

Unit 9: Successful Transitions

a) Starting school

Most children with DS enjoy attending their local preschool playgroup or nursery. Many of the basic building blocks to prepare children for inclusion into mainstream school can be learned in such environments.

Start planning early so that there is time for effective liaison. In choosing a school, take account of where the child's friends, siblings or playgroup peers are going as these children will be a support for the child with DS as they start school.

Ensure that the child's Statement of Special Educational Need is finalised and that any learning support hours mentioned in it are ready to be put into place. Encourage new teaching assistants to meet with the parents and get to know the child before they start school. Consider having two teaching assistants, rather than one, to avoid overdependence on one adult.

Most Local Authorities will have an Early Years intervention programme such as Portage which the child with DS will have been part of. The Portage worker or early year's worker will provide the school with up to date information and reports about the child including a personalised 'This is Me' booklet which tells the child's 'story' and 'needs' as if written by the child. Probably the most useful piece of information that the school will have!

In the term before the child starts school a transition meeting at school should be arranged by support professionals working with the child. This is an opportunity for information to be shared with staff at school and parents/carers where any anxieties, however trivial, can be aired so that strategies can be put into place to make for a successful and inclusive placement.

Parents, key school staff – usually the Headteacher, SENCO, class teacher and TA, and involved support professionals – Educational Psychologist, Speech and Language Therapist, Nursery/ Playgroup leader, Portage worker/Early years worker will attend. A transition plan should then be drawn up to enable the transition into school to be a smooth and successful one.

Try to arrange a visit from school to the home and to the playgroup or nursery. Seeing the child in the security of a familiar setting can be very valuable for a class teacher or teaching assistant who may otherwise underestimate the ability of the child. Remember children are likely to function at a much higher level in familiar surroundings.

Consider arranging additional visits for the child into school to help familiarise themselves with the layout and the new people. At these times, give them a key adult to whom they can relate.

Ensure that all primary school staff are fully informed about the child and about DS in general. However make the point that any good teacher can teach a child with Down syndrome.

Whole school staff training at a staff meeting either in the term before the child joins or at the beginning of the term that the child starts is recommended. This should be run by a support professional who has knowledge of the specific learning profile of children with DS and issues around support, differentiation etc, and often including the parent(s) if they feel confident enough. If not then the trainer should include personal profile of the child. The trainer could be an Educational Psychologist, an Advisory Support teacher, a Portage or Early years worker, a Speech and Language Therapist. There may be several presenters from different disciplines.

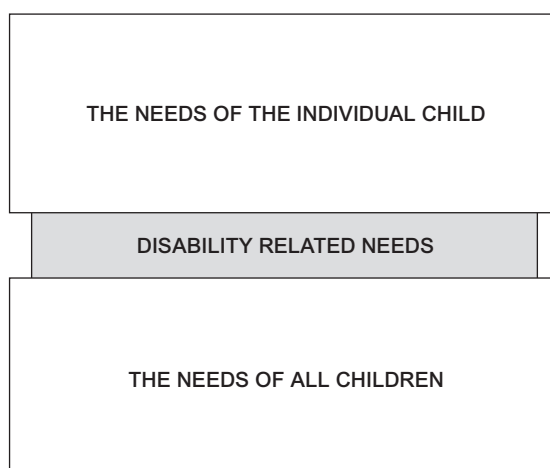
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A book made using photos of all the areas in the school together with a sentence underneath each photo will make a lovely aide memoire for the child to have at home during the holidays before they transfer to familiarise themselves with the school and to remind them of what to do, who is there etc. Photos of teachers and TAs if available are also helpful. 'This is my teacher, she is called ...'.



As for all children, children with DS are children first and their needs in school are the same – to feel happy and secure, to learn and to play. Get to know the child with DS as a child first who has their own personality and their own likes and dislikes. Finally the school needs to know about the child's needs relating to DS. It is important that whole staff training is provided by a trainer who has knowledge of the specific learning profile of children with DS, and can inform your school about how to use support, models of good inclusion and how to differentiate. Check within your Local Authority whom this might be or contact DSA if there is nobody with this skill.

MEETING INDIVIDUAL NEEDS



Carefully consider the first transfer within the primary school. For a few children, spending extra time in nursery or reception, especially if they are Summer born or have had little nursery experience, can prove valuable. It can give them time to develop and consolidate key skills without interfering with the development of friendships as children of this age are still able to make and break friendships very easily. However, this should only be done in exceptional circumstances. For the majority of children with Down syndrome, placement in their correct age group is most beneficial in the long term. Many Local Authorities (LAs) will have policies about whether children can repeat a year or not so make sure that you know what your LA guidelines are.

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If you do keep children back a year, they should then move up school with that peer group. Under no circumstances should you try to move any child back to their proper age group or hold them back for a further year at a later stage, as social relationships will be totally disrupted. If your child has been held back a year then it is important that the child transfers to secondary school as a year 7 in a year 6 class otherwise he will miss the curriculum and experience of year 6.

b) Moving from Infants to Juniors

Changing class each year presents every child with a new set of challenges, with new people teaching them, new routines to learn and a new classroom location. After a long summer break, returning to school requires adjustment even without any other changes to building or personnel that might have occurred. Children with Down syndrome do adapt to new situations, but there might be a period of settling in, as they learn the new routines, get to know new people and adjust to different expectations.

Some children will only take a short time to adjust – some may take a few weeks or even half a term to regain their attainment achieved at the end of the previous summer term. All are typical adjustments that children with DS will make on transfer, including from one year group to the next – so don't worry about apparent loss of skills during this transfer time!

As in all their learning, children with Down syndrome will be helped by clarity and practice. They need to be helped to understand the rules and what is expected of them as individuals. They then need to be given opportunities to practice newly learned skills. When significant changes occur for any of us, we may revert to recurrent behaviour patterns that emerge when we are insecure or unsure how to cope with change. In children with Down syndrome, it is not uncommon for behaviours that have disappeared e.g. thumb sucking or rocking, to reappear temporarily in the new setting. Once the child settles down they should disappear again, so staff should not be unduly worried.

Having a learning difficulty may make changes that appear relatively insignificant to us seem far greater, particularly for the child with poor social skills or a high level of anxiety. Staff need to be aware of this and to offer support and understanding to the child who may be confused or distressed by quite small changes in routine or personnel.

Transition to the junior school presents even more changes than the normal yearly transfer for both children and parents. Transition in an all through primary school requires fewer adjustments than a move from a separate infant school. However, there are still likely to be changes in expectation and approach in the classroom and around the school building.

Transition visits which include other children who would also benefit need to take place during the Summer term.

These transition changes are appropriate and add clarity to the development of maturity in the child. If the child continues in an all through primary school it is important to mark the change from infant to junior as a key event in the child's life. Adults working or interacting informally with the child e.g. welfare or administrative staff, will need to change their expectations accordingly.

The child's peers will copy the models of behaviour displayed by the adults around them. They too should be supported in relating to the child with DS as a same-age peer, not as a developmentally younger child who needs to be looked after.

Where the infant and junior schools are separate, the two SENCOs should share information well before transfer. Ideally the junior school SENCO should attend the Year 2 annual review.

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The Year 3 teacher should visit the Year 2 class and meet the child. Before that meeting the class should be told about the visit, the name of the visiting teacher and why she is coming.

The child with DS and the parents should visit the new school and ideally be linked up with a 'buddy' who will look out for them when they start. They should be shown where the children wait to go into school and which door they go in. They should be shown the dining hall, the toilets and anything else which might be unfamiliar.

A book made using photos of all the areas in the school together with a sentence underneath each photo will make a lovely aide memoire for the child to have at home during the holidays before they transfer to familiarise themselves with the school and to remind them of what to do, who is there etc. Photos of teachers and TAs if available are also helpful. 'This is my teacher, she is called...'.

If decisions on classes have been made, the child should be introduced to their new teacher. They should also meet the Headteacher and the school secretary. Photos that the parents can take home will be useful in teaching the child their names and their job in school. If the child's teaching assistant is to change, try to appoint them before the transfer so they can spend time getting to know the child and picking up tips from the current assistant.

At the start of Year 3, there should be a meeting between the parents, the SENCO and the class teacher to agree on forms of communication e.g. a home/school book or telephone calls at pre-agreed times. Dates for IEP meetings need to be set well in advance to enable the parents to be included if they so wish. Routines for the involvement of outside professionals e.g. speech and language therapist or advisory teacher should also be clarified.

If transferring to a new school, lunchtime details are likely to be different. Although the child with DS will learn the new rules and routines in time, they should be supported initially by a peer or an identified lunchtime supervisor. Asking the child's teaching assistant to supervise them at lunch time is not recommended as the child should learn to access the people who are there normally if they need help.

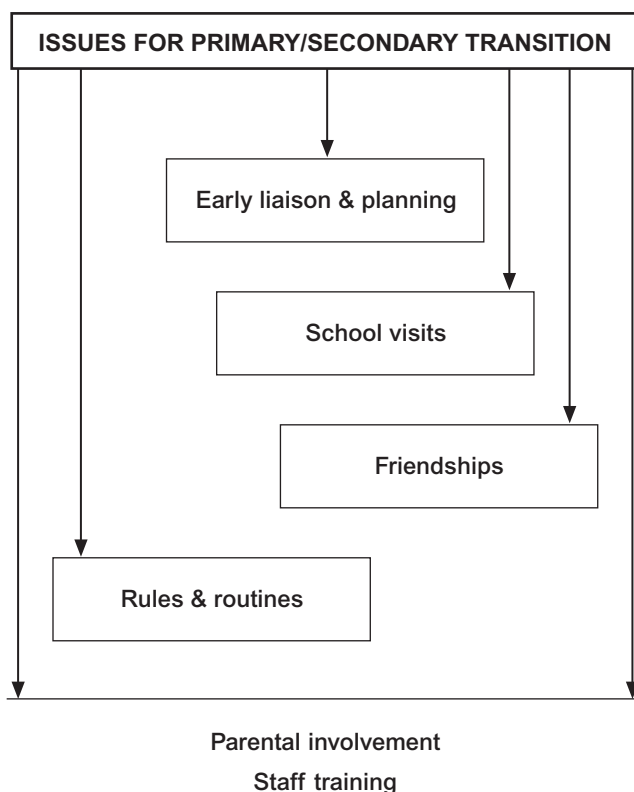
Make a key fob set of instructions including photos to help the child learn the routines in the dining hall. Make a visual menu with photos and words so that the child can make independent choices about what to eat.

If the dining hall is very busy and/or the child takes longer to eat than his peers, arrange for the child with DS to collect his/her meal first together with his/her friends so that they can all sit on the same table.

Consider setting up a play and lunchtime 'buddy' system, with older children supporting their younger peers until they settle in. Make sure that the older pupils don't do everything for the child and encourage the child to learn how to play independently of their support with peers from the child's class. Such an approach is much preferable to providing an adult 'minder' for the child with Down syndrome, as it encourages the development of independence and normal friendships.

Unit 9:

c) Transition from primary to secondary school



Transition to secondary school can be difficult for many pupils, but particularly so for those with special needs. In contrast to primary school, pupils have to relate to many teachers and find their way to and from different classrooms.

Pupils with Down syndrome are likely to find adapting to new surroundings and adjusting to new expectations difficult and most will need extra preparation and help. During the final primary year it is vital that plans are made to make this major transfer as smooth and as positive as possible for all involved. Essential elements to successful transition are a positive attitude and a carefully prepared transition plan.

The first step is choosing a school. There may be one main school which most of the pupils from the primary school feed into. Socially this is the most sensible option as the child will be well supported by familiar friends. However, it might not welcome the child or have inclusive systems in place. In this case the parents may be better looking elsewhere.

In drawing up a transition plan it is important to start early to allow proper liaison between schools and relevant professionals.

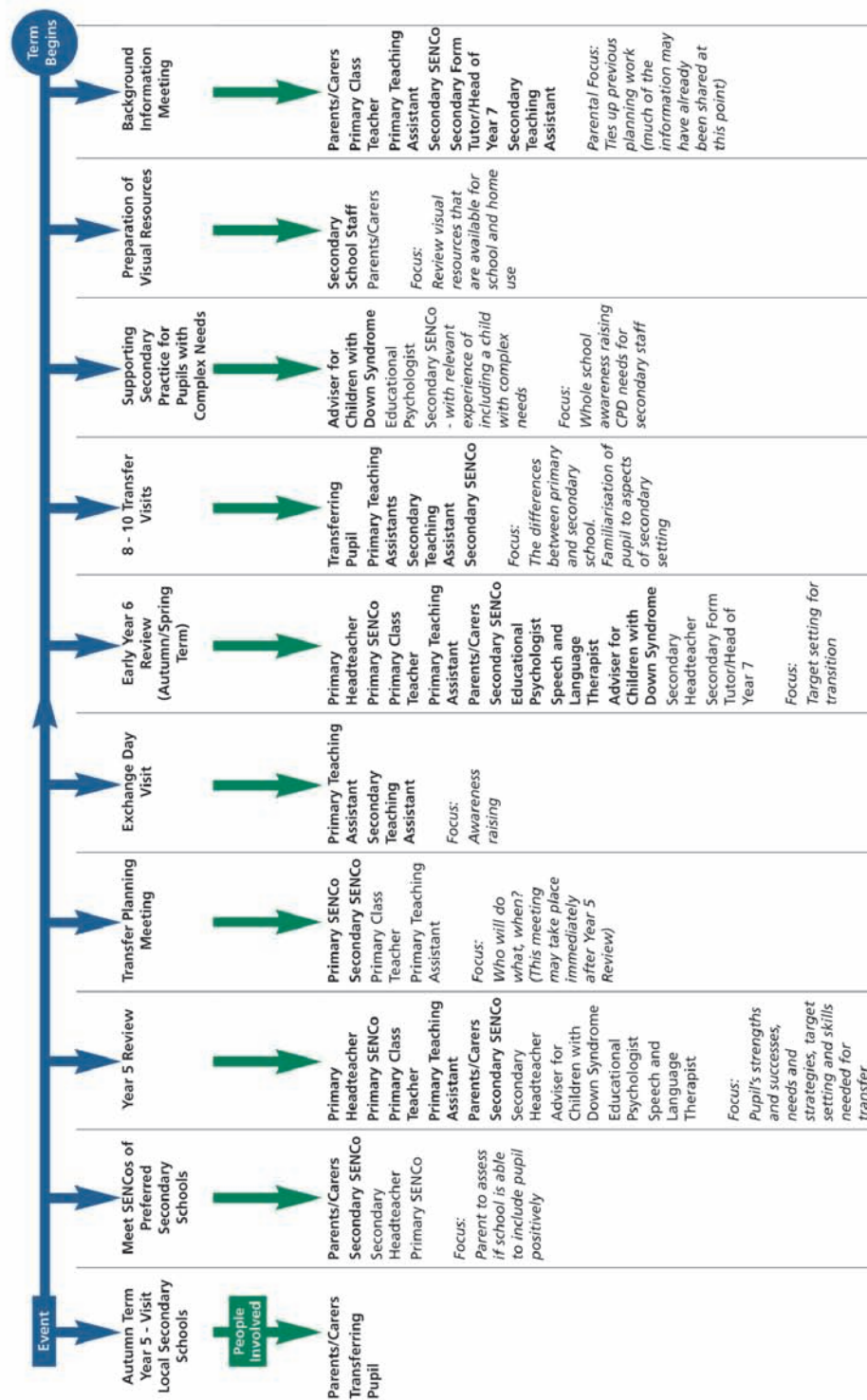
Ensure the annual review in Year 6 is held in the Autumn or early Spring. Planning between Primary and secondary school with parental involvement is essential. On the next page is an excellent timeline planner for this taken from the **Secondary Transfer Guide**.

Unit 9:

Unit 9:

Secondary Transfer Timeline

Illustrates the order of events, who should be involved and the main focus of attention at each stage of the transfer procedure.



Note: Essential involvement is shown in Bold type

Unit 9:

A detailed transition plan should then be drawn up following the year 6 Annual Review in the Autumn term:

Transition Plan OBJECTIVE	For Julie Coates COURSE OF ACTION	24th April 2008 - Primary School TA, SENCO Primary school PERSONNEL INVOLVED	Present: Parent, Class teacher (CT), TIME SCALE	SENCO from Community College POINTS TO CONSIDER	Educational Psychologist (EP) ACHIEVEMENT CRITERIA
To provide personal profile for Julie.	A4 sheets to be used with photo of Julie.	Provided by parents, school – CT and TA, SENCO at college (SDCC) to make part specific to secondary school.	Beginning of July.	Physical needs re stairs, car rides, continence issues.	Profile will be available for staff at SDCC.
Transition book for SDCC.	Photos to be taken of key areas of SDCC.	TA and Julie to go during their first visit to SDCC to identify TA – SENCO to identify.	Asap – staff to set date.	All areas of site including car park, playground, primary school corridors and subject rooms, school uniform etc.	Laminated book with photos and text will be available with primary school and parents can reinforce Julie's familiarity with SDCC.
Visits of staff from SDCC to Primary school.	Key worker TA from SDCC to visit Primary school.	SENCO SDCC to sort staffing and then contact to be made with Primary school.	Before half-term.	TA to familiarise herself with Julie's level of skills across subject areas, observe her in class and start to get to know her as a person!	Visit(s) completed and information drafted by TA to be fed back to key staff at SDCC.
Familiarisation of new school, staff, routines, routes etc.	Primary TA to go with Julie for first visit and meet key TA, then SDCC TA to meet Julie in car park for subsequent visits.	CT, TA SDCC, Mother.	Asap – date to be set so that as many visits as needed can be fitted in this term.	Julie has already spent one morning at SDCC without TA support. She performed well in class and was happy to be in for year 6's and was a star. Julie is familiar with the school because her older brother already attends SDCC.	Julie will be able to find her way around the school site, and will be able to find her timetable and locate rooms for lessons.
ICT needs prior to Transfer.	Referral to Advisory teacher for ICT to visit Primary school and assess Julie's needs.	CSET (County Special Education Team).	Already done and referral form received by school – Mother and school to fill in. School and parents to chase school appointment.	Programmes already used by Primary school. Programmes available at SDCC – training for Julie, Julie can already use programmes, can copy and paste and use a mouse.	Advice and training received/planned for SDCC on relevant software and hardware for Julie.
Familiarisation of timetable.	Key jobs and visual timetable to be made when timetable known.	SDCC.	End of term or whenever timetable details are known.		Visual timetable key jobs will be made when timetable known.
Speech and Language Therapist (SALT).	Assessment requested. Plus ongoing support requested in secondary school.	CSET already requested. SALT will be assessing Julie in Primary school in May.	This term and ongoing.	Parent request regular SALT input during term and when Julie transfers to SDCC.	SALT will be able to advise parents of availability of services.
Transport.	Mother has filled in request for transport form – taxi with escort has been requested.	EP to e-mail information re new regulations for transport for SEN pupils to Mother and SENCO.	Mother informed that she will know the outcome in June.	Julie needs straps on seat belt secured and doors on child lock. Julie likes to undo her seat belt and treat to open the door whilst in transit. SDCC TA will meet Julie from taxi and take to taxi at end of day.	Parents will be informed by transport of whether taxi agreed. Mother would like to meet driver and escort, if possible, before Julie starts school.
Familiarisation of canteen, choosing Menu.	SDCC to organise visits, possibility of Julie sampling a lunch in the canteen.	SDCC.	During summer term visits.	Mother would like Julie to be able to use card system like all the pupils.	Julie will have familiarised herself with canteen systems.
Peers for tutor groups.	Decisions about which of Julie's friends will be in her tutor group.	SENCO and CT to liaise.	During summer term.	Tutor for group. Julie will be in the same house as her brother.	Tutor class lists finalised.
Links for language group offered from a local Community College.	SENCO SDCC has discussed with SENCO at school – they are delighted to invite Julie to join the group – no charge.	TA from SDCC. Mother will contact CSET and transport re taxi.	September 08.	Julie will need a taxi to take her to school and then return her SDCC as TA from SDCC will accompany her to take forward work into SDCC for Julie.	Julie will attend the fortnightly group at local school.
Outreach from Special School (SS).	Teacher from SS will visit SDCC to give advice – agreed by CSET.	Outreach teacher SS, TA SDCC. EP to check referral route with CSET.	September 08.	Mother does not want Julie to go to too many different places so outreach rather than sessions at SS required.	Outreach visits will be organised and confirmed.
Home School book.	Will be set up by SDCC.	SENCO.	September 08.	SENCO would like Mother to write any concerns, however small, so that SDCC can sort!	Julie will take home school book in her bag!
INSET for SDCC.	EP's (specialism DS) to provide training for key year 7 curricula staff and SEN staff.	SENCO, EPs.	Date to be fixed before the end of summer term for as early as possible in the Autumn term.	Learning profile for pupils with DS, differentiation etc to be covered.	Training will have taken place.

Unit 9:

Make sure that everybody involved with the child is invited to help design the transition plan.

Invite the class teacher, TA and SENCo from the primary school, the SENCo, form tutor and TA representative from the secondary, the speech and language therapist, the educational psychologist, the advisory teacher and LA officer as well as parents.

Set up regular meetings between primary and secondary staff to monitor the progress of the transition plan.

Invite the secondary SENCO and form tutor to the final termly review in the primary school.

Invite the secondary SENCO, form tutor and TA to observe the child in class.

Arrange secondary class groupings so that the child with Down syndrome has some familiar and supportive friends in the same form group.

Discuss how home and school can keep communication channels open. Agree who will be the child's key worker.

Discuss ways in which the child will access the curriculum and where small group or individual work is indicated. By far the majority of time (around 85% plus) should be spent in mixed ability lessons so that the student has good models of learning and behaviour. Small group work should be accessed by a range of students for example for social skills, SRE or speech and language. Individual work should be at a minimum and should have real purpose and targets e.g. specific speech and language work; individualised reading or writing programme, learning subject vocabulary.

Agree targets for the child's first IEP and how subject staff will become involved in IEP planning and evaluation. A target for independence should always be included both in lessons without TA support when possible and in moving around the school. This will vary depending on individual student's needs. This enables friendships with peers to develop as well as increasing self esteem.

In some schools, a secondary teaching assistant has swapped jobs with their counterpart in the primary school for one afternoon a week during the last half term before transfer. This enables the primary school to learn what will be expected of the child in the secondary school. It enables the new assistant to get to know the child and how he or she learns best and it enables the child to make a positive relationship with someone from their new school.

Unit 9:

The preparation of a personal profile of the child by the parents, primary staff, speech and language therapist and the child themselves can be really valuable in setting the scene for new staff who may be quite apprehensive. See below:

Henry Alexander Barwell

Henry Barwell has never been short of a birthday party! Born as he was on the very last day of the nineteen eighties. This is just as well really, because he likes trendy clothes and is conscious of his image, is a pretty cool dancer and enjoys a wide taste in music. His favourite bands at the moment are Britney Spears, Oasis and Cold Play.

Henry is the eldest of three children. He has a sister, Olivia, aged 8 and a brother Joe who is 5. He gets on well with both of them most of the time and doesn't often lose his temper or fight. Sometimes he is very kind and helps them if they are upset or get hurt.

Henry loves football and supports Manchester United. On his last birthday he got the official team shirt and now won't be seen wearing anything else! He spends hours kicking around in the garden practicing his shooting and ball skills, but he gets quite frustrated if he's not playing well. He also enjoys table-football and snooker and has recently taken up table tennis. On Tuesday nights he does gymnastics and at weekends rides his mountain bike or goes swimming with his Mum and Dad, brother and sister. Henry is quite competitive and likes to win but is beginning to learn that this is not always possible.

Henry has a sharp sense of humour and often sees the funny side of things. He likes sharing a good giggle with his family, friends and even teachers! Sometimes he finds something so funny or interesting that he won't stop talking about it! When he was younger he could occasionally be a bit stubborn, but has become less so in the last few years. Henry likes routine, but with a little encouragement is also happy to try things unfamiliar. He is not without determination and once he's discovered a new activity can be persuaded to persevere until he has mastered it. This year he learnt to ski and says this is the thing he is proud of most.

Henry is a gentle person and quite caring. He avoids aggression and is happier away from loud noises or very busy environments. He is sensitive to emotion and will often be the first to console someone if they seem a bit down.

He says he is quite looking forward to going to St. Birinus, but he's not sure how different it will be from Harwell. He wants to get better at reading and speaking and would love to be in a football team, but is a bit anxious of some of the bigger boys.

Penny & Giles Barwell (Parents)



Additional visits to the secondary school can be very useful for the child, particularly if they will not have many friends there when they start. Try to encourage at least one friend to go with them and try to visit at informal times as well as during lesson times so they can see what goes on at break and lunchtimes.

Unit 9:

Help the child draw a plan of the new school and construct a visual timetable showing which rooms are used for which activities. Practice walking the route from home to school and from the playground into the correct room for registration, learning where to hang coats or leave sports kit.

Key fobs for daily timetables can also be useful. The DSA produce a CD to enable schools to make their own visual time tables. This is also part of the Education Support Disc.

Examples of visual time tables:



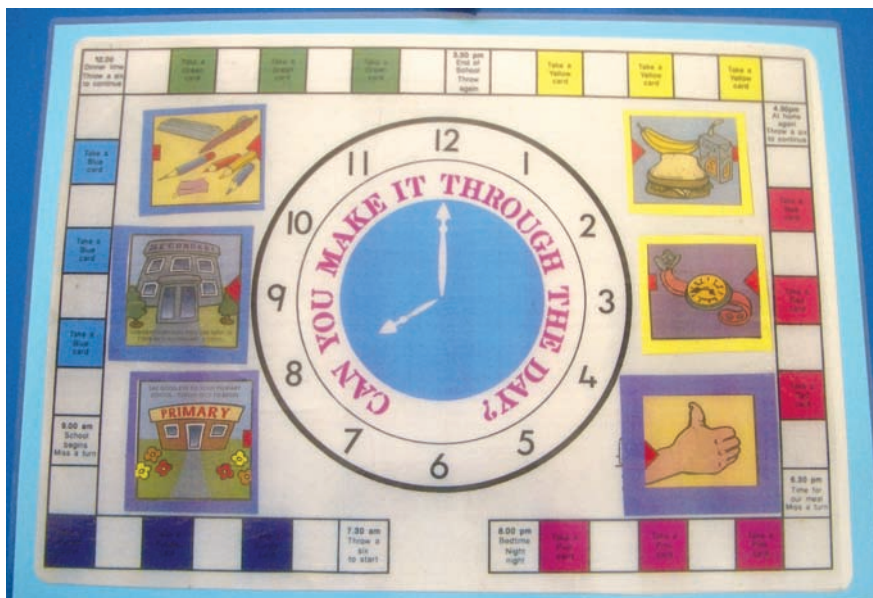
Visual timetable for a student who remembered the timetable by who was teaching him rather than by subject:.

A R → 1 → 2 → B → 3 → 4 → L → R → 5 → 6										
Monday Tuesday Wednesday Thursday Friday										
	Registration	Art	Art	Break	Music	Music	Lunch	Assembly	Basic Skills	Basic Skills
	Registration	Maths	English	Break	Drama	French	Lunch	Registration	I.T.	P.E.
	Assembly	Science	Geography	Break	Maths	English	Lunch	Registration	D.T.	D.T.
	Registration	P.E.	D.T.	Break	French	Drama	Lunch	Registration	Science	Maths
	Registration	P.E.	Soc.Ed	Break	English	Drama	Lunch	Registration	English	Learning support

The same symbols and words that are used in the visual timetable can also be placed on subject classroom doors and on exercise books. This enables the pupil to find his way to lessons and to pack his school bag independently.

Unit 9:

Board games are also a fun way of helping students to understand the routines and procedures of secondary school:



If the pupil is going to a secondary school without current friends, try to arrange some visits to a primary school that feeds the secondary and let him accompany those children on their visits to the secondary school.

Discuss what sort of equipment and special clothing will be needed and how the student is to store and carry it around the school. Involve the parents in doing some dummy runs to get the student used to carrying a heavy bag around.

A visual checklist of what to pack for which day will help the student to become independent in packing his bag and will ensure that the correct books, equipment and clothing (for PE/games/swimming etc.) will be in school when needed!

Unit 9:

Talk about school dinners and how he is to queue up and pay for them or whether he would prefer a packed lunch. Check whether menus need to be differentiated using photos and words so that the student can be independent in making choices. Where possible go through the week's menus preteach and role play making a choice. How will the student pay? Cash or a card? Again procedures need to be taught.

Part of any transition plan must involve staff training. New staff are likely to feel anxious and uncertain as to their role and that of teaching assistants. They need opportunities to air their concerns and then to receive ongoing support from colleagues and the school's Senior Management Team.

Below is an example of a personalised description of learning needs for a school receiving a pupil with DS for the first time – it was prepared for the school by the Educational Psychologist with specialist time for supporting students' with DS and was given out to staff at the end of whole school staff training session at a staff meeting at the end of the school day at the beginning of the Autumn term when the student started. It was given to all staff, both teaching and support who were going to be directly involved with the pupils in year 7.

Key points and strategies for all year 7 staff who will be teaching and supporting Sally who has Down syndrome and who is transferring to Community College in September 2009.

Sally's needs in school are the same as for any student – to have the opportunity to learn, to make friends, to enjoy school and be happy. Sally is a young person who has her own personality and interests who also has Down syndrome. Sally should be fully included in all subject lessons with the whole class with appropriate support (by staff or peers). She should only be withdrawn from class for very short periods of time and for a specific reason to do with her own learning needs.

Students' with Down syndrome (DS) have a particular learning style – they are very strong visual and kinaesthetic learners. They show a learning profile which is not one of overall delay. They have a specific profile with characteristic strengths and weaknesses.

The range of ability to learn within the population of students' with DS ranges from just below average ability to severe learning difficulty with the majority having moderate difficulties in learning. Check that you know at what level Sally is learning.

Sally's strengths are:

Strong visual awareness and visual learning skills – Her work will need to be differentiated using visual and kinaesthetic strategies.

An ability to learn from sign and gesture – Sally uses Makaton signing to help others understand her speech which can be unclear. Staff will need to know which signs she uses and to use them themselves when teaching. Always use speech when you are signing – this will help Sally to model good speech patterns which will improve her own speech.

Ability to learn and use the written word – Sally's ability to read will be ahead of her ability to make her speech understood – so clarity of speech will be much better when she can read text to you.

Ability and desire to learn from peers – Sally will want to make friends and be part of everything, including school clubs. She may need to be supported by staff or peers, at least initially.

Ability to learn from concrete and practical materials – this needs to be remembered when differentiating all subjects for her.

Unit 9:

Sally's weaknesses are:

Significant learning difficulties – she finds it very difficult to understand what is happening in unfamiliar situations so she will need as much pre teaching as possible; practice in finding her way around school; what is expected in different subject lessons; routines for going into class; how to use the canteen; how to read a timetable; where to get transport home etc. Make everything as visual and small step learning as possible.

Delayed Motor skills – fine and gross. Sally has significant physical disabilities. She has balance problems, hypotonia (floppy muscles at joints) and ankles that have not formed properly. She is getting a wheelchair for longer journeys at home, but she will tire easily and find it hard work, initially, to walk around the school site. She will need help going up and down stairs – you will need to monitor how fast she can get from lesson to lesson and make allowances for her if she arrives late for your lesson. If it becomes a problem, school may need to allow Sally to leave each lesson, say 5 minutes early, so that she arrives on time for the next lesson. This will also mean that she avoids the rush of students between lessons. However, make sure that Sally knows and has written down for her, any homework that is given out! Sally should have homework differentiated for her, and scribed into homework book by staff or peers.

Speech and language delay – Sally will need her TA to chunk instructions for her – writing short instructions for her on a small whiteboard will be a good aide memoir for her. It is important that staff preplan differentiation for her, as well as letting the TA's know what areas will be covered during each half term in advance so that the differentiation of work being done is ready for the lesson rather than doing it 'on the hoof'. Teaching staff are responsible for this so opportunities to meet with TAs to discuss planning and differentiation needs to be built into the timetable whenever possible.

Short term auditory memory – i.e. 'the listening memory' is poor in pupils' with DS, so back up 'teacher talk' with a scribe noting down key points on a small whiteboard; where possible pre-prepare visual work cards to back up facts being given in the lesson.

Consolidation and retention problems – it is likely that Sally will need to regularly go over work taught – 'overlearning' a task. Things can be easily forgotten after a weekend, half-term and especially after longer holidays. (As with many students!)

Generalisation, thinking and reasoning – this is likely to be more difficult for Sally so be patient and help her to remember by referring back to material and making the links for her – mind maps and webs will help her.

Avoidance strategies – like many students, if Sally finds things difficult she may develop tactics to change the situation – this could be anything from talking about a holiday or favourite TV programme to locking herself in the toilet or hiding. So be aware and try to work out why she might be doing this and alter the situation – if students have difficulty using language they will not be able to tell you what is worrying them so do some detective work – ask other staff, parents etc and develop strategies to enable Sally to prosper. (This hasn't been a problem in Primary school so hopefully won't be at College, but as it will be a big change, forewarned is forearmed!)

Some strategies to use:

- Make use of writing frames, cloze procedure.
- Visual organisers, white boards and highlighter.
- Relate text to pictures, diagrams, charts, mind maps, flash cards, Cue cards and prompt sheets.
- Computer, practical and concrete activities.
- Use programmes of study and level descriptors from earlier key stages.

Unit 9:

- Curriculum Maps.
- QCA guidelines, P scales, PIVATS.
- Small supported groups for some subjects where the school already does this.
- Creative thinking, flexibility and additional resources.
- Learners who have difficulty in writing down their ideas, need different ways of making a permanent record of their work e.g. use grids from Clicker 5, SwithcitMaker2 to make talking books mind maps.
- Ask questions and note down pupil's responses.
- Ask pupil to tell you their story, what they have done etc.
- Let pupil give their description to a scribe.
- Give one pupil in the group the role of scribe, another of artist etc.
- Let pupil draw a picture or cartoon strip.
- Ask pupil to label a picture or diagram.
- Let pupil match text to pictures.
- Give pupil words to select from to make a sentence.
- Give pupil words, numbers, sentences on stickers.
- Give part completed sentences.
- Cloze procedure with or without words to choose from.
- Encourage pupil to work with a more able peer who helps them record their work.
- Let the pupil dictate onto a tape recorder to be transcribed later by themselves, another pupil or an adult.
- Provide a structured plan with headings for notes.
- Provide model sets of notes, model descriptions etc.
- Provide a series of written questions for the pupil to answer.
- Allow the pupil to produce a chart/diagram/mind map instead of a piece of writing.
- Make use of appropriate computer programmes.

Many of these strategies will already be in place for other students so fit Sally in with the good practice that already exists in college and most of all enjoy teaching her!

Educational psychologist supporting pupils' with DS in mainstream education.

Share other students' with DS experiences of being in secondary school with staff and students in tutor group:

The views of a year 8 boy with Down Syndrome taken from the Secondary Transfer Guidance document.

'When I came to School I was afraid there would be bullies. I told my teacher and I have not been bullied here. I like school dinners. I always have sausages chips and smiley faces.

The best thing about this school is I like all my lessons except maths. My favourite subject is Drama because we are acting the Titanic. I am the captain. It is in pitch darkness and we are headed to the iceberg. We have to put life jackets on because there is not enough lifeboats for us all.

I am allowed to bring my toys to school but they must be little ones that I keep in my pencil-case or pocket so teachers can't see them. I have lots of little animals I bring

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to school with me. They like to come with me in my pockets. Sometimes they watch me and sometimes they help me do my work.

My best friends are Chris, Sammy, Son and Karina. They are all in my class. On Thursday it is Drugs Awareness Day and we can wear casual clothes. I am going to wear a top saying SLAM, a casual shirt and some sort of hat.

When I leave school I want to get a job at Whipsnade looking after elephants. This is my dream.'

(This layout is based upon the pupil's own computer generated version using 'Clicker 4' software.)

- Discuss how support will be managed to build on the child's independence and ensure the involvement of subject staff in the child's learning programme.
- Discuss how time will be found for teaching assistants to liaise with subject staff and be involved in the planning of teaching programmes.
- Discuss who will prepare differentiated teaching materials and when this will be done.

d) Using support

In secondary school the opportunity often arises to consider several ways of organising support. It is not advisable to have one TA to support a student throughout the day. This can create over-familiarity and over-dependency on one adult and is very intense for both student and TA. Encouraging students with DS to become independent in their learning and social skills is also an important aim at secondary school and a single TA will not be able to promote these skills.

Research (Beadman 2009) has shown that at secondary level students with DS are better supported by a number of TAs, ideally between 4 and 6, who cover all lessons. Where timetabling permits, the TAs should provide support in the subjects which they feel that they have more expertise in. It is important that the same TA supports for all the subject lessons so that it is the same TA for example who supports all Maths lessons, whilst another TA supports all the Science lessons. The same TA may provide support in several subjects. Within the group of TAs supporting the student one should be designated lead TA/key worker for the student.

The lead TA has the responsibility to attend training and to cascade down information both to TAs and to teaching staff. The key worker also supports TAs in all areas to do with the student with DS alongside the SENCO, and will also be the first contact point for parents if there are any concerns/issues either from home or school.

'The school has in place a key worker to link with home, to co-ordinate activities and subjects and help manage the timetable; this has had a really positive impact.'

'Teachers will give work to lead TA to differentiate which enables S to access the lesson at her level e.g. in a recent class French assessment this occurred where S could put symbols as answers on test – S scored 35/50 on the same test that the whole class were doing.'

'System working well involving a number of TAs in supporting the student with DS – Seen as a better way of supporting pupils and meeting their social and inclusion needs.'

Teachers and support staff need to meet regularly to plan, communicate feedback and monitor progress. A communication book for all involved to record plans, notes, ideas and feedback is often invaluable, especially as more than one TA is involved with the student.

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e) How schools can help with transition

Schools can help transition by recognising the problems students might face and trying to minimise them. Most students with DS will be in mixed ability classes for the majority of the timetable when they start in year 7. Some schools keep Year 7 students with a small number of key teachers who each teach several subjects. Some keep room changes to a minimum or mark key rooms with a clear symbol/photo on the door.

A few schools have a small nurture group for year 7 students which may include the student with DS – this should be agreed according to individual need and not by assuming that all students with DS referred to schools with this provision will benefit from it. If schools have a nurture group it is vital that there is a planned transition into mainstream lessons with a target of full inclusion during the summer term. If schools continue nurture provision after this time they promote non-inclusive practice.

In some schools, disability awareness is a key part of their PSHE programme and all students are encouraged to befriend and support the student with Down syndrome. Some set up Circles of Friends or use tutor group time to discuss issues such as bullying. Homework is often a real issue for the student with Down syndrome and their family. To avoid problems, it is important that all staff take the following actions:

- All homework should be differentiated to make it accessible. All homework should be written down in full in the student's planner. It should be accompanied by a short explanation, linking the homework with the preceding lesson. Key words or diagrams should be added to provide a visual reminder. The use of an extra 'Homework Explanation Book' should be considered where there are particular problems. The date by which homework should be completed and handed in should be clearly indicated.

This is Lily's successful transition to secondary school

First of all Lily visited with her mum, at the beginning of the spring term of year 6. From then on she was accompanied by her TA on several visits to help her become familiar with the Pilton Campus and Community. During this time she joined in different lessons with the Nurture Group. Over the next 6 months the time increased to allow her to experience lunchtime and eventually all day. By the end of the summer term she was attending secondary school for 3 days a week.

To prepare for the beginning of term a visual timetable was made and a communication book to aid her independence around school, this also improved her Speech and Language skills.

She travelled to school on the bus with an escort for a short time but proved to us all she could manage this task on her own. Over the time Lily has built up her independence and she now makes her own way to lessons.

Lily is now in Year 10 working towards GCSE Art, Entry Level Science and several ASDAN awards.

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As you can see from this picture Lily had a very successful transition to Pilton Community College as, in the first year of school Lily won an award for her effort.



f) Useful reading

Alton, S. (2001) **The Early Years Starting School Information Sheet.**
Down's Syndrome Association.

Alton, S. (2001) (Revised 2008 Beadman J) **Children with Down's syndrome – Transition from Primary School to Secondary School Information Sheet.**
Down's Syndrome Association.

Beadman J. (2009) **Evaluation of inclusive practice for students with Down's syndrome in Devon Secondary schools Academic year 2008-2009.**
<http://www.downs-syndrome.org.uk/resources/publications/reports.html>

Hassold, T. & Patterson, D. (eds) (1999) **Down syndrome: A promising future together.**
Wiley-Liss.

Smith, D. (2000) **Smoothing the Transfer for Pupils with Learning Difficulties.** NASEN.

Secondary Transfer Guidance. DSA & Hertfordshire County Council compiled by Christina Singh and Frances Martin (2005) – supporting the secondary transfer process for pupils with DS and other complex needs.

DSA Interactive visual timetable for home and school use CD.

Cerebra. **Help us to help you produce a 'Personal Portfolio' – a guide to gathering information.** www.connectinghands.co.uk working with www.cerebra.org.uk

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