Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3 Transition Guidance
School Collaboration and Sharing Information to Support Progression in Learning
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Christ the Redeemer Primary School and St Colm’s High School (Twinbrook)

Bridge Integrated Primary School and New-Bridge Integrated College
Introduction

Section 1: Transition from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3
Introduction

Research indicates that the transition from primary to post-primary school is a significant and stressful time for pupils and their parents (Evangelou et al., 2008; Sutherland, 2010). Pupils have to adjust to the changes involved in moving from primary to post-primary school. Parents are naturally anxious about their child’s ability to cope with change. Most pupils adjust well to their new situation, but some struggle to cope. For some, the transition can have a negative impact on their learning and social and emotional wellbeing (Sutherland, 2010).

Therefore, it is essential for primary and post-primary schools to work collaboratively to ensure that all pupils benefit from a successful transition. Sharing information between primary and post-primary schools is an important part of this process. A positive experience of transition creates benefits for pupils such as increased confidence and improved learning outcomes. It also reduces anxiety for pupils and parents (ibid.).

As transition from primary to post-primary school is a significant time for pupils, schools should review and evaluate their current transition policy and practice. This can be a focus for school improvement (DENI, 2009a), school self-evaluation (DENI, 2010a; 2010b) and development planning (DENI, 2010c).

Schools should review and evaluate how they engage and collaborate with their primary or post-primary counterparts. They should also examine the ways in which they share and use assessment and other information to support progression in learning during the Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3 transition phase.

Aim

This guidance aims to support primary and post-primary school principals, senior leaders and teachers to work collaboratively to ensure that all pupils have a positive experience of moving from primary to post-primary school.

Summary

This guidance outlines the ten principles underpinning successful transition. It also provides success indicators so that schools can monitor their progress. It lists how successful transition benefits pupils, parents, teachers and schools. It sets transition within a broader educational policy context, linked to school improvement.

This guidance considers the roles of teachers, pupils and parents and suggests how they can be involved in the transition process. It emphasises the need for schools to ensure continuity of the curriculum, pedagogy and assessment across the Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3 interface. It suggests collaborative approaches to achieve this. The guidance also considers sharing and using assessment and other data to support pupil progression in their learning.

Case Studies

There are two case studies to support this guidance:

• Christ the Redeemer Primary School and St Colm’s High School (Twinbrook); and
• Bridge Integrated Primary School and New-Bridge Integrated College.

You can find these at www.nicurriculum.org.uk
Barriers to Collaboration

This guidance acknowledges the practical constraints that will in some cases limit the extent to which primary and post-primary schools can collaborate. For example, post-primary schools may have a large number of feeder primary schools. Primary schools also may feed a large number of post-primary schools. There are also logistical issues to consider such as transporting pupils between schools to attend shared events. The extent to which primary and post-primary schools can put this guidance into practice depends on their individual circumstances. This guidance gives schools a framework to use when considering their transition arrangements. This framework can help schools to ensure that pupils’ transition is successful.
Section 1
Transition from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3
Transition from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3 is a crucial period for parents and their children. Research in England, Wales, Scotland, Ireland, Australia and New Zealand highlights transition as a critical period. This is because pupils face significant changes as they move from the final year of primary school to their first year of post-primary school (Evangelou et al., 2008; INTO, 2008; Mackenzie et al., 2012; Mc Gee et al., 2004; Powell et al., 2006; Sutherland et al., 2010; Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) 2011; West et al., 2010). Moving from primary to post-primary school means that pupils have to adapt to changes in:

- school culture or ethos;
- school size;
- numbers of pupils;
- timetabling;
- teaching styles;
- level of demand;
- academic expectation;
- workload; and
- how subjects are taught.

Transition involves pupils adjusting:

- from being the oldest in their primary school to being the youngest in the post-primary school;
- to pupils from different backgrounds and traditions;
- to having to move around the school to different classrooms for different subjects;
- to subjects being departmentalised, how these are timetabled and how different teachers teach them;
- to greater value being placed on ability rather than effort;
- to being grouped in classes for different subjects, often streamed according to ability; and
- to the pastoral system and pastoral support.

Most pupils can cope with these changes. Any negative impact these changes may have on pupils’ progress in learning is usually short term. Some research suggests that the effects of transition dissipate during the first term. Other research suggests that this can take up to a year (Anderson et al., 2000; WAG, 2011).

A few pupils, however, are less able to cope with transition from primary to post-primary school. Research shows that pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds and those from some ethnic minority groups are particularly vulnerable at the transition stage.

Vulnerable groups at the transition stage in Northern Irish schools

Evidence from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) publication Reviews of Evaluation and Assessment in Education for Northern Ireland (OECD, 2013) suggests that around one fifth of primary pupils are vulnerable and at risk of underachieving. Pupils in vulnerable groups may have greater difficulty coping with transitional changes in their schooling than their peers. This can have a negative and long lasting impact on their progress in learning and achievement (Sutherland et al., 2010, WAG, 2011). These pupils mainly attend schools serving less socially and economically advantaged communities. They may be at risk of underachieving and find coping with the changes associated with transition difficult.

Other studies highlight that boys (Harland and McCready, 2012), in particular those from working class Protestant communities (Purvis, 2011), and children from the Irish Traveller community are at risk of underachieving (McVeigh and Joyce, 2011).
Pupils transferring from Irish-medium primary schools to English-medium post-primary schools may initially have difficulty adjusting to their new language environment.

Newcomer pupils may also find the move from primary to post-primary school challenging. This is particularly apparent if there are intercultural barriers or they do not have the language skills to participate fully in the school curriculum (DENI, 2009b). You can find further information about supporting newcomer pupils at The Inclusion and Diversity Service (IDS): www.education-support.org.uk

**Social and emotional effects of transition**

The changes pupils face when moving from primary to post-primary school will have a social and emotional impact. Transition happens when pupils are experiencing other changes in their personal lives and development as they enter adolescence (Gerner and Wilson, 2005; INTO, 2008; Sutherland et al., 2010).

Pupils can experience anxiety about social and academic changes and the uncertainty of starting a new school (Evangelou et al., 2008). Research suggests that pupils’ two main concerns are about fitting in and making new friends (Chedzoy and Burden, 2005). Moving to a post-primary school can disrupt pupils’ friendship networks. They may have to deal with losing contact with friends from primary school. They also need to develop the social skills to build new relationships and interact with peers and teachers. Some pupils may lack self-confidence or have low self-esteem and worry about making new friends or bullying. Others may be concerned about what is expected from them and about their ability to cope with the increasing academic challenge. Pupils must also contend with the challenges of becoming more autonomous and developing independent learning skills.

**Academic selection**

It is worth highlighting that the Department of Education’s *Post-Primary Transfer Policy* states that pupil transfer from primary to post-primary school should not be based on academic criteria.

> Decisions on admission to post-primary schools should not be based on the perceived academic ability of an applicant however defined or assessed (DENI, 2013a, see also DENI circular 2013/20).

However, most grammar schools in Northern Ireland continue to select pupils on their academic ability, using the ‘transfer test’. The OECD Review on the Northern Ireland Evaluation and Assessment Framework (2013) serves as a reminder that the commercial tests that schools use for academic selection are unregulated. The OECD Review suggests that using commercial tests can lead to a distortion of the Northern Ireland Curriculum at Key Stage 2. The content of the tests is not regulated. There are questions about the validity, reliability and comparability of the tests (Elwood, 2011). Some teachers may feel pressured by parents to spend teaching time preparing pupils for the tests, although the content of the tests may not be appropriately aligned to the Northern Ireland Curriculum (OECD, 2013).

The OECD Review (2013) and an ETI report (2012) suggest that the academic selection process puts undue pressure on pupils to perform well in the tests. This is unsettling for pupils, parents and schools. The academic selection process is therefore likely to add to the anxiety pupils face when moving from primary to post-primary school (Connolly et al., 2013).
The attainment dip

Educational research in England, Scotland, Wales, Ireland, Australia and New Zealand shows that the challenges pupils face during the Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3 transition are a potential barrier to progress in learning (Evangelou et al., 2008). Research on transition in these countries consistently shows a dip in pupil progression. Typically, pupils in their first year of post-primary school show little or no progress in their learning. Some pupils even regress (WAG, 2011). Some studies show a dip in pupils’ progress in English, mathematics and science (Burr and Simpson, 2007; Galton et al., 2003).

In Northern Ireland, the OECD Review highlighted Year 6 pupils’ excellent performance in reading (Progress in International Reading Literacy (PIRLS)) and mathematics and their strong performance in science (Trends in Mathematics and Science (TIMSS)). Pupils performed well above the international average in these areas. However, research shows a dip in attainment in literacy and numeracy at post-primary level. This is associated with pupils’ transition from primary to post-primary school. It is similar to the pattern found in other countries (Northern Ireland Audit Office Report (NIAO), 2013). At the end of primary school, more than one in six pupils do not achieve the expected standard in literacy and numeracy. By the end of Key Stage 3, more than one in five pupils do not achieve the expected standard in literacy and numeracy (ibid.).

Teachers in primary and post-primary schools should work collaboratively, where possible, to develop ways to address the dip in attainment and to ensure that pupils continue to make progress in their learning. By working collaboratively, teachers can help to address the wider challenges pupils face during the transition period to ensure that their transition is successful (Evangelou et al., 2008).

The ten key principles underpinning successful transfer

When working collaboratively to plan and develop their transition arrangements, primary and post-primary schools should consider the ten key principles that align with DENI school improvement policy (DENI, 2009a; DCSF, 2008; Evangelou et al., 2008).

A successful transition should:
• be child-centred, engaging pupils in the transition process, meeting the needs of individuals and enabling them to develop fully;
• focus on improving standards, in particular standards in literacy and numeracy;
• support collaboration between teachers from primary and post-primary schools to share best practice and expertise;
• engage parents in the transition process;
• build relationships based on a common vision, co-operation, shared responsibility and trust;
• establish and develop an effective communication network and clear channels of communication;
• create, maintain and develop systems and structures that support links, partnerships and sustained collaboration between schools;
• ensure coherence, continuity and progression of the curriculum, assessment and pedagogy;
• share and use assessment and other information to plan progression; and
• support pupils to develop the confidence, understanding and skills they need to become increasingly independent learners.
What are the benefits of a successful transition?
Research indicates that successful transition from primary to post-primary schools has significant benefits for pupils, parents, schools and teachers (DCSF, 2008; Evangelou et al., 2008). These benefits include:

• reduced anxiety for pupils and parents;
• stronger links between parents and schools;
• improved pupil confidence and self-esteem;
• higher levels of pupil engagement in learning;
• pupils taking greater responsibility for their learning and progress;
• higher levels of professional understanding;
• more continuity of the curriculum and the way it is taught;
• better consistency in approaches to assessment and curricular target setting between schools;
• shared confidence in teacher assessments across schools;
• more effective use of data and information to support progression in learning;
• more effective targeting of support and intervention;
• more effective tracking of pupil progress;
• improved partnership working between primary and post-primary schools; and
• improved learning outcomes.

Indicators of a successful transition
Research (Evangelou et al., 2008) suggests that we can use the following as broad indicators of each pupil’s transition experience.

• Social adjustment
Pupils with good personal and social skills can make the social adjustments necessary for success in a new school. Indicators of successful transition include the pupil:
  - developing new friendships, which can lead to increased levels of self-confidence and self-esteem; and
  - settling so well in school that their parents have no concerns.

• Institutional adjustment
Pupils settle well into school life and school routines and develop a sense of belonging.

• Curriculum continuity and progression
This enables pupils to build on the progress they made in their primary school.

• Interest in learning
Pupils show a growing interest in the post-primary school and school work.

Primary and post-primary schools could work collaboratively to ensure that all pupils experience successful transition. They could collaborate to develop approaches to achieve success in the above broad indicators.
School self-evaluation and development planning

Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3 transition could be a focus of school improvement for primary and post-primary schools (DENI, 2009a). Transition can be part of the school self-evaluation process and development planning (DENI, 2010a; 2010b; 2010c). The principal, senior leaders and teachers from primary and post-primary schools may find Appendix 1 useful. It is a model for school self-evaluation of their transition arrangements. They can adapt and use the quality indicators to generate questions for discussion about the quality of their transition arrangements. They can use the quality indicators to review their policy and practice, identify areas for improvement and to set targets.

Figure 1. School Self-evaluation and development planning
Section 2
School collaboration to support transition
School collaboration to support transition

Primary and post-primary schools can work together to ensure pupils have a positive experience of transition. Schools should work in partnership to help individual pupils feel valued and well prepared for post-primary school. Depending on the level of collaboration, primary and post-primary schools might find working together useful in evaluating how they support successful transition. Schools could work together to identify how to improve pupils’ transition experience. They can translate these into actions and outcomes in their school development plans.

The aims of collaborative working

The main purpose of collaborative working is to support all pupils to have a positive experience during the transition from primary to post-primary school (Atkinson et al., 2007; DCSF, 2008; DENI, 2009a; Evangelou et al., 2008). Collaboration between primary and post-primary schools should:

- develop and build sustainable relationships and partnerships;
- engage pupils and parents;
- provide opportunities for teachers to share good practice and expertise;
- ensure coherence, continuity and progression of the curriculum, assessment and pedagogy;
- support pupil progress and improvement in learning outcomes;
- share a common understanding of assessment approaches and standards;
- share and use assessment and other information to plan progression;
- provide pupils with challenging, enriching and rewarding learning experiences; and
- support pupils to develop the confidence, understanding and skills they need to become increasingly independent learners.

The head of ICT and a computer technician from St Colm’s visit a Year 7 teacher from Christ the Redeemer primary school to discuss using iPads to enhance learning.
Types of collaboration

There are various interpretations of inter-school collaboration (Atkinson et al., 2007). For the purposes of this guidance, we classify collaboration according to its extent and depth (Hanford et al., 1997). Collaboration falls into four broad categories:

- **Networking**
  Primary and post-primary schools and teachers exchange information for mutual benefit. This is the most informal type of collaboration.

- **Co-ordination**
  Primary and post-primary schools and teachers exchange information and co-ordinate activities for their mutual benefit to achieve a common goal. This requires planning, organisational involvement and commitment.

- **Co-operation**
  Schools and teachers exchange information, co-ordinate activities and share resources to achieve a common goal and for their mutual benefit. Shared resources can include knowledge, experience, staffing, materials, school accommodation and finances.

- **Collaboration**
  Schools and teachers exchange information, co-ordinate activities, share resources and enhance the capacity of their partner school to achieve a common purpose. This type of collaboration is about developing sustainable working partnerships. It requires a high level of support and commitment from the principal, the senior leadership team and the teachers involved in collaborative working. Its success depends on leadership and direction, clearly defined roles and responsibilities, comprehensive planning, and effective communication.

Primary and post-primary schools can use one or more of these approaches to develop structures and processes to help pupils make a successful transition from primary to post-primary school. Schools can use the above classification when reviewing and evaluating their approaches to collaboration (Appendix 1). Schools could examine how they might develop networking opportunities into collaborative partnerships.

School collaboration and the broader policy context

As part of their self-evaluation and development planning, schools should consider how collaboration during the transition process is linked to and can be developed within the broader educational policy context (Appendix 1). The transition process needs to be part of each school’s strategic approach to school improvement. Schools could consider the following educational policies.

**Every School a Good School**

*Every School a Good School* (DENI, 2009a) is a policy that aims to support school improvement by:

- enabling all pupils to achieve their potential;
- raising achievement; and
- closing the gap in performance between the most advantaged and most disadvantaged in our community.
School self-evaluation and development planning are at the core of the school improvement process (ibid.). The principal and senior leadership team should consider their school’s transition arrangements as part of the self-evaluation and development planning process. They could evaluate the effectiveness of their transition arrangements in contributing to school improvement. The principal and senior leadership team could examine elements of their transition arrangements in relation to the characteristics of a good school and indicators of effective performance (DENI, 2009a).

The arrangements that a school makes to collaborate with other schools can be used as a quality indicator to assess the school’s connections with the local community. (DENI, 2009a). Primary and post-primary schools could work collaboratively to support improvement.

Count, Read: Succeed

The Count, Read: Succeed strategy (DENI, 2011a) is part of the Department of Education’s School Improvement policy. This strategy aims to:

- support teachers and school leaders in their work to raise overall levels of attainment in literacy and numeracy among young people; and
- narrow the current gaps in educational attainment (DENI, 2011a).

Primary and post-primary schools could work collaboratively to support the literacy and numeracy strategy. The Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) Survey of Best Practice in English and Mathematics in Post-Primary Schools (ETI, 2013) and the Chief Inspector’s Report (ETI, 2012) highlight this. These documents state that teachers from mathematics and English departments in post-primary schools need to strengthen their links with primary schools. Teachers need to build on the pupils’ learning experiences in primary school. Schools could collaborate, share best practice and develop cross-phase literacy and numeracy programmes. This collaborative approach would help to ensure continuity and progression of the curriculum, literacy and numeracy across the Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3 transition. This will help to overcome the regression in learning that can occur at the transition stage (ETI, 2013).

The STEM Review

The STEM Review (DENI/DEL, 2009) highlights the role of education and schools in enabling young people to develop knowledge, understanding and skills in science, technology, engineering and mathematics. The STEM Review suggests that one of the main problems in science is the tendency for post-primary schools to repeat much of what primary schools have already covered. Post-primary schools often take little account of pupils’ prior learning in science. At post-primary level, this can lead to pupils becoming less interested in science.

The report also states that there is a need to improve pupil performance in science and mathematics. It recommends improved planning at the Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3 transition. The report also recommends that primary and post-primary schools work collaboratively to ensure continuity and progression from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3.
Community Relations Equality and Diversity

The DENI Community Relations Equality and Diversity (CRED) policy aims to improve relations between communities by educating children and young people to develop self-respect and respect for others. The CRED policy promotes collaborative working between schools from different sectors of education (DENI 2011b; DENI, 2011c). Some post-primary schools from one sector may have links with feeder primary schools from a different sector. There may be opportunities for these schools to work collaboratively to ensure that pupils experience a successful transition in the broader context of building relationships, equality, diversity and inclusion.

Schools can do this by developing curricular links between subjects such as Personal Development and Mutual Understanding (PDMU) in primary schools and Learning for Life and Work in post-primary schools.

You can find out more about CRED at www.credni.org

Shared Education

Shared education involves two or more schools or other educational institutions from different sectors working in collaboration with the aim of delivering educational benefits to learners, promoting the efficient and effective use of resources, and promoting equality of opportunity, good relations, equality of identity, respect for diversity and community cohesion (Connolly et al., 2013).
Primary and post-primary schools could consider opportunities to advance shared education. DENI encourages cross-sector collaboration between controlled state schools and Catholic maintained schools through shared education. This is part of the Northern Ireland Assembly’s Together: Building a United Community strategy (OFMDFM, 2013).

You can find more information about shared education at www.schoolsworkingtogether.co.uk

Schools could explore how they can collaborate by using aspects of the Northern Ireland Curriculum. For example, they could consider developing cross-phase literacy, numeracy and science programmes. Schools might link primary learning in Personal Development and Mutual Understanding (PDMU) with Personal Development and Local and Global Citizenship learning at Key Stage 3. Schools should also look at how they can implement the CRED policy (DENI, 2011b; DENI, 2011c) to support shared education.
Section 3
Important roles in transition
Section 3

Important roles in transition

Successful transition from primary to post-primary school depends on the commitment and support of each school’s principal and senior leadership team. The principal and senior leadership team should:

• ensure that school policy and practice meets the Department of Education’s Post-Primary Transfer Policy (DENI, 2013a; 2013b);
• lead the school self-evaluation and development planning process in their respective schools (Appendix 1, see also DENI, 2010a; DENI, 2010b; DENI, 2010c);
• review relevant school policies to ensure that they are aligned with broader educational policies and that they are implemented effectively to enable all pupils to have a successful transition;
• ensure that there is continuity and progression in the curriculum, pedagogy and assessment between primary and post-primary schools;
• lead, establish and build sustainable primary–post-primary collaborative partnerships, based on a shared vision and purpose;
• ensure that structures, processes and procedures are in place to support collaboration and information sharing between schools;
• ensure effective channels of communication;
• ensure those involved in working collaboratively have clearly defined roles and responsibilities;
• support and empower teachers to share effective practice and expertise by providing time and resources;
• ensure the transition process builds on prior learning, supports improvements in learning and contributes to raising standards;
• ensure there is a focus on raising standards in literacy and numeracy;
• give parents information, support and advice;
• provide opportunities to engage pupils and parents actively; and
• gather the views of pupils and parents and use these to inform improvements in the transition process. (DENI, 2009a).

Successful transition also relies on primary and post-primary teachers building collaborative relationships based on trust and co-operation. During the transition process, schools should:

• engage pupils and parents;
• help to make pupils and parents feel involved and valued;
• give pupils a voice; and
• ensure parents are well informed about processes and decisions that affect their child (ibid.).

The Role of Teachers

Teachers should work collaboratively to develop ways to support pupils during transition. The senior leadership team should work with and support teachers in their own schools and work collaboratively with colleagues from their partner school.

Primary teachers can:

• help to prepare pupils for the changes they will face by giving them opportunities to discuss and express their views about going to post-primary school;
• engage and support parents to be involved in their children’s transition process;
• use the areas of the curriculum, for example Personal Development and Mutual Understanding, to discuss issues or topics, for example relationships, diversity, bullying or coping with change, that will help prepare pupils for transition;
• make pupils aware of the different subjects at post-primary school and how they relate to the primary curriculum;
• make pupils aware of the key staff and their roles in the post-primary school, for example class or form tutor, head of year, head of department and counsellor;
record assessment data and other information relevant to pupils’ learning;
use assessment information to identify low achievement and underachievement;
develop interventions to support low achieving and underachieving pupils and set targets for progression and improvement; and
give pupils taught in Irish experience of subjects taught in English.

Pupils from Christ the Redeemer using iPads to learn about the weather

Primary and post-primary teachers can work collaboratively to:

- ensure individual pupils’ needs are met;
- ensure that there is an effective pastoral support programme to support pupils during transition;
- engage and support parents to be involved in the transition process;
- plan a range of joint activities for pupils in Year 7;
- give pupils opportunities to participate in activities in the post-primary school and to meet new teachers;
- review schemes of work to ensure there are strong links between the primary and post-primary curriculum;
- share effective practice and expertise on pedagogy;
- share a common understanding of assessment approaches and standards;
- share and use assessment information to build on prior learning and to plan progression;
- identify low achievement and underachievement;
- develop interventions to support low achieving and underachieving pupils and set targets for progression and improvement;
- develop approaches or strategies to improve learning and to raise standards; and
- plan a transitional support programme focusing on the use of subject-specific terminology, particularly in mathematics and science.
Important roles in transition

Post-primary teachers can:

• ensure they use the pastoral care system effectively to support pupils;
• engage and support parents to be involved in the transition process;
• be mindful and supportive of the additional challenge many pupils may face when transferring in to a new language environment, particularly in developing subject-specific terminology;
• support pupils to develop the personal and social skills, self-confidence and self-esteem necessary to:
  - settle well into school life and routines;
  - develop a sense of belonging;
  - relate well to teachers and peers; and
  - make new friendships;
• give pupils opportunities to engage in a range of activities and school events;
• give pupils a forum to express their views and concerns about transition;
• ensure continuity of the curriculum, pedagogy and assessment; and
• use information that the primary schools provided to build on each pupil’s prior learning, plan progression and set targets to improve learning and raise standards.

The Role of Parents

The Department of Education’s school improvement policy Every School a Good School (DENI, 2009a) and research highlight the importance of schools developing links and engaging with parents to support school improvement (Cummings et al., 2010). Research shows that parental engagement is particularly important to ensure that pupils have a successful transition from primary to post-primary school (Sutherland et al., 2010). The school and parents are two key agents that share responsibilities for the pupil’s well-being, socialisation, and personal and emotional development.
Engaging with parents promotes inclusion and contributes to improvements in pupils’ social, emotional and academic outcomes (DCSF, 2008; Evangelou et al., 2008; Harris and Goodall, 2007; West, et al. 2010). Research shows that engaging effectively with parents produces benefits for pupils, parents and schools.

Pupils:
• have a less stressful transition from primary to post-primary school;
• are more likely to adjust to their new school;
• find learning easier when they have supportive parents at home;
• will do better and achieve more when their parents are involved;
• can have their concerns dealt with more quickly when parents have a positive relationship with the school and teachers;
• are more confident knowing they have their parents’ support;
• develop more positive attitudes and behaviour; and
• are happier and more likely to want to go to school.

Parents:
• have stronger links with teachers and improved relationships;
• are better informed about the school and transition process;
• are less anxious about the transition process;
• are reassured about their children’s education;
• know more about their children’s learning and can encourage them;
• are better placed to support their children;
• find their children do better; and
• build their own confidence and skills.

Schools:
• develop improved relationships with parents;
• support collaborative working between teachers and parents;
• receive support from parents;
• can use the skills that parents bring to complement teachers’ skills and expertise;
• can share ideas that parents contribute;
• can support parents to encourage other parents to become involved in the school and with their children’s learning; and
• see an improvement in pupils’ academic performance, outcomes, attitudes, behaviour and attendance.

Parental engagement
To engage parents successfully in their children’s learning, schools can consistently reinforce the importance of the role that parents play in supporting their children’s education (Evangelou et al., 2008). By working together, teachers and parents can develop a relationship based on mutual trust, respect and a commitment to improving learning outcomes (Sutherland et al., 2010). This can help pupils to overcome the social, emotional and academic challenges they may face during the course of their school lives.

All pupils can benefit from their parents engaging in their education and supporting them through the transition process (Sutherland et al., 2010). Therefore, it is important for primary and post-primary schools to convince parents of the value of their support. Schools can provide a range of opportunities, such as volunteering, events and coffee mornings, for parents to become actively involved with the school. Parents need to be able to support their children through the transition process and to help improve their learning during this time of change and beyond.
As part of the transition process, primary and post-primary schools can work independently and collaboratively in school self-evaluation and development planning to evaluate parental engagement. Schools could invite parents to share their views. They could use this along with other information to help improve their transition arrangements (Appendix 1).

Primary and post-primary schools could work collaboratively to develop ways to engage parents. Some parents may need to help to develop the skills and knowledge to support their children’s learning. Schools can engage parents by offering bespoke forms of support such as literacy and numeracy classes, parenting skills support or pastoral care provision. Schools can work with the Inclusion and Diversity Service (DENI, 2009b) to develop strategies to support and engage parents of newcomer pupils in their children’s learning. Schools may find some of the following strategies useful for engaging with parents.

When communicating with parents, schools should:
- provide clear and easy to understand information about the transition process;
- make early contact between parents and post-primary school teachers;
- make sure parents know who to contact in school;
- make sure parents know what their children will be learning;
- respond promptly to enquiries and offer ongoing dialogue and support for any concerns or issues;
- provide information in different languages, where appropriate;
- provide translation and interpreting services, where appropriate;
- use ICT, for example the school website, emails and text messaging alerts, online surveys or blogs;
- hold parents’ consultation evenings;
- hold open evenings;
- hold school events, taster days, school plays and sports days;
- publish newsletters;
- provide weekly or monthly drop-in sessions; and
- coffee mornings.

Schools should give parents opportunities to volunteer, for example:
- as school governors;
- as members of the Parent–Teacher Association (PTA);
- as members of the parents’ forum or council;
- with school events and trips; and
- with after school clubs.

Schools should give parents opportunities to engage in decision-making, for example:
- as school governors;
- as representatives on the Parent–Teacher Association (PTA);
- at a stakeholder day;
- in online surveys; and
- as part of parent focus groups.

Schools should enable parents to support their children’s personal, social and emotional development and learning – family learning – by encouraging teachers to:
- discuss with parents activities that they can undertake at home with their children to link and extend the learning taking place in the classroom;
- provide parenting classes;
- provide basic skills classes in literacy, numeracy and ICT;
Important roles in transition

- provide guidance or classes to support parents to deal with their children’s personal social and emotional development;
- provide reading clubs for parents and children;
- provide mentoring for parents who lack the confidence or skills needed to support their children’s learning; and
- provide family learning days.

Barriers to engaging parents

Transition is also a challenging time for parents. As well as being anxious about how their children settle in to their new school, parents have to cope with change. They need to develop new relationships with post-primary school teachers and become familiar with the post-primary school structure, organisation and processes. Some parents may not have the skills or be able to support their children academically or with emotional or behaviour problems. Some parents may lack the confidence to engage with their children’s teachers and may find becoming involved in their education difficult (Sutherland et al., 2010).

Research suggests that there are links between parents’ level of engagement and their socio-economic status and experiences of education. Parents from disadvantaged communities or those who have had a negative schooling experience are less likely to want to engage with schools (ibid.). Parents of newcomer pupils may also be unfamiliar with the school system or there may be language barriers that make engaging fully with the school difficult. Schools and teachers often view these parents as hard to reach.

The Role of the Pupil

Primary and post-primary school collaboration aims to ensure that pupils experience a successful transition (Evangelou et al., 2008). The DENI school improvement policy states that the transition process should be child-centred (DENI, 2009a). In practice, this means schools should listen to the views of children and young people and involve them in discussions and decisions about school life that directly affect them. Research shows that pupils can play an active role in helping to make the move from primary to post-primary school successful (DCSF, 2008, Sutherland et al., 2010). Research indicates that by engaging effectively with pupils, schools can create benefits for pupils that include:

- reducing anxiety;
- feeling respected, listened to and taken seriously;
- building self-confidence and self-esteem;
- feeling that they can make a difference and influence change;
- helping them to adjust to and settle into the post-primary school;
- encouraging them to take greater responsibility for their learning;
- improving motivation;
- developing a sense of belonging;
- developing communication, personal and social skills; and
- developing democratic skills.

Engaging effectively with pupils also provides benefits for schools, including:

- improved pupil–teacher relationships;
- enhanced engagement with teachers and school;
- a better understanding of pupils’ views;
- an insight into pupils’ capabilities;
- a more inclusive approach to school self-evaluation and development planning; and
- improved learning outcomes.
Engaging pupils

Schools should consider pupil engagement in relation to their transition arrangements as part of the self-evaluation and school development planning (Appendix 1). Schools should gather and use pupils’ views, along with other evidence, to inform improvements in their transition process. Schools need to give pupils a range of opportunities to become involved in the transition process. These could include:

- regular opportunities to discuss and share their views about the transition experience;
- joint primary and post-primary school events, activities or lessons;
- visits, activities or lessons in the post-primary school;
- question and answer sessions with post-primary teachers;
- post-primary pupils mentoring primary pupils;
- buddy systems where Year 9 pupils can be buddies to Year 8 pupils; and
- after school clubs and societies.
Section 4
Continuity and progression
Section 4
Continuity and progression

Research undertaken in England, Wales, Scotland, Ireland, Australia and New Zealand highlights the lack of continuity and progression of the curriculum, pedagogy and assessment between primary–post-primary schools (INTO, 2008; Mackenzie et al., 2012; Mc Gee et al., 2004; Powell et. al., 2006; Sutherland et al., 2010; WAG, 2011; West et al., 2010).

This lack of continuity and progression is mirrored in Northern Ireland schools. The ETI Survey of Best Practice in English and Mathematics in Post-Primary Schools (ETI, 2013), the Chief Inspector’s report (ETI, 2012) and the STEM review (DEL/DENI, 2009) raise concerns about a lack of continuity and progression in Northern Ireland schools at the Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3 transition in literacy, numeracy, science and mathematics (ibid.).

The lack of continuity and progression in relation to the curriculum, pedagogy and assessment is associated with the attainment dip in post-primary schools in English, mathematics and science (Burr and Simpson, 2007; Evangelou et al., 2008; Galton et al., 2003; NIAO, 2013; OECD, 2013; WAG, 2011).

Research suggests that primary and post-primary schools need to work collaboratively to address the dip in attainment. Schools could focus their attention on ensuring continuity and progression from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3 in English, mathematics and science. Schools should also evaluate continuity and progression in other subjects, skills and capabilities as part of school self-evaluation and development planning (Appendix 1). Schools should consider to what extent there is continuity and progression of the curriculum, pedagogy and assessment.

Teachers from Bridge and New-Bridge ensure progression and continuity in science classes by planning science lessons together
The Curriculum

A coherent curriculum supports continuity and progression. The Northern Ireland Curriculum is designed to be coherent. A coherent curriculum supports pupils to gain a better understanding of their learning experience as a whole. The curriculum at Key Stage 3 builds on the curriculum at Key Stage 2. The component parts of the Northern Ireland Curriculum have a clear and explicit relationship with each other within each year of each key stage and over time. This is illustrated in the CCEA Big Pictures of the Curriculum at Key Stage 1 to Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3 (Appendices 2 and 3). Table 1 shows the relationship between the statutory components of the curriculum at Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3.

The main difference in the curriculum between Key Stages 2 and 3 is that at Key Stage 3 it is subject based, including modern languages. Personal Development and Mutual Understanding becomes Learning for Life and Work at Key Stage 3 and The World Around Us and its contributory elements of history, geography, and science and technology become separate subjects.

Table 1: Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statutory Areas of Learning</th>
<th>Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2</th>
<th>Key Stage 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Language and Literacy</strong></td>
<td>Language and Literacy</td>
<td>Language and Literacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mathematics and Numeracy</td>
<td>Mathematics and Numeracy</td>
<td>Mathematics and Numeracy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Education</td>
<td>Physical Education</td>
<td>Physical Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modern Languages</td>
<td>Modern Languages</td>
<td>Modern Languages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Personal Development and Mutual Understanding</strong></td>
<td>Learning for Life and Work</td>
<td>Learning for Life and Work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Personal Development Employability, Local and Global Citizenship)</td>
<td>(Personal Development Employability, Local and Global Citizenship)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The World Around Us</strong> (Geography, History, Science and Technology)</td>
<td>Environment and Society (Geography and History)</td>
<td>Environment and Society (Geography and History)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Science and Technology</td>
<td>Science and Technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Statutory</strong></td>
<td>Religious Education (DE Core Syllabus)</td>
<td>Religious Education (DE Core Syllabus)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Statutory Cross-Curricular Skills</strong></td>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>Communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Using Mathematics</td>
<td>Using Mathematics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Using ICT</td>
<td>Using ICT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Thinking Skills and Personal Capabilities (Other Skills)</strong></td>
<td>Thinking, Problem-Solving and Decision-Making</td>
<td>Thinking, Problem-Solving and Decision-Making</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Self-Management</td>
<td>Self-Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Working With Others</td>
<td>Working With Others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Managing Information</td>
<td>Managing Information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Being Creative</td>
<td>Being Creative</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
To ensure that there is curriculum coherence across Key Stages 2 and 3, school leaders and teachers from primary and post-primary schools who are involved in curriculum planning and development should work collaboratively to:

- review and plan programmes/schemes of work for subjects;
- make explicit the relationship between knowledge, understanding skills and capabilities within and across subjects;
- make explicit the learning connections between and across subjects;
- build on progress from the primary school;
- avoid unnecessary repetition and overlap of subject content;
- plan progression within subjects in relation to knowledge, understanding and skills;
- support improvements in standards in literacy and numeracy;
- produce resources to support pupils during transition and address the attainment dip;
- emphasise how pupils’ learning experiences are relevant to:
  - everyday life;
  - personal development;
  - the world of work and learning and career pathways;
  - active citizenship, the community, and
  - the environment and sustainability.

**Pedagogy**

It is important for pupils to have continuity in their experience of teaching and learning (Sutherland et al., 2010). The Northern Ireland Curriculum promotes a pedagogy that supports school improvement and improvements in learning outcomes. The curriculum pedagogy promoted is the same for all key stages. Table 2 shows the characteristics of quality teaching and learning in the classroom.
Characteristics of Quality Teaching and Learning in the Classroom

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics of Quality Teaching and Learning in the Classroom</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Create a safe learning environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Set high expectations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledge prior learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognise the significance of informal learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use a range of teaching and learning strategies</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Characteristics of Quality Teaching and Learning in the Classroom

| Take into account individual learning needs | Teachers should get to know pupils as individuals and gain a good understanding of:  
- their abilities;  
- their personalities;  
- what motivates them; and  
- how they learn best.  

Teachers should differentiate lessons in terms of levels of demand to meet individual pupil needs.  

Teachers should ensure that their lessons are well-structured and that they deepen and consolidate learning. |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Use ICT to enhance learning</td>
<td>Teachers can use ICT in innovative ways to extend and enrich their pupils’ learning experience.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide scaffolded support</td>
<td>Teachers should provide activities and structures of intellectual, social and emotional support to help pupils to progress in their learning. This helps pupils to gain confidence in their own ability and gradually to take greater responsibility for their learning.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Enable pupils to develop and apply their knowledge and understanding in different contexts or subjects | Teachers should engage pupils in learning about big ideas, key issues and concepts, key processes, subject narratives and discourses.  

Teachers should enable pupils to connect, transfer and apply their learning from one subject or context to another. |
| Enable pupils to develop their capacity for critical thinking and problem solving | Teachers need to provide pupils with motivating and challenging learning opportunities to use higher order thinking skills. This requires pupils to apply their learning to abstract concepts in unfamiliar contexts.  

Teachers can use effective questioning and, for example, interpret Blooms’ Taxonomy (revised) as a guide for formulating questions. |
| Support pupils to acquire and develop Cross-Curricular Skills | Teachers should provide pupils with a range of opportunities to acquire and develop the Cross-Curricular Skills of Communication, Using Mathematics and Using ICT. |
| Illustrate expected standards | Teachers should provide model answers/responses to illustrate quality and standards and explain how the work demonstrates these. |
| Encourage learning through collaboration | Learning is a social activity. Teachers should provide opportunities for pupils to work together to share ideas and thinking and to learn from and with others. |
Characteristics of Quality Teaching and Learning in the Classroom

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Empower pupils to become independent learners</th>
<th>Teachers need to support pupils to gain confidence and develop the skills to manage and take responsibility for their own learning. Teachers need to enable pupils to make the connections between the Thinking Skills and Personal Capabilities and Assessment for Learning. Teachers can encourage pupils to engage actively in their own learning, for example by discussing how they learn and what they are good at and setting targets for improvement. Teachers should enable pupils to develop their metacognitive ability. They can encourage pupils to think about how they think and learn, reflect on their learning and apply this to new learning situations. Teachers should develop and use the language of thinking skills to discuss and promote learning.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Align assessment with teaching and learning and use it to improve learning</td>
<td>Teachers should align assessment with teaching and learning. This will ensure assessment validity as teachers will design assessment to assess pupils’ performance against learning outcomes. Teachers should use assessment to help improve learning as well as to indicate the stage a pupil is at in their learning.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Guidance on Teaching Learning and Assessment at Key Stage 4 (CCEA, 2013)

Teaching and learning at Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3 should demonstrate these characteristics. Teachers in primary and post-primary schools should have opportunities to share best practice and to develop and use a range of teaching and learning approaches that support progression in learning.

Progression is not just about how much subject content pupils know. Progression is about moving pupils from shallow, surface learning to deep learning. It involves moving pupils from learning as memorising to retain and reproduce information to learning as interpretation. To ensure that pupils have continuity in their experience of teaching and learning, teachers in primary and post-primary schools should work collaboratively to develop a range of teaching and learning approaches. These approaches should:

- support pupils to become increasingly independent learners;
- prepare pupils for lifelong learning; and
- promote a learner-centred pedagogy.

Teachers should use:
- an infusion approach to teaching skills alongside subject knowledge and understanding;
- active enquiry-based learning and active teaching methodologies;
- effective questioning; and
- a range of assessment approaches to support learning.
Assessment

Assessment is an integral part of the Northern Ireland Curriculum at all key stages. Assessment must reflect the curriculum requirements and provide constructive, motivating and challenging learning experiences for pupils. Assessment should be part of the teaching and learning process that supports independent learning. It should enable young people to gauge their own progress and potential and make improvements in their learning.

To find further guidance on these teaching and learning approaches go to [www.nicurriculum.org.uk](http://www.nicurriculum.org.uk) and search for:

- Assessment for Learning: A Practical Guide;
- Thinking Skills and Personal Capabilities;
- Guidance on Thinking Skills and Personal Capabilities for Key Stage 1 and 2;
- Guidance on Thinking Skills and Personal Capabilities for Key Stage 3; and
- Active Learning and Teaching Methods for Key Stage 3 (this can be adapted for use at Key Stage 2).
Assessment is a key professional competency (GTCNI, 2011) that requires all teachers to:
• use a range of assessment strategies to assess pupils' learning;
• appreciate the uses and limitations of these strategies;
• make evidence-based assessment against relevant criteria;
• involve pupils in assessing their learning and performance;
• assess pupil performance against relevant benchmarking data;
• understand the relationship between assessment, setting pupil targets and progression;
• use assessment information to make teaching more effective; and
• collaborate with others to make assessment more effective at the classroom and whole-school level.

CCEA guidance on assessment for primary (CCEA, 2013) and post-primary schools (CCEA, 2012) promotes and illustrates the importance of continuity in assessment approaches across the Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3 interface. CCEA guidance and the General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland (GTCNI) teacher competencies emphasise the need for the schools and teachers to develop and use a range of assessment approaches. Throughout all key stages of the Northern Ireland Curriculum, quality assessment should be based on the following five key principles. It should:
• be complementary to and supportive of learning;
• be valid and reliable;
• be fit for purpose and manageable;
• support teachers' professional judgement; and
• support accountability.

Primary and post-primary schools should focus on using assessment to improve learning. This should include formative assessment and may include a summative assessment component. Teachers should use a range of assessment strategies including:
• a focus on learning;
• creating and using assessment criteria;
• effective questioning;
• peer and self-assessment and
• quality feedback.

Pupils in Christ the Redeemer engage in an interactive quiz as part of the teacher’s formative assessment of their progress in learning
Sharing assessment standards

Teachers in primary and post-primary schools should also work collaboratively to develop a shared understanding of assessment standards for the Cross-Curricular Skills of Communication, Using Mathematics and Using ICT. This will help to ensure the consistent application of standards across Key Stages 2 and 3. It will also support teachers to plan progression on learning.

You can find further information on developing assessment strategies in the CCEA guidance documents referenced below.

As part of the school self-evaluation and development planning, senior leaders and teachers could consider their assessment policy and practice, focusing on ensuring continuity of assessment practice across the transition phase. When considering assessment, school leaders and teachers should refer to the following guidance documents available from www.nicurriculum.org.uk

• Guidance on Assessment in the Primary School
• Guidance on Subject Assessment at Key Stage 3
• Assessment for Learning: A Practical Guide

This website also has further information on statutory assessment at Key Stages 1, 2 and 3.
Section 5
Sharing and using assessment and other information
Section 5
Sharing and using assessment and other information

Research demonstrates the importance of schools sharing and using assessment and other pupil-related information to support pupils to make a successful transition from primary to post-primary school (Evangelou et al., 2008; Sutherland et al., 2010; WAG, 2011). Sharing and using assessment and other data effectively is one of the quality indicators for teaching and learning (DENI, 2009a). This is essential for planning and ensuring individual pupil progression. Research shows that effective use of assessment data is essential for school improvement.

... data is only effective if it stimulates questions about the actual learning that is taking place and how it can be developed further ... (Kirkup et al., 2005).

The effective use of data in school self-evaluation and planning for improved outcomes for pupils is central to DENI’s school improvement policy (DENI, 2009a). Sharing and using data across the transition phase could be a focus for self-evaluation and development planning. Primary and post-primary schools could work collaboratively to identify strengths and areas for improvement around sharing and using assessment and other data (Appendix 1).

The OECD Report (2013) suggests that primary and post-primary schools could work together to use data more effectively to monitor individual progress, particularly during transition. The report states that exchanging information effectively between primary and post-primary schools will help to strengthen and better promote the curriculum’s focus on the progression of pupil learning across Key Stages 2 and 3.

Statutory requirements
When a pupil is transferring to a post-primary school at the end of Key Stage 2, the Education (Pupil Records and Reporting) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2009 (HMSO, 2009; DENI, 2013c) require the primary school to give the receiving post-primary school:

- the level of progression each pupil has achieved in any cross-curricular skill they have been assessed in;
- a statement, if a pupil has been exempted from any part of the assessment arrangements in that school year; and
- the pupil’s formative record of progress and achievement.

The regulations define the minimum requirements for transferring information to post-primary schools. Most primary schools provide more information than is required. They give post-primary schools a range of assessment data and other useful information. Schools should therefore, have an efficient system for sharing and exchanging information about pupils.

Gathering, recording and sharing assessment data
All schools must establish manageable processes and procedures. Schools can use School Information Management Systems (SIMS) and Assessment Manager to record and analyse their assessment data. The primary school can also use the Common Transfer File, found on the SIMs, to transfer data to the post-primary school (see OECD 2013).

Schools should use assessment data to inform actions that:
- enhance teaching and learning;
- improve learning outcomes; and
- contribute to raising standards.
The extent to which schools can use assessment data to improve learning outcomes depends on collecting the right type and quality of data. Before gathering and recording assessment information, schools need to ask:

- Is the information appropriate for this purpose?
- What will we use the assessment evidence for?
- Could we use assessment evidence already available for this purpose?
- Do we need to gather other assessment evidence?
- Is the assessment evidence dependable?
- How will we gather and record the assessment information?
- When and how often will we gather and record the assessment evidence?
- Who is responsible for gathering the data?
- How will we analyse and interpret the data?
- How will we use the data to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment?
- How will we use the data to improve learning outcomes?

**Assessment data**

The pupil assessment data that primary schools can share with the post-primary school include:

- the levels attained for each Cross-Curricular Skill: Communication, Using Mathematics (and Using ICT at a date to be decided);
- information from commercially-based tests such as Progress in English and Progress in Mathematics (where used in schools);
- information from diagnostic tests such as the CCEA computer-based assessments in numeracy and literacy (where used in schools);
- class tests; and
- formative assessment information, including teacher observation.

**Sharing other information**

The primary teacher can share further information about the pupil including:

- the Record of Achievement;
- progress in learning;
- attitude to learning;
- capacity for independent learning; and
- strengths and areas for development.

**Using assessment and other information to identify low-achievement and underachievement**

Primary teachers can share information with their post-primary colleagues about low-achieving and underachieving pupils. Many factors related to low achievement and underachievement are not directly measurable. Teachers can use pupil observation and other school data to identify low achievement and underachievement. (Montgomery, 1996; Underwood et al., 2009). Teachers can also use their knowledge of pupils and their professional judgement to complement assessment information. They should consider other factors that may act as barriers to learning, including:
• personal or individual differences and behaviours;
• behavioural and emotional factors;
• socio-economic and cultural factors;
• friendships;
• special educational needs;
• attendance figures;
• persistent absenteeism;
• pupil mobility; or
• communication skills.

**Intervention strategies**

The primary school can share information with the post-primary school about low-achieving and underachieving pupils and any interventions they have put in place. Teachers from primary and post-primary schools could collaborate to develop an intervention approach that is consistent across the Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3 transition. Intervention strategies can include:

• additional provision for specific areas of subject knowledge and understanding;
• a focus on developing specific skills such as self-management and study skills;
• mentoring support;
• targeted support to tackle specific problems, for example improving motivation, concentration, self-esteem and self-efficacy;
• pastoral support for pupils experiencing behavioural or emotional problems; and
• engaging parents and the wider community in learning support programmes for their child.
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Appendices
**Appendix 1:** School self-evaluation of their transition arrangements

**Ensuring an effective transition between primary and post-primary schools**

Principals and senior leaders in primary and post-primary schools may find these tables useful. They can use or adapt the self-evaluation model to identify strengths and areas for development.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Leadership Evidence</th>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Areas for Development</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Relevant school policies are reviewed regularly to ensure they:</td>
<td>• Support pupils to experience a successful transition; and • Are aligned with broader educational policies.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. School transition policies are implemented effectively.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. There are strong links between the primary and post-primary curriculum, clearly demonstrating that the curriculum, assessment and pedagogy have:</td>
<td>• Continuity; and • Progression.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. There are structures, processes and procedures in place to support collaborative working and sharing information within and between schools.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>5. There is an effective communication network in place and clear channels of communication.</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. A member of SLT or another appropriate teacher has responsibility for developing, monitoring and evaluating the success of school partnerships.</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Leadership Evidence</td>
<td>Quality Indicator</td>
<td>Strengths</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Leadership Evidence</td>
<td>Quality Indicator</td>
<td>Strengths</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Relevant school policies are reviewed regularly to ensure they:</td>
<td>• support pupils to experience a successful transition; and • are aligned with broader educational policies.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. School transition policies are implemented effectively.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<td>3. There are strong links between the primary and post-primary curriculum, clearly demonstrating that the curriculum, assessment and pedagogy have:</td>
<td>• continuity; and • progression.</td>
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<td>4. There are structures, processes and procedures in place to support collaborative working and sharing information within and between schools.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. There is an effective communication network in place and clear channels of communication.</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. A member of SLT or another appropriate teacher has responsibility for developing, monitoring and evaluating the success of school partnerships.</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. Those involved in the transition process have clearly defined roles and responsibilities.</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. Teachers have effective support, including time and resources, to ensure successful transition.</td>
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<tr>
<td>9. Staff are empowered to share and develop good practice and expertise and to identify areas for improvement in the transition process.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>10. The transition process builds on prior learning, supports improvements in learning and contributes to raising standards.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>11. Pupils and parents are well informed and actively engaged in the transition process.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>12. Staff actively seek and use pupils’ and parents’ views about transition to inform improvements in the transition process.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of Collaboration Evidence</td>
<td>Quality Indicator</td>
<td>Strengths Areas for Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Collaboration between primary and post-primary schools is carefully planned and sustainable.</td>
<td>1.</td>
<td>- Schools monitor and review the quality of collaboration and development planning process.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Collaboration is based on agreed goals and objectives.</td>
<td>2.</td>
<td>- The processes of collaboration are clear and well-documented.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. The processes of collaboration are clear, including: • roles and responsibilities; • accountability; • decision making; • communication; and • monitoring and evaluation.</td>
<td>3.</td>
<td>- The processes of collaboration are clear, including: • roles and responsibilities; • accountability; • decision making; • communication; and • monitoring and evaluation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Teachers from primary and post-primary schools meet regularly throughout the year and collaborate to ensure pupils experience a successful transition.</td>
<td>4.</td>
<td>- The processes of collaboration are clear, including: • roles and responsibilities; • accountability; • decision making; • communication; and • monitoring and evaluation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Schools and teachers exchange information, co-ordinate activities, share resources and enhance partner schools’ capacity to achieve a common purpose.</td>
<td>5.</td>
<td>- There is a clear and effective communication system.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. There is a shared understanding of what constitutes success and how to assess it in terms of outcomes.</td>
<td>6.</td>
<td>- There is a clear and effective communication system.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>7.</td>
<td>- There is a shared understanding of what constitutes success and how to assess it in terms of outcomes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Schools monitor and review the quality of collaboration and development planning process.</td>
<td>8.</td>
<td>- Schools monitor and review the quality of collaboration and development planning process.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality Indicator</td>
<td>Evidence</td>
<td></td>
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<td>------------------</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. The primary school prepares pupils for transition by making Year 7 pupils aware of the changes involved in moving to post-primary school.</td>
<td>Strengths</td>
<td>Areas for Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. The primary school offers opportunities for pupils to discuss and express their views about transition including their concerns and what they look forward to.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Teachers in primary and post-primary school collaborate, plan and provide a range of joint activities/events for pupils in Year 7.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Year 7 pupils have opportunities to meet teachers and pupils from the post-primary school.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Year 7 pupils have opportunities to participate in activities in the post-primary school.</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. The post-primary schools’ pastoral care system has a focus on ensuring pupils experience a successful transition.</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. All staff in post-primary schools support pupils to develop the personal and social skills, self-confidence and self-esteem necessary to:</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• settle well into school life and school routines;</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• develop a sense of belonging;</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• to relate well to teachers and peers; and</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• to make new friendships.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
### Involving pupils

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator</th>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Areas for Development</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8. In post-primary schools pupils have opportunities to participate actively in a range of school activities and events.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>9. In post-primary schools pupils have a forum to express their views and concerns in relation to their experience of transition.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>10. In discussion with pupils, teachers in post-primary schools regularly review how well each pupil is settling into the school and their progress in learning.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### Involving parents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator</th>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Areas for Development</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. There is a focus on encouraging all parents to become involved with the school and support their children during transition.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Parents are invited to share their views about the transition process and given opportunities to participate.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3. The school is aware of parents’ circumstances and works to overcome possible barriers that may prevent them engaging with the school. These barriers can include:</td>
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<tr>
<td>• disability;</td>
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<td>• language;</td>
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<td>• parents separated;</td>
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<td>• working hours;</td>
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<tr>
<td>• other caring responsibilities; and</td>
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<tr>
<td>• lack of confidence or skills to engage with teachers.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| 4. | The school provides support to parents to enable them to help their child during the transition process. This can include:  
   - parenting classes;  
   - numeracy and literacy classes;  
   - English or Irish Medium language classes  
   - family learning days; and  
   - after school homework club and parent-pupil homework sessions. |
| 5. | Parents of pupils in Year 7 have opportunities to discuss their preferred post-primary school options with their child’s class teacher. |
| 6. | Post-primary schools provide information and offer support and advice to parents of Year 7 pupils. |
| 7. | Parents have opportunities to visit post-primary schools, to meet teachers and discuss issues or concerns. |
| 8. | Primary and post-primary schools use a range of approaches to engage parents in their child’s learning. |
| 9. | ICT is increasingly used to communicate with parents. This can include:  
   - school website;  
   - email;  
   - text messaging alerts;  
   - online surveys; and  
   - blogs. |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator</th>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Areas for Development</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Primary and post-primary teachers collaborate to plan programmes of learning that:</td>
<td>• link to and build on the primary curriculum;</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• avoid repetition and overlap;</td>
<td>• chart clear progression; and</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• are skills infused.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Primary and post-primary teachers collaborate to plan progression in the Cross-Curricular Skills:</td>
<td>• Communication (Literacy);</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Using ICT; and</td>
<td>• Using Mathematics (Numeracy);</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>and the Thinking Skills and Personal Capabilities:</td>
<td>• Managing Information;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Thinking, Problem-Solving and Decision-Making;</td>
<td>• Being Creative;</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Working with Others and</td>
<td>• Self-Management.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Primary and post-primary teachers share good practice and expertise in approaches to teaching, learning and assessment.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Quality Indicator</td>
<td>Strengths</td>
<td>Areas for Development</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Teaching, learning and assessment approaches are similar across Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Teachers have a shared understanding of assessment standards and in particular in relation to the Cross-Curricular Skills.</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Pupils are supported to take greater responsibility for and become more independent in their learning. For example, by:</td>
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<tr>
<td>• self and peer assessment;</td>
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<tr>
<td>• reviewing their work; and</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• setting targets for improvement.</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. Primary and post-primary schools commonly use:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• enquiry-based learning;</td>
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<tr>
<td>• effective questioning;</td>
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<tr>
<td>• a range of active teaching and learning methods;</td>
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<tr>
<td>• an infused approach to teaching skills alongside knowledge and understanding;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• assessment for learning.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
## Sharing and using assessment and other information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator</th>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Areas for Development</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. A manageable system is in place for gathering and recording assessment and other information about pupils.</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 2. Assessment data is used effectively to:  
  • enhance teaching and learning;  
  • improve learning outcomes; and  
  • contribute to raising standards. | | |
| 3. A manageable system is in place for gathering, recording and sharing assessment and other information about pupils between primary and post-primary schools. | | |
| 4. There is a mechanism in place for post-primary and primary teachers to discuss and share assessment standards. | | |
| 5. Assessment and other data is used effectively to identify low and underachievers. | | |
| 6. In post-primary schools a system is in place for sharing information related to a pupil's well-being and learning with appropriate staff. | | |
| 7. Post-primary schools effectively use information provided by the primary schools to build on prior learning and plan progression. | | |
Appendix 2: The Big Picture of the Curriculum at Key Stages 1 and 2

The Northern Ireland Curriculum aims to empower young people to achieve their potential and to make informed and responsible decisions throughout their lives.

TO DEVELOP THE YOUNG PERSON AS AN INDIVIDUAL
- personal understanding
- mutual understanding
- personal health
- moral character
- spiritual awareness

TO DEVELOP THE YOUNG PERSON AS A CONTRIBUTOR TO SOCIETY
- citizenship
- cultural understanding
- media awareness
- ethical awareness

TO DEVELOP THE YOUNG PERSON AS A CONTRIBUTOR TO THE ECONOMY & ENVIRONMENT
- employability
- economic awareness
- education for sustainable development

The Northern Ireland Curriculum aims to empower young people to achieve their potential and to make informed and responsible decisions throughout their lives.

The “Big Picture” of the Curriculum at Key Stages 1 & 2

**Areas of Learning**
- The Arts
- Language and Literacy
- Mathematics and Numeracy
- Personal Development & Mutual Understanding
- Physical Education
- The World Around Us
- Religious Education

**Cross-Curricular Skills**
- Thinking Skills & Personal Capabilities

**Assessment for Learning**
- building a more open relationship between learner and teacher
- clear learning intentions shared with pupils
- shared / negotiated success criteria
- individual target setting
- taking risks for learning
- advice on what to improve and how to improve it
- peer and self assessment
- celebrating success
- peer and self evaluation of learning

**Learning Experiences**
- investigating & problem solving
- links between curriculum areas
- relevant and enjoyable
- media-rich
- skills integrated
- active and hands on
- offers choice
- challenging and engaging
- supportive environment
- culturally diverse
- positive reinforcement
- varied to suit learning style
- on-going reflection
- enquiry based

**Fostering**

**Attitudes and Dispositions**
- personal responsibility
  - self-confidence
  - curiosity
- concern for others
  - community spirit
  - flexibility
  - tolerance
- commitment – determination – resourcefulness
  - integrity – moral courage
- openness to new ideas
  - respect
## Appendix 3: CCEA – The Big Picture of the Curriculum at Key Stage 3

### Key Elements

- **Thinking & Decision Making**
- **Safety & Management**
- **Religious Education**
- **Science & Technology**
- **Modern Languages**
- **Arts**
- **Mathematics**
- **Physical Education**
- **Languages**
- **Science & Technology**
- **Religious Education**
- **Home Economics**
- **Local & Global Citizenship**
- **Employability**
- **Personal Development**

### Areas of Learning

- **Personal Responsibility**
- **Concern for Others**
- **Commitment – Determination – Resourcefulness**
- **Openness to New Ideas**
- **Self Belief – Optimism – Pragmatism**
- **Community Spirit**
- **Integrity – Moral Courage**
- **Tolerance**
- **Curiosity**

### Learning Experiences

- **Investigating & Problem Solving**
- **Relevant and Enjoyable**
- **Linked to Other Curriculum Areas**
- **Supportive Environment**
- **Culturally Diverse**
- **Enquiry Based**
- **Positive Reinforcement**
- **Varied to Suit Learning Style**
- **On-Going Reflection**

### Assessment for Learning

- **Clear Learning Intentions Shared with Pupils**
- **Shared / Negotiated Success Criteria**
- **Advice on What to Improve and How to Improve It**
- **Peer and Self Assessment of Learning**
- **Peer and Self Evaluation of Learning**
- **Taking Risks for Learning**
- **Individual Target Setting**

### Key Cross-Curricular Skills

- **Thinking, Problem Solving, Decision Making**
- **Safety & Management**
- **Religious Education**
- **Science & Technology**
- **Modern Languages**
- **Arts**
- **Mathematics**
- **Physical Education**
- **Languages**
- **Science & Technology**
- **Religious Education**
- **Home Economics**
- **Local & Global Citizenship**
- **Employability**
- **Personal Development**

### Key Cross-Curricular Values

- **Empowerment**
- **Economic Sustainability**
- **Cultural Awareness**
- **Media Awareness**
- **Ethical Awareness**
- **Employability**
- **Economic Awareness**
- **Education for Sustainable Development**

The Northern Ireland Curriculum aims to empower young people to achieve their potential and to make informed and responsible decisions throughout their lives...
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Achievement</td>
<td>The progress and success of a pupil in their learning over a given time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment</td>
<td>The systematic collection, interpretation and use of information to provide a deeper understanding of what pupils know and understand, their skills and personal capabilities and what they can do as a result of their learning experiences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment for Learning (formative assessment)</td>
<td>The process of seeking and interpreting evidence for pupils and their teachers to use to decide where they are in their learning, where they need to go and how best to get there.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deep Learning</td>
<td>Involves the critical analysis of new ideas, making connections with prior learning and known concepts and principles. It leads to a better understanding and long-term retention of concepts and supports problem solving in unfamiliar contexts and applied to learning, life and work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diagnostic assessment</td>
<td>Used to identify the pupils' strengths and weaknesses and to highlight the specific nature of difficulties that the learner might have. The information from the assessment informs future teaching and learning and implement intervention strategies to support improvements in the pupils' learning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fit for purpose (assessment)</td>
<td>An assessment that is fit for purpose provides a measure of what it was intended to assess. An assessment designed for one purpose may not be suitable for another.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formative assessment</td>
<td>see Assessment for Learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enquiry-based learning</td>
<td>A pedagogic approach that is pupil-led and where the teacher facilitates learning. It involves the pupils seeking answers to questions and finding solutions to problems.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Levels of Progression</td>
<td>Used at Key Stages 1, 2 and 3 to assess pupil performance in the Cross-Curricular Skills of Communication, Using Mathematics and Using ICT. The Levels of Progression for each skill range from one to seven. Pupil performance is judged against the assessment criteria that define each level.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literacy</td>
<td>The pupils' ability to read and use written information and to write appropriately and legibly, taking account of different purposes, contexts, conventions and audiences. It involves the development of an integrated approach to the acquisition of talking, listening, reading and writing across the curriculum (DENI, 2011).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low achievement</td>
<td>When a pupil is achieving to the full extent of her or his ability, but is well below average compared to her or his peers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Numeracy</td>
<td>The pupils’ ability to apply appropriate mathematical skills and knowledge in familiar and unfamiliar contexts and in a range of settings throughout life, including the workplace (DENI, 2011).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Term</td>
<td>Definition</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer Assessment</td>
<td>A group of pupils make judgements about each other’s performance and learning and suggest ways to improve their learning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Progression in learning</td>
<td>This is where learning builds on previous learning and is increasingly challenging in demand as pupils move from year to year.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pupil Progression</td>
<td>A pupil is viewed as showing progression in terms of the breadth and depth of their learning if they are acquiring, developing and consolidating knowledge, understanding and skills at a rate that is typical of pupils of similar ability working at the same level within the Key Stage.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-assessment</td>
<td>Pupils reflect on their learning, make judgements about their performance and identify ways to improve their learning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shared Education</td>
<td>Two or more schools or other educational institutions from different sectors working in collaboration with the aim of delivering educational benefits to pupils and promoting the efficient and effective use of resources, equality of opportunity, good relations, equality of identity, respect for diversity and community cohesion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard</td>
<td>A statement about the degree of quality to be attained in an assessment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surface learning</td>
<td>The uncritical acceptance of information and memorisation as isolated and unlinked facts. This leads to superficial retention of material usually for examinations. It does not promote long-term retention of knowledge and understanding.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summative assessment</td>
<td>Used to determine a pupil’s learning at a particular point</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thinking Skills and Personal Capabilities</td>
<td>Managing Information, Thinking, Problem-Solving and Decision-Making, Being Creative, Working with Others and Self-Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Underachievement</td>
<td>When a pupil’s performance is below what is expected, based on their ability.</td>
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</table>