn't do any visits and only provided induction afternoons at their school.

One Reception teacher said they waited until after they had visited all the children in their nursery before they divided the children into their two classes.

Typical responses included:

- *Following the transition meeting, I visited only those which nursery staff felt would benefit from a 1:1 visit/observation. This year I visited 1 child in a setting and 9 in another setting*
- *I don't think any were visited at their nursery but we had 2 induction afternoons*
- *We visit our main feeder nursery and all other children visit us*
- *All except 1 as child off when due to visit and no other time could be arranged.*
- *27 out of 30 were visited, 3 children did not attend any Pre School*

How Nursery Staff helped children with transition:

Both Private and States sector nurseries were asked the question 'What links are made between Pre-school and receiving Schools to ensure a smooth transition for children?'

Many of the private nurseries tried various ways to help the transition process:

- Most nurseries asked parents for details of which school their child would be attending in advance. This was done verbally or by using a form.
- One nursery felt it useful to group children who would be attending the same schools.
- Some introduced lunch boxes in the summer term.
- During the summer term another nursery gave children their own designated play space separate from the younger ones.
- Some nursery classes join in with Reception for lunch time play, story and singing through the summer term.
- Some nurseries created transition books for the children and some put school uniform in the role play area during the summer term.
- One nursery took photos of each Reception teacher at the transition meeting and displayed these with their name as well as photos and logos of the school.
- Several staff said they are in contact with the schools by telephone.
- One Private Sector manager visited the main receiving school in the autumn term to how see the children have settled and to answer any questions from the teacher.
- One Private Sector nursery visited their feeder primary school on a weekly basis throughout the year and had already forged links.
- Many nurseries encourage children to come back to visit them in the September after they have started in Reception to see friends and staff.
- In schools, the nursery children will often visit the Reception during the school's transition days in July.

How Reception Staff helped children with the transition:

Teachers gave comprehensive details of how they helped this process which included:

- Welcome information
- One or two meetings for parents prior to admission which included an opportunity to explain the curriculum and Foundation Stage Profile to parents.
- Induction visits in the summer term when children can come and play for a session.
- Some invited parents to fill in a profile for their child, others asked child and parents to complete 'Hello school, this is me' to help them understand the child's background and interests.
- A teddy bear's picnic for all children and parents once children were allocated to specific classes.
- Invitations to sports day and open day.
- Children making a poster about themselves prior to admission
- Staff chose to plan familiar topics to give children security.
- Some mentioned keeping existing friendship groups together.
- Each School's induction process for the beginning of September was slightly different however many spoke about staggering the intake during the first week. Some took half the class for half days for the first two days or part time for the whole class.
- One school provided an extra Teaching Assistant full time for the first half term.
- Some asked for family photos to display next to a photo of themselves in the classroom and children could bring their own teddy or comfort from home for the first few day/weeks to have something familiar.
- One School has established links with their main feeder private nursery by the nursery visiting weekly throughout the year to use the library and outside area as well as play with the Reception children.

Typical responses included:

- *Began the term by allowing the children to work through play/activities for a couple of weeks before introducing JEL, maths, reading, writing and focused activities. Have introduced each of these gradually. Have enforced procedures and routines right from the start to ensure that the children feel safe. Have also implemented individual behavioural/support programmes for those that need them*
- *We ensure that wherever possible that children were placed with other children from their Nursery. We had 2 short sessions at the beginning of the year which the children attended in groups of 11, this gave us a chance to get to know them and for them to find their way around the classroom. On the 3rd session all the children came together and stayed for lunch and then went home. This has worked really well for the past few years.*
- *I extended an invitation to one setting to visit our Reception class. Held regular 'pop in' afternoons for parents. A transition afternoon. Parents welcomed into our class for 15 minutes in order to settle children as needed.*
- *During Nursery visits each child was given a laminated photo board which included pictures of all the adults who would be working in Reception and pictures of all the areas within the Reception setting. We have invited Nurseries nearby to bring children for extra transition sessions. We encourage nearby Nurseries to use our Forest School area so they are familiar with our grounds.*
- *We offer 6 x 1hour sessions in the 2nd half of summer term. Parents stay if they wish. 'Mingling' sessions with Nursery/Reception. Meeting with parents in July to talk about any perceived differences between Nursery and Reception- emphasising the foundation Stage – Nursery to Reception is a continuous journey!*
- *We talked about difference between Nursery and Reception class. What do we do different now?*

Learning Journeys in Nursery

Almost all of the nurseries commented on the Learning Journeys. Most said they give the Learning Journeys to the child and parent asking that they take them to their Reception class when they start in September. Some concerns were raised about the possibility of schools not receiving the Learning Journey and some nurseries made suggestions about how this could be avoided. This included constant reiteration by nursery staff to the parents about the importance of this book to help their child settle in their new school. Some included a page of personal information compiled by the child for the teacher. All agreed the Learning Journeys needed to be shared with the school.

One nursery raised a concern about the demise of the summative forms, especially in schools where Learning Journeys are not spontaneously taken in and therefore no information is received about the child. Another nursery hoped that the links with schools would still continue to improve without the summative forms. These concerns were from nurseries that answered earlier in the year and were based on the previous years' experience.

Some staff went to inductions at schools with special needs children

Although not part of this report, one nursery teacher commented that she had not received any Learning Journeys from private nurseries.

One nursery class said they also send a nursery report to the new school in addition to the Learning Journey.

Learning Journeys in Reception

Details of Learning Journeys brought into schools are shown at the end of this document.

There was a wide range in the number of children who brought in their Learning Journey to Reception without prompting. The percentage of children ranged from 10% up to 40%.

Those Reception classes that had more Learning Journeys brought in said they had reminded parents at the Summer Term induction meeting with parents and again in September. One had sent a letter out in the summer and prompted again in September which resulted in 100% brought in.

Typical responses included:

- *We specifically asked all families to bring them in on the first day. Most who didn't were from our own Nursery and we had already seen them so maybe parents thought it was not important!*
- *A letter was sent out in the summer asking for these to be brought in.*
- *We had sent a request on induction day that they bring them in on the first day*
- *We got them after we sent the initial letter*

The answers given to the question 'How many Learning Journeys have you **NOT** seen?' were inconclusive and were sometimes contradictory to the previous question of how many brought them in. Several said that after many prompts they had seen almost all of them which was very encouraging. However some staff had not seen as many as half of them.

Most of the comments on how Learning Journeys were used in the Reception classroom showed they are highly valued and used in the following ways:

- Frequently used as a link between home and nursery to help the children settle in their new surroundings.
- They are used as to help understand where children are in term as development and as a starting point for meeting their needs.
- Some teachers were reading them to form assessments of the children using the Foundation Stage Profile as a framework.

Typical Responses included:

- *As a starting point for new Reception Learning Journeys.*
- *Children talked us through their Nursery Learning Journey and we will keep them alongside the Reception one until half- term I also find it a useful reference for completing the Foundation Stage Profile.*
- *I read each one to give me an idea and starting point for understanding each child to understand how to hook into children's individual styles and interest.*
- *I also spend time reading the observations and comments on a separate occasion.*

Learning Journeys are being used to build relationships both between staff and individual children and also between the children too.

Some children shared them with a new friend and others presented to the class which also had the added advantage of developing their speaking and listening skills too.

Typical Responses included:

- *'The children spend time sharing Learning Journeys with the teacher and teaching assistant talking about their experiences and learning.'*
- *We have also allowed the children to present their Learning Journeys to the other children, selecting their favourite pages and discussing them'*
- *They shared with the group and were able to talk about their time at Nursery with others – this also helped children form new friendships and find things in common with other children.'*

Transition meeting

This was the first year that a transition meeting was arranged. It was held in April on one evening and nursery staff were able to meet all the Reception teachers from the schools that their children leaving that summer would be attending, to discuss their transition.

It was attended by 95% of staff and feedback from staff in the survey showed it was regarded as a very positive initiative to forge links and exchange information. Anecdotal evidence given by Child Care Registration and Development Officers also showed that there has been a positive change of practice following this meeting.

As a direct result of this meeting, several practitioners are now making their own partnership with receiving schools. One Nursery team leader visited the Reception class where nine of her children will go and several staff from Private Nurseries have visited Nursery classes.

During the academic year 2011/2012, there have also been several opportunities where staff from the three sectors have met together, such as Moderation meetings and various training sessions. These have given further opportunities to build up partnership between nursery staff and reception teachers.

Summary and Conclusions

The feedback has shown that children's experience of moving from nursery to reception during the summer term has shown improvement on previous years. This can be largely attributed to staff from nurseries and reception working together to improve their transition processes within their own setting.

All Reception teachers visited children at their nursery except one who said '*I don't think any were visited at their nursery but we had 2 induction afternoons*'. We are currently looking at Pre-Reception visits for all Jersey children.

A significant shift in practice has been through the partnership working between all three groups of practitioners. This was evident when the UK consultant supporting the Foundation Stage Profile could not tell the difference in professional conversations between nursery practitioners from the Private and States sector when they were looking at the children's Learning Journeys together.

Subsequent to the transition process, it has been noticeable that there has been a significant improvement in the interrelationships between the three sectors. In addition to meeting about transition, practitioners are visiting each other's settings and sharing practice. They are helping and supporting each other at a much wider and deeper level. These are early indicators that there has been a change in culture and every encouragement needs to be taken to ensure that this is embedded.

Responses showed that some Reception teachers have been asking for data from the Foundation Stage Profile. It's the first year that the Profile has been moderated and the data is not sufficiently robust to be used as a summative assessment, nor does it provide details about a child's personality or character which is so vital for a smooth transition. Learning Journeys should be considered the main source of information on individual children at this stage.

It was disappointing that many nursery and reception staff said that they asked parents on several occasions to take their child's Learning Journey into reception but many did not do this. This could be attributed to the time lapsed during the long summer holiday period as parents may have forgotten. In addition to this, parents have not been required to do this in the past and are not used to taking this responsibility. Most of the schools in the town area said that they didn't have many Learning Journeys brought in without prompting parents. The reasons for this is worth further investigation as to what can be done to engage parents more in this process

Many practitioners across all the groups of practitioners gave creative ways in which they helped the transition process, showing that there is a genuine commitment to do the best for children through this potentially difficult emotional time

Evidence from several Private Sector nurseries shows that some private schools request information about children as early as October for the following September. The value of this information is limited and practitioners have expressed concern because children develop at different rates at this age and may not correlate to their stage of development in the summer term eight months later. It may be worth looking at the timing that information is requested about children so there is consistency across all sectors.

The Transition meeting in April 2012 was regarded as having a positive impact for these positive beginnings to continue, this meeting should become an annual event, preferably in May and become a core part of an effective transition policy.

It is envisaged that another review of the transition be undertaken in summer 2013 or 2014 which will allow more time to plan feedback and for practitioners to improve the transition process further

This is an excellent start and has achieved what was anticipated from the collaborative effort of all the practitioners when they created the guidelines the previous year. It is hoped that this very positive start can be built upon for the benefit of parents, children and staff.

Evaluation of transition from Pre-school to Reception

