Aiming for Excellence in Key Stage 3

Moving On...

Effective Transition from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3

Estyn
Arolygiaeth Ei Mawrhydi Dros Addysg
A Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru
Her Majesty's Inspectorate
For Education and Training in Wales
... Excellence for all... ...Rhagoriaeth i bawb...

Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru
Welsh Assembly Government

AWDURDOD
CYMWYSTERAU,
CWRICWLWM AC ASESU
CYMRU

QUALIFICATIONS,
CURRICULUM &
ASSESSMENT AUTHORITY
FOR WALES

accac

Contents	Page

1.   The context and purpose of this document

Context

This Estyn document is part of the programme of guidance and support being developed by the Qualifications, Curriculum and Assessment Authority for Wales (ACCAC), the Basic Skills Agency, BBC Wales and Estyn to help schools and LEAs raise standards in key stage 3.   It is in keeping with the Welsh Assembly Government's commitment to take action to raise standards, improve literacy and numeracy skills and enrich the learning experience of all young people.

Estyn published the first element in the programme, **Aiming for Excellence in Key Stage 3**, in conjunction with the Welsh Assembly Government and ACCAC, in October 2002. This was a discussion document and a practical tool to help schools and local authorities consider how to:

● build on the good progress at key stage 2;

● develop pupils' skills effectively in literacy, numeracy and information and communications technology (ICT); and

● improve pupils' learning.

Aiming for Excellence in Key Stage 3 confirmed that good arrangements for managing transition are key factors in helping pupils to achieve more.

In March 2003, BBC Wales worked with ACCAC to produce a bilingual package of videos and booklets, **Raising Standards in Literacy and Numeracy**, to help secondary schools develop pupils' literacy and numeracy skills identified as key areas for improvement in **Aiming for Excellence in Key Stage 3**. The Basic Skills Agency is also providing funding and training programmes to help LEAs and schools improve transition and standards of literacy and numeracy.

Purpose

This document focuses on:

● what schools and LEAs are doing to help pupils do better as they move from primary to secondary school; and
● how primary and secondary schools and LEAs are working together to improve continuity in teaching and learning between key stage 2 and key stage 3.

It gives particular attention to features of good practice and what needs to be done to make further improvements.   The document draws on information from school inspections and visits by Estyn to schools and LEAs in 2002 and 2003.

2   Main findings

Improvement strategies

- Most secondary schools need to improve standards of achievement in key stage 3 to show good progress from the standards pupils achieved by the end of key stage 2.

- Most schools and LEAs have good plans and programmes to improve transition. The most effective plans identify the different aspects of transition and how improvements will be made. A few schools do not have sufficiently robust plans to improve transition.

Improving continuity in teaching and learning

- There is a consensus in schools and LEAs that improving continuity and progression in teaching and learning between key stage 2 and key stage 3 is a priority to raise standards in key stage 3.

- Classroom observation by primary and secondary teachers, in the phase that comes before or after their own, is one of the most effective starting points to improve continuity between key stages 2 and 3.

- Schools are trying hard to improve the quality of teaching and learning, with much success. However, very few schools evaluate and measure the impact of new practices on the standards that pupils achieve.

- Many secondary schools are developing whole school literacy and numeracy strategies. The most effective develop literacy and numeracy skills as part of learning across the curriculum to build on good practice in primary schools. Many LEAs provide good in-service training programmes to help schools do this. The most beneficial advisory support is provided on an individual school basis. Few LEAs systematically target additional support and resources to schools where pupils have poor literacy and numeracy skills.

Meeting the needs of learners

- Secondary schools are improving the way they meet the individual learning needs of pupils, particularly those with statements of special educational needs (SEN), when they transfer from primary to secondary school.

- Many schools have units of work or projects that link work in Year 6 and Year 7. The best of these improve continuity and progression in line with their pupils' learning needs. They have challenging objectives and enthuse pupils so that they look forward to continuing the work in their secondary school. Some primary and secondary schools share teachers and specialist expertise. As a result, pupils are now doing some work in Year 6 that was previously not possible until Year 7.

- Some secondary schools have given more responsibility to form tutors and adapted the curriculum in Year 7 to help pupils manage the transfer to secondary school more effectively. Overall, most form tutors do not have enough time, or information, to give pupils the same level of individual support that they received from their class teacher in their primary school.

Use of data and information

- Some primary schools are sharing a wider range of information about pupils' achievement and attainment with secondary schools. Teachers who receive evidence of what individual pupils already know, understand and can do by the end of Year 6, have a better idea of where to start teaching in Year 7. They are also more aware of the progress pupils ought to make in key stage 3. In some secondary schools, teachers do not receive enough information to know whether their pupils are making enough progress.

- Secondary schools that use data best have good arrangements to receive a range of attainment data from their primary schools. A few primary schools do not pass on any data and only a minority systematically pass on information about achievement in the foundation subjects or religious education. Some data still arrives in secondary schools too late to be useful.

- Some LEAs provide good data and electronic systems to help schools manage transition. They help schools to track the progress of individual pupils in key stage 3 on the basis of their performance at key stage 2. Some use data to identify where additional support is needed for schools having difficulties in raising standards in key stage 3.

3. Managing transition

It is widely recognised that, to enable pupils to make better progress and achieve more in key stage 3, it is necessary to:

- raise everyone's expectations of what pupils can achieve;
- improve the quality of teaching and learning; and
- ensure more continuity from key stage 2 in the curriculum.

3.1 Planning to improve transition

Some LEAs have prioritised improving transition in their education strategic plans. They provide training, resources and advisory support to schools to meet their particular circumstances. Many primary and secondary schools are also improving transition independently. Most progress is made where there is a well-planned strategy to improve transition in the school development plan. Some primary and secondary schools have developed joint plans for the purpose. This is fairly straightforward in areas where primary school pupils go to the same secondary school and where secondary schools receive pupils from a relatively small number of primary schools. Where the transfer pattern is complex, there are still benefits to pupils and teachers from working in ways described in this document.

The most effective plans have realistic and sustainable strategies to put improvements in place over a three-year period with a main focus in each year. They have aims and objectives and outline intended actions, staff responsibilities, specific timescales and resources. These plans also have qualitative or quantitative targets for each objective, so that the school is able to evaluate the impact of the planned action on standards.

3.2 Transition policies

Effective transition involves all those who are directly or indirectly responsible for pupils' progress from key stage 2 to key stage 3. A few primary and secondary schools have agreed joint policies, with clear aims and objectives. Teachers in all schools understand their respective responsibilities for putting policy into practice.

The best transition policies have well-developed arrangements, between primary and secondary schools, for:

- joint curriculum planning so that schemes of work build on what has been taught previously;
- pastoral links for meeting pupils' personal and social needs;
- continuity in teaching and learning methods;
- developing pupils' literacy, numeracy and information communications and technology (ICT) skills; and
- evaluating the impact of the policy and improvement initiatives on standards.

In these secondary schools, there are equally effective arrangements for:
- monitoring standards regularly through observation and sampling pupils' work; and
- tracking pupils' progress against prior attainment.

Schools that put policy into practice effectively have a well-informed senior manager who co-ordinates the various strands of activity. However, only a few schools provide time and training for senior managers to undertake this role appropriately. In many schools, individual improvement initiatives need to be better co-ordinated so that benefits can be applied consistently across the curriculum.

3.3   Improving teaching and learning

Improving continuity

The most effective improvements in teaching and learning have taken place where primary and secondary teachers have observed teaching methods and pupils' work in each others' classrooms. In the last year, an increasing number of secondary teachers have observed lessons in primary schools. As a result, they have become more aware of pupils' standards of achievement and know more about how subjects and skills are taught in key stage 2. Some primary teachers have also observed their former pupils in key stage 3 classrooms and have become more aware of how they can prepare Year 6 pupils for key stage 3.

Many schools are using additional funding from a range of sources, including the Welsh Assembly Government, LEAs, the General Teaching Council for Wales and the Basic Skills Agency, to develop systems for improving teaching and classroom organisation when pupils transfer from primary to secondary school.

There is better continuity between key stage 2 and key stage 3 when primary and secondary teachers:

- know more about key stage 3 and key stage 2 programmes of study, respectively;
- observe lessons to identify effective practice, for example, lesson structures;
- exchange and discuss the content of their schemes of work and develop shared schemes of work to improve progression from Year 6 to Year 7;
- work together to agree strengths and weaknesses in individual pupils' knowledge and skills, to plan teaching that builds on this knowledge and to monitor pupils' progress;
- design units of work begun in Year 6 and completed in Year 7, sometimes including independent work at home or across the summer to prepare pupils for more demanding homework in key stage 3;
- develop consistent ways of teaching literacy, numeracy and ICT skills across the curriculum;
- learn about different teaching and learning methods, for example, mental mathematics or guided reading;
- share in-service training to develop teaching methods, for example, promoting thinking skills, mental calculation or developing writing skills across the curriculum;
- ease the transfer of some pupils by sharing expertise to provide more specialist teaching in Year 6 and more learning support for pupils in Years 7 and 8;
- agree what evidence of achievement needs to be passed to secondary subject teachers to provide a benchmark to measure individual pupils' progress in key stage 3;
- share teaching and learning materials and resources across the key stages;
- share specialist facilities and learning resources, for example, drama, media and computer technology facilities and resources such as software, number aids in mathematics or science equipment; and
- arrange for key stage 2 learning support assistants to continue to work with groups of pupils and their new teachers in Year 7.

Improving schemes of work and lesson structures

Almost all secondary teachers who have observed teaching methods in primary schools have revised their schemes of work and changed how they structure lessons to help pupils learn more effectively.

An art department in a boys' secondary school has improved the quality of work in Year 7 by tackling the particular factors that often cause boys to underachieve. Teachers realised that many boys were not doing their best work at the first attempt but that they responded well to competitive and problem-solving tasks and to individual feedback. Pupils now learn more and produce very good work because their teachers:

- teach the scheme of work in smaller units with more focused tasks and set deadlines;
- aim for quality not quantity;
- use a variety of teaching approaches including writing, drafting and discussion;
- continually reinforce and repeat instructions, concepts and skills;
- put more emphasis on self-assessment and annotate pupils' work to provide specific personal targets for improvement;
- link classwork and homework so that one informs the other; and
- give the opportunity to revisit work to make improvements and reward improvement promptly.

Some English departments now use hour-long teaching sessions in Year 7 more effectively by adopting the four-part lesson structure that is increasingly being used in primary schools. The key features are:

- a starter activity such as a brainstorm on spelling or vocabulary, where challenging questioning, often with the use of individual whiteboards, provides an effective start to the lesson;
- an introduction to what and how pupils will be learning, followed by shared reading or writing that provides a model for what pupils will have to do for themselves;
- time for pupils to apply what they have learnt, through individual, pair or group work, using support frameworks, such as prompts or writing frames, where necessary; and
- a plenary session to evaluate how well the work has been done and to plan the next steps.

In mathematics, some teachers have restructured lessons so that pupils are more involved and challenged to think for themselves. Each lesson comprises an initial whole class session for 10 minutes, a middle session where pupils work individually or in pairs or groups for about 30-40 minutes and a final 10-minute whole class session. At all times, the teacher gives direct instruction in line with clear learning objectives. The direct instruction comprises:

- showing pupils how to do something, such as play a number game;
- explaining why something is as it is, such as why 35 divided by 3.5 is 10;
- questioning pupils to extend their thinking and probe their level of understanding; and
- directing pupils so that they know what to do.

These practices are also being used in other subjects to improve the quality of learning

Although it is too early for these changes to have made an impact on pupils' performance at the end of key stage 3, the immediate benefits have been:

- higher levels of understanding;
- improved standards of achievement;
- greater pupil application and motivation; and
- higher attendance rates.

Improving learning

Many primary and secondary schools are now working together, with their LEA or with professional subject associations on initiatives to improve how pupils learn. A small number of primary schools and secondary schools are using Cognitive Acceleration through Science Education (CASE) programmes across key stages 2 and 3. This joint work is improving skills of scientific enquiry by encouraging pupils to tackle open-ended tasks and to explore alternatives. Some mathematics departments are introducing Cognitive Acceleration in Mathematics Education (CAME) techniques to develop pupils' thinking skills. In one very effective Year 8 approach, pupils explore the concepts of trig ratios based on their own geometric constructions. The pupils tell the whole class how they arrive at their solutions. Having to explain how they thought out the problem in this way helps the pupils to understand how they are learning. A few LEAs and their schools are giving thinking skills a very high priority at key stage 2 and are continuing with this work in key stage 3. When the thinking skill is taught together with with subject content, pupils learn more effectively and are better able to transfer and use learning strategies independently in less familiar situations.

At present, few schools are doing enough to develop strategies that will ensure that pupils' thinking and learning skills will develop effectively as they progress from key stage 2 into key stage 3 and beyond.

Using Information and Communications Technology (ICT)

Pupils usually have better and more immediate access to computers and to subject software in Year 6 than they have in Year 7. A few primary and secondary schools are finding ways to improve continuity in learning through better use of ICT in key stage 3.

One group of primary schools and their secondary school has provided one laptop for every two pupils in Year 6, which pupils take with them to the secondary school, so that ICT continues to be an integral part of their learning. The laptops are used mainly for pair work within a range of target subjects and each primary school is linked to one of the secondary school subject departments. The departments taking part in the project are English, Welsh, mathematics, science, geography and history. The aim is that pupils will make good progress in developing and using ICT skills through key stages 2 and 3 in these subject areas.

Another secondary school is harnessing Year 6 pupils' enthusiasm for ICT by making it an integral part of their learning in key stage 3. ICT is a priority in the current school development plan and all subject schemes of work include ICT objectives. All lesson plans and associated resources such as photographs, maps, Internet links, voice and video clips are available as Powerpoint presentations and stored on the school Intranet and the wider Internet. Pupils are able to access appropriate areas of the school website for out of school study. The school uses interactive whiteboards and data projectors. As a result, pupils interact well with each other and with their teacher in lessons and also learn to use ICT skills independently to improve their work.

3.4   Improving literacy and numeracy skills

Some secondary schools have made good progress in developing whole school strategies for teaching literacy and numeracy skills as part of learning across the curriculum. This practice builds effectively on how pupils learn these skills in key stage 2.

All LEAs now have literacy and numeracy strategies to raise standards in key stage 3, building on similar strategies for key stage 2. Some provide a fully co-ordinated training programme for senior managers, literacy and numeracy co-ordinators, heads of department and subject leaders, and teachers and learning support assistants. This training has most impact when it is followed up with support in schools and classrooms. Although many LEAs have initiatives to develop and share good practice, few LEAs systematically target additional support to schools where pupils have poor literacy and numeracy skills.

Many secondary schools have appointed co-ordinators to develop a whole-school approach to teaching literacy and numeracy skills. Where co-ordinators are able to work with literacy and numeracy co-ordinators in their partner primary schools, there is better continuity from key stage 2 to key stage 3.

> The schools that are most effective at helping pupils to improve their literacy and learning skills usually have:
>
> - clear strategies to improve pupils' literacy and numeracy skills and effective leadership to implement them;
> - a whole school framework identifying the range of literacy and numeracy skills pupils need;
> - literacy and numeracy co-ordinators who work with departments and learning support assistants to develop pupils' literacy and numeracy skills in subject lessons;
> - in-service training to show the contribution that good standards of literacy and numeracy can make to standards in subjects across the curriculum; and
> - clear literacy and numeracy objectives in schemes of work and lesson plans.

Some primary and secondary schools use the criteria for gaining the Basic Skills Quality Mark as a self-evaluation tool to identify strengths and weaknesses in how they teach literacy and numeracy. In one secondary school, teachers acknowledge that they had not realised the low levels of reading of some pupils, until the school improved its assessment of reading to meet the Quality Mark criteria.

> One group of primary schools and their secondary school have made a joint application for the Basic Skills Quality Mark. Preparing to meet the ten criteria for the Quality Mark together in this way has been the catalyst to improving the quality and consistency of how they teach literacy and numeracy skills in key stages 2 and 3.

Literacy

Pupils' literacy skills are improving where teachers explicitly teach the oral, reading and writing skills distinctive to their subject areas. Pupils learn better when they understand that different subjects need particular reading and writing skills. These skills go beyond using key words, useful though that is as part of the process. Some LEAs provide good in-service training programmes for teachers to learn more about reading strategies and forms of writing for specific subjects.

Pupils' work is improving where pupils learn how to read and write different kinds of texts (particularly non-narrative and non-chronological texts) for different purposes and audiences. For example, more teachers are now explaining the characteristics, at word, sentence and whole text level, of writing that recounts, reports, describes procedures, explains, argues or informs. In reading, pupils are taught ways to skim to achieve an overview, to scan to find specific information, to read closely to understand an idea or concept and to question what is being said. Teaching in this way gives pupils the tools to improve their understanding and oral and written expression.

Some primary schools are working closely with their secondary school to develop literacy skills.

In one area, the primary schools and the secondary school follow the same literacy programme, which has a clear framework for developing pupil's skills through reading and writing different kinds of texts. A literacy consultant provides extended training for all teachers and works with subject leaders and specialists to plan how they will teach the language skills needed in their subject. This work has been developed systematically over two years. It is improving the range and depth of reading and writing in key stage 2 and embedding the development of literacy skills as part of learning across the curriculum in key stage 3. The framework for progression has raised both expectations and standards.

When teachers from another secondary school observed lessons in Years 5 and 6 in their partner primary schools, they were impressed by how whole-class guided reading and discussion on content and style helped pupils to develop their understanding. They also became aware of pupils' enthusiasm for shared reading in small groups as well as individually. They now use overhead projectors or whiteboards for whole-class guided reading and paired reading in lessons. The immediate benefit is that pupils understand subject content better.

Numeracy

Numeracy involves more than the ability to calculate accurately. It is also the ability to use number correctly and appropriately across a wide range of situations and contexts. There are opportunities to use subjects across the curriculum as practical and relevant contexts for pupils to develop and apply their knowledge and skills of number, shape, space, measures and handling data. Good standards of numeracy make a greater contribution to raising standards in some subjects more than others but planned opportunities to apply numeracy skills improve pupils' understanding of some aspects of most subjects in the curriculum.

Overall, few schools have well-co-ordinated strategies to develop pupils' numeracy skills across the curriculum.

In the best practice, a whole-school approach effectively extends good practice in teaching numeracy in key stage 2 to key stages 3 and 4.

In one secondary school, the school's numeracy co-ordinator has arranged in-service training for all staff and worked with departments over a three-year period to build up teachers confidence in their own use of numeracy in the classroom. Teachers have worked in small groups to improve their own skills, for example, in calculating and using measures, data handling and conducting surveys. The co-ordinator works with each department to exploit the mathematical potential of each unit of work to plan relevant opportunities for pupils to develop, practise and apply numeracy skills. She also supports individual teachers with particular units of work. All departments have a numeracy toolkit including 100-squares, number lines, scale selectors, calculators, pie-chart scales, protractors and a variety of measuring instruments. Teachers use staff and department meetings to share good practice and to produce displays of pupils' work that highlight aspects of numeracy.

The advantage of teaching numeracy skills in this way is that pupils have a range of purposeful contexts to:

- explore number;
- calculate accurately and efficiently, selecting mental strategies where appropriate;
- deal with measurement accurately;
- handle and interpret data;
- reason mathematically, making predictions and asking questions;
- adopt a range of strategies for solving problems; and
- communicate mathematically and present their work for different audiences and purposes.

Literacy and numeracy 'catch up' programmes

Some secondary schools have 'catch-up' programmes for pupils to improve their basic skills in literacy and numeracy. Often, primary teachers teach these programmes using primary teaching methods. These programmes are particularly successful where these teachers have copies of departmental schemes of work, so that pupils learn skills to apply later in subject lessons.

One school has a 'Boost to Learn' programme that aims to improve the literacy and numeracy skills of underachieving pupils as soon as they start Year 7. The school takes the advice of Year 6 teachers to target pupils of average, or just below average, ability with low motivation.

The school also provides programmes that successfully improve pupils' reading skills in three 50-minute sessions each week. Pupils are targeted on four criteria:

- reading age below 11 years;
- key stage 2 assessment of level 3 or below in English;
- placement on the SEN register in primary school; and
- a low score on the school's reading placement test.

The reading gains boost motivation and attendance as well as help pupils keep up with their peers in mainstream lessons.

Literacy and numeracy summer schemes

Some schools provide activities that help pupils maintain momentum over the summer between Years 6 and 7. The best have clear objectives to help pupils learn better from the start of Year 7.

One secondary school hosts a summer numeracy school for forty Year 6 pupils from the partner primary school who are at risk of falling behind on transfer. They are pupils who:

- lack confidence in their own ability;
- have attained lower levels in national curriculum assessments than expected;
- have special educational needs;
- need support to develop social skills; or
- would benefit from small group teaching and intensive tuition.

A Welsh-medium secondary school, whose pupils come largely from homes where Welsh is not a first language, arranges a week's residential course at Glanllyn for Year 6 pupils to promote the use of Welsh as a medium of communication between pupils and pupils and teachers. This has a significant impact on their use of Welsh in Year 7.

As part of its literacy project, another secondary school provides a pamphlet and books for pupils to help them carry their reading habits and enthusiasms from primary to secondary school. The pamphlet contains guidance for pupils and their parents, some suggested fiction in English and Welsh because 'two languages = twice the choice' and a well-designed record card for pupils to bring with them to discuss the books they have read with their form tutor and Year 7 teachers. This approach motivates pupils to read and helps teachers know more about their new pupils as learners.

3.5   Sharing units of work

Most schools use the term 'bridging unit' to describe a unit of work which primary and secondary teachers plan together. It is usually started at the end of Year 6 and completed at the beginning of Year 7. The best units continue learning seamlessly from primary to secondary school and meet schools' particular curricular needs.

Some LEAs are helping groups of primary and secondary schools to develop these units together. Sharing work in this way makes the process less daunting, helps schools to agree the appropriate level for the work and provides models for schools to adapt to their own circumstances.

The process of planning such units has helped primary and secondary teachers to know more about each other's schemes of work and teaching approaches. In some cases, it has led to better teaching in Year 7 because pupils' work provides the secondary school with information about their standards of achievement earlier than if the work had not started until the autumn term.

Many secondary schools provide exercise books or folders, which pupils will continue to use throughout Year 7. In this way, pupils are encouraged to do their best work, which secondary teachers can take account of when planning the next stages of learning. Having the evidence of pupils' previous work makes it easier to see if they are making good progress in Year 7.

The most effective units have challenging objectives and enthuse pupils so that they look forward to continuing the work in their new school. Most of the schools have focused on the core subjects and the benefits are often restricted to learning in English or mathematics at key stage 3. A few schools have taken the opportunity to devise a unit of work that prepares pupils for new aspects of work in science, technology or geography, for example, and which also develops literacy, numeracy, ICT and broader learning skills. The advantage of this approach is that it enables teachers in all subjects to learn about the skills that pupils bring with them, at the beginning of Year 7.

Some units include activities for pupils to do on their own over the summer holidays. Where this is done without taking the abilities of individual pupils into account, those who need additional support become discouraged.

3.6   Sharing expertise

Some primary and secondary schools are beginning to improve transition by sharing expertise or appointing teachers to work in both primary and secondary schools. Some successful initiatives are:

> Key stage 3 science staff teach Year 6 classes in the summer term to introduce pupils to the science topics they will study in Year 7. The pupils' work is displayed in science laboratories in the secondary school to aid continuity by providing a familiar environment in Year 7.

> A secondary design and technology teacher provides Year 6 pupils with a clear brief for designing and making a 'desktop tidy' using computer aided design and manufacture technology. Pupils are given basic outlines for their own designs, which they e-mail to the secondary school, before they use the workshop facilities at the secondary school to cut their design to shape and assemble the finished product. On return to their primary school, they test and evaluate their work, record their findings and suggest improvements. The technology project has improved pupils' skills and they are now able to do work in Year 6 that they were previously unable to do before Year 7.

> A primary-secondary school partnership has appointed a teacher to improve basic literacy and numeracy skills across key stages 2 and 3. The teacher teaches pupils from all the primary schools who need additional help in basic skills in the summer term of Year 6 and continues to teach them in key stage 3. The teacher also helps secondary subject teachers to plan appropriate work for these pupils, attends departmental meetings and uses departments' schemes of work and assessment practices, so that the additional support also helps pupils improve their skills in subject lessons. The pupils not only make progress in terms of their basic skills but also in terms of their behaviour, motivation and attitudes to learning.

3.7 Special educational needs (SEN)

Most primary and secondary schools share a good range of information about pupils with statements of SEN. This is because most secondary schools provide time for the SEN co-ordinator (SENCO) to work directly with teachers and pupils in primary schools.

In the best practice, the secondary school SENCO:

- attends the annual reviews of all Year 6 pupils;
- receives copies of the most recent individual education plans and shares them in advance with teachers who will teach that pupil in Year 7;
- provides specific information on pupils' abilities in reading, writing, spelling and number work to Year 7 teachers;
- supports teachers in Year 7; and
- monitors the individual progress of pupils with SEN through key stage 3.

Secondary schools often receive incomplete information about pupils with SEN who need intervention through 'school action' and 'school action plus', in accordance with the SEN Code of Practice. Some secondary schools spend too much time retesting these pupils at the beginning of Year 7. This is not an effective use of time. It is unnecessary when the information that is being sought can be made available from the primary school.

Some schools use a good range of information about pupils with SEN to plan additional basic skills programmes in key stage 3. SEN specialists teach these programmes with help from learning support assistants who also support pupils in mainstream classes. In the best practice, all teachers develop and reinforce basic skills in the context of their subject and structure the learning within the subject accordingly.

Some LEAs effectively support pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties on transfer to secondary school.

As part of its Children and Youth Partnership programme, one LEA has appointed a support teacher to give individual help to vulnerable and disaffected pupils with poor attendance and behaviour in Years 6 and 7. The support teacher works with pupils and their teachers on strategies to manage emotions and behaviour, so that the pupils can do better work and develop the self-esteem to make a successful transfer to the secondary school. The teacher, also, co-ordinates the work of relevant professionals, such as SENCOs, teachers, educational psychologists, education welfare officers and staff from health agencies and social services. In 2001-2002, this pilot project had measurable success in improving these pupils' attendance and literacy and numeracy skills and in reducing the number of fixed term and permanent exclusions.

3.8   The role of the form tutor

A few secondary schools have given form tutors time to meet pupils regularly to review their work and progress. Some tutors also mentor those pupils whom Year 6 teachers consider may slip backwards on transfer to secondary schools. In the most effective practice, form tutors' good knowledge of pupils' prior achievements and attainment enables them to give pupils the kind of regular support that they received from their Year 6 class teacher.

3.9   Curriculum organisation

A few secondary schools have changed their curriculum or timetable in order to help pupils learn more effectively in key stage 3. They are finding ways to make the Year 7 curriculum less fragmented. These include:

- teaching some subjects in half-term units rather than every week or fortnight;
- reducing the number of teachers who teach pupils in Year 7;
- specifying units, across the curriculum, in which subject teachers develop pupils' ICT skills;
- ensuring that form tutors teach their form their subject and personal and social education units; and
- timetabling subjects so as to reduce the number of room changes for pupils.

3.10 Transferring and using data and evidence of achievement

Good transfer of information on pupils' achievement and attainment and subsequent use of the information are essential to enable secondary teachers to make informed decisions about:

- where to start their teaching;
- what they must do to maintain and build on pupils' existing achievement; and
- what they should expect in terms of attainment as pupils progress through key stage 3.

In the last year, some schools have found the time for primary and secondary teachers to work together to assess the work of pupils in Year 6 and Year 7. This strategy is very effectively helping teachers agree on the standards pupils are achieving in Year 6 and the progress they should make in Year 7.

Some primary schools pass on useful information about pupils' national curriculum levels to the secondary school. This has proved particularly useful in English and Welsh, where a pupil's level of attainment may be different in writing from what it is in reading. As a result of receiving information by attainment target, a number of schools have given particular attention to consolidating writing skills in Year 7.

There are still a few primary schools that do not pass on any data and only a few schools systematically pass on information about achievement in the foundation subjects. Some data still arrive in secondary schools too late to be useful.

Some primary and secondary schools have protocols to ensure the data are provided promptly and presented in accessible ways. Some have efficient arrangements to do this electronically, in ways that make information about a pupil easily available to senior managers, heads of department, SENCOs and key stage 3 teachers.

Secondary schools that use data effectively have a member of the senior management team who takes responsibility for liaising with the primary schools, receiving the data, disseminating information and monitoring and evaluating the ways in which information is analysed and used.

In the best cases, schools use data effectively to:

- set whole school targets;
- set targets for subject departments, classes and individual pupils;
- review progress towards targets;
- identify under-achievement by individual pupils, by groups and in particular subjects; and
- inform reviews of learning, teaching and curriculum planning.

A few secondary schools have very good systems to evaluate the effectiveness of teaching in helping pupils make progress. They track pupils' progress by recording pupils' assessments in termly units of work and make changes to how they teach those units where pupils make less progress than others. Their skilful use of data and assessment helps them make teaching improvements quickly.

Some LEAs provide good data and electronic systems to help schools manage transition. They enable schools to track the progress of individual pupils across key stage 3 on the basis of their performance at key stage 2. They support and challenge schools in their use of data and provide information that allows schools to compare their performance and progress with schools in similar circumstances in the LEA and in Wales as a whole.

Many LEAs use attainment data and trends to identify priorities in their education strategic plans. Some use data to identify where additional support is needed for schools having difficulties in raising standards in key stage 3.

4 Recommendations for schools and local education authorities (LEAs)

To improve the continuity and quality of teaching and learning, primary and secondary schools should build on best practice to work more closely together to:

❍ develop policies to manage transition effectively;

❍ develop consistent approaches to teaching and learning across key stages 2 and 3;

❍ enable primary and secondary teachers to observe teaching in each others' schools and to agree the standards of work expected of pupils;

❍ help pupils to make better progress by sharing subject expertise and ensuring continuity in schemes of work from key stage 2 to key stage 3;

❍ develop strategies to ensure continuity between the primary and secondary phases in the ways pupils develop language, number, thinking and learning skills;

❍ agree practices in assessing, recording and tracking pupils' progress and setting individual and school targets; and

❍ agree on the information about pupils' achievement and attainment that secondary schools need, and how and when it will be provided, so that secondary teachers can match work to the needs and abilities of pupils as soon as they transfer schools.

To raise standards in key stage 3, secondary schools should:

❍ build more effectively on the standards pupils achieve at the end of key stage 2;

❍ monitor and evaluate the impact of improved transition arrangements on pupils' progress and standards through classroom observation and sampling pupils' work;

❍ ensure that all subject teachers apply and extend the language, number, learning and thinking skills that pupils bring with them from the primary school; and

❍ make better use, at whole school and departmental level, of the information about pupils' prior achievement and attainment to plan for, and track, pupils' progress in each year of key stage 3.

To improve transition and raise standards, LEAs should provide schools with:

❍ support in developing effective transition policies and practice;

❍ help to improve pupils' literacy, numeracy, learning and thinking skills, through well-coordinated training and support programmes;

❍ development and training for teachers, appropriate to their respective roles and responsibilities;

❍ advice and support to meet the particular needs and priorities of groups of schools and individual departments;

❍ additional targeted support, when they have significant challenges in raising standards; and

❍ information that enables them to record, track and analyse pupils' progress and to evaluate the school's performance and progress against others in similar circumstances.