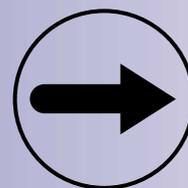


Transition from Primary To Secondary school Summary of Consultation Responses

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Adran Hyfforddiant ac Addysg
Department for Training and Education



Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru
Welsh Assembly Government

Title of Document:	Transition from Primary to Secondary School. Summary of Consultation Responses
Audience	Governing bodies and headteachers of maintained schools, Local Education Authorities, teaching unions and school representative bodies, church diocesan authorities, national and local bodies in Wales with an interest in education.
Overview	This document provides a summary of the responses to the consultation document on Transition from Primary to Secondary School. The consultation document was issued on 22 November 2004 with responses to be provided by 25 February 2005.
Action required	For information only.
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Additional copies:	This document is available electronically on the Department for Training and Education's website – www.learning.wales.gov.uk
Related documents:	"Aiming for Excellence in Key Stage 3" (Welsh Assembly Government, Estyn, ACCAC – October 2002). "Moving On ... Effective Transition from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3" (Estyn – January 2004). "Moving On ... Improving Learning - Effective Transition from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3" (Estyn – July 2004). "Bridging the Gap" (ACCAC – November 2004). Consultation Document: "Transition from Primary to Secondary school" (Welsh Assembly Government – November 2004)

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Responses to the consultation on Transition from Primary to Secondary School

Summary

This document draws together responses to the consultation on proposals that would require maintained secondary schools and their feeder primary schools to establish a plan to facilitate the transition of pupils from primary to secondary school at the end of Year 6.

Background

The Learning Country set out the Assembly Government's commitment to improving continuity and progression in learning for all pupils moving from primary to secondary school. Wales-only provision at Section 198 of the Education Act 2002 provided powers for the National Assembly for Wales to require the governing body of a maintained secondary school and its maintained feeder primary schools, jointly, to draw up a Transition Plan. The consultation document, published in November 2004, sought views on the content and timing of regulations and guidance to underpin the establishment of Transition Plans.

Copies of the consultation document were sent to one in ten schools in Wales. Copies were also sent to Local Education Authorities, teaching unions and school representative bodies church diocesan authorities; national and local bodies in Wales with an interest in education. An electronic version of the consultation document and an on-line response proforma were also made available on the Assembly's Learning Wales site at www.learning.wales.gov.uk.

Responses to the consultation document

The consultation period ended on 25 February. Overall, the comments received were positive with respondents largely supporting the approach set out for the introduction of Transition Plans and the proposed core and optional content of such plans. There was also support for the timescale set out for the introduction of Transition Plans.

Issues for concern raised most frequently by respondents included whether it was appropriate for regulations to apply to small primary schools where transfer patterns might swing significantly from year to year. There were also observations on the extent to which there would be additional costs associated with the initial set-up of Transition Plans.

The comments will be used to inform the development of regulations and associated guidance. The Welsh Assembly Government would like to take this opportunity to thank all respondents to this consultation exercise.

Summary of responses

Application and Content of Transition Plans Categories of Schools

Q1. Do you agree that the requirement for a Transition Plan should be applied to the categories of maintained secondary and maintained primary schools identified in para 2.2?

There were 56 responses to this question. All respondents agreed that the requirement for a Transition Plan should be applied to the categories of schools identified in the consultation document ie:

- Community, voluntary and foundation secondary schools where they have feeder primary schools as defined for the purposes of s198 of the Education Act 2002; and
- Community, voluntary and foundation primary schools where they are defined as a feeder primary school for the purposes of s198 of the Education Act 2002.

No suggestions were received for additional categories to be added to the above list. The above categories will, therefore, be used as the basis for the development of regulations and supporting guidance.

Definition of a Feeder Primary School

Q2. Do you agree that a primary school be designated as a feeder primary school of a particular secondary school where more than half of the Year 6 cohort has transferred to the secondary school at the end of the last school year?

77% of respondents agreed with the approach proposed. Looking specifically at the response received from primary and secondary schools, 84% were in favour.

There was, therefore, broad-based support for the approach proposed and in particular strong endorsement of a cut-off point as proposed that would ensure that a primary school would only be required, at any one time, to be a party to one Transition Plan.

Of those that disagreed, concerns centred primarily on the possibility that plans might need frequent revision as a result of changes in the destination of the Year 6 cohort. In particular, it was noted that small primary schools, with less than 50 pupils, might well see a significant shift each year in the percentage of the cohort moving to specific secondary schools.

There are approximately 250 primary schools with 50 pupils or less and the comments registered on their situation are recognised. Consideration will be given in framing regulations as to whether such schools might be exempt from the statutory requirement, although free to work with a partner secondary school on a voluntary basis.

Several respondents noted that the approach proposed would result in a number of primary schools not being involved in a Transition Plan as a result of less than 50% of the Year 6 cohort moving to one specific secondary school. It was also pointed out that primary schools frequently had firm links with a range of secondary schools including Welsh medium and faith schools that took a small but significant percentage of pupils each year. While the numbers in each case might be small it was underlined such links should not be undermined where a primary and secondary school are not linked through a Transition Plan.

The above points are noted and guidance will emphasise that the proposed approach will provide a minimum requirement for a Transition Plan. There will still be the potential for schools to work together to maintain existing and develop new links on a voluntary basis to support specific aspects of transition not covered by a Transition Plan.

Q3. Are there any circumstances that would need to be considered in framing regulations where, if a school was defined as a feeder primary school, it would not be appropriate for a Transition Plan to be put in place?

In responding to this question 64% did not foresee circumstances where a Transition Plan would not be appropriate.

Where doubts were registered, in a similar vein to the previous question, they centred on a situation where a primary school worked with a number of secondary schools with no obvious lead partner (in terms of 50% of the Year 6 cohort transferring to a specific secondary school). There was also concern that there would be practical difficulties including co-ordination of INSET provision where a plan drew schools together from different local authorities.

As noted above, it is proposed that the regulations will set a minimum requirement. There will still be opportunities for schools to work together to maintain existing and develop new links on a voluntary basis to support specific aspects of transition. Guidance will address this point. In addition it will also emphasise that in developing a transition plan, consideration should be given as to whether additional schools might be a party to all or specific elements of the plan on a voluntary basis.

Partnership in Planning

Q4. Do you agree that regulations should require the governing body of a secondary school and the governing bodies of its feeder primary schools to work together to develop and maintain a single Transition Plan?

The majority of respondents, 79%, endorsed the approach proposed. There were, however, concerns as to the extent to which it would be feasible for the Governing Body to engage directly in the development and maintenance. However, most respondents acknowledged that while the Governing Body might oversee and agree the Transition Plan the detail would need to be undertaken by school management teams possibly working alongside a nominated governor.

Overall, there was agreement that there should be a single plan and that the Governing Body of each school should be required to approve the Transition Plan. However, respondents were of the view that regulations and supporting guidance must provide flexibility for Governing Bodies to determine locally how best to manage the development and implementation of the plan working with head teachers and school management teams.

Q5. Do you agree that pupils and parents from the secondary school and its feeder primary schools should have the opportunity to contribute to the development of the plan and comment on the action proposed?

88% of respondents were in agreement with the proposal. Respondents underlined that this could be approached from a number of angles including links with parent governors, questionnaires to parents and involvement of parents on working groups. Proposals to involve pupils included reference to school councils and consultations targeted at pupils in Years 6 and 7.

Q6. Do you agree that local education authorities should be given the opportunity to comment on Transition Plans as they are developed and that they be provided with a copy of the plan once complete?

Almost all respondents, 96%, agreed that Local Education Authorities should be given the opportunity to comment on Transition Plans as they are developed. Comments varied on the extent of LEAs' involvement but the majority of respondents acknowledged that LEAs were well placed to make a valuable contribution through the provision of advice and guidance on good practice.

Respondents also suggested that LEAs might have a role in challenging schools on the breadth and quality of their plans and making linkages with authority wide strategic plans.

Content of Transition Plans

Core Content for Transition Plans

Q7. Do you agree that the areas identified in para 2.15 be identified in regulations as the core requirement to be addressed in every Transition Plan?

Core Content

There was strong support across the board for the proposals with 87.5% of respondents (and 93.5% of schools) in favour of the proposals set out at para 2.15 being identified in regulations as the core requirement to be addressed in every Transition Plan. There was significant comment on the proposal for joint curriculum planning to be part of the core. A large number of respondents emphasised that this area should not be limited to subject based links. In particular, there was a need to promote continuity in cross curricula approaches to improving literacy, numeracy and ICT skills. Others suggested that plans should also address continuity in the development of thinking skills. Both points will be considered in the framing of regulations and guidance.

Comments from schools confirmed that to varying degrees many were addressing the above areas but that a plan would require a more coherent and detailed approach. In this context, while using the plan to build on strengths, there would need to be scope – as proposed - for the pace of development to be determined by Governing Bodies in the light of local circumstances.

Optional Content

There was strong support for the three areas identified for inclusion in Transition Plans on an optional basis. A significant number of respondents suggested that Pastoral Links be added to the Core and a number suggested that all three areas be added to the Core Requirement.

Set against this there was agreement that the core should major on key areas for development rather than areas such as pastoral links where practice was well established. The emphasis in regulations and guidance will therefore be placed on meeting the core requirement as defined at para 2.15 of the consultation paper supported by the areas identified at para 2.16 as optional content. It will be a matter for Governing Bodies to elect whether to add to this through locally brokered agreements with partners.

DURATION AND REVIEW OF TRANSITION PLANS

Implementation

Q8. Do you agree that the timetable referred to in paragraph 3.1 is suitable?

The majority of respondents, 88%, agreed the proposed timetable for implementation with regulations coming into force on 1 September 2006, Transition Plans to be in place by September 2007. On this basis the first cohort to transfer under the new arrangements would be in September 2008. A small number of respondents suggested timescales ranging from September 2005 to September 2010. With regard to the latter suggestion the feeling was that there was need for schools to work together to pilot and develop good practice.

The overall view, however, was that the timetable provided a reasonable basis for a plan to be put in place in most circumstances. Others also welcomed the proposal that the timetable run in tandem with changes to statutory assessment arrangements given the emphasis on primary and secondary schools working together to ensure consistency in assessment.

Duration and Review of Transition Plans

Q9. Do you agree that a Transition Plan should have a lifespan of 3 years?

Almost four out of every five respondents (79%) agreed with the proposal for 3 years. A small number of responses set out the case for a 5-8 year life span. However, most respondents were of the view that, within a three year planning framework, the plan should be reviewed annually and rolled forward rather than be subject to a formal review every three years.

Such an approach would allow ongoing adjustments to take account of changed circumstances including developments in the arrangements for assessment and changes in the number of schools involved in the development and implementation of the Transition Plan. As a result of the views registered consideration will be given to providing sufficient flexibility for plans to be a rolled forward within a three year planning framework.

Q10. How long before expiry of a plan should guidance recommend that it be reviewed?

Responses to this question were considered in conjunction with those for Question 9. There was broad agreement that the review of a three year plan should be undertaken in the third year of the plan and completed at least 6 months before the end of the third year to ensure continuity. However, there was a strong lobby for an annual review in the context of a rolling three-year plan.

It was also suggested that the review should be one element to the self-evaluation undertaken to inform the school development planning process. A number of schools suggested that reviews could be built into existing rounds of meetings with partner schools to discuss transition arrangements.

Q11. With reference to paragraph 3.6, do you agree that review should be automatically triggered by these circumstances?

88% of respondents agreed that a review should be automatically triggered by the three circumstances outlined in para. 3.6 of the consultation document. In particular, it was accepted that a review should follow from any shift in transfer patterns that impacted on whether a school was defined as a feeder primary school.

There were doubts expressed as to whether the other two categories should automatically trigger a review. This was based on the view that changes in the circumstances of one school might not necessarily require a transition plan to be reviewed. However, the majority view was clearly in favour of such a review being a requirement.

Disputes

Q12. Do you agree that the regulations should provide for the Assembly to determine any disputes relating to the definition of a feeder primary school?

82% of respondents agreed that Regulations should provide for the Welsh Assembly Government to determine any disputes relating to the definition of a feeder primary school. Support for the proposal was based on the view that the Assembly was in a position to provide an informed and impartial view.

A significant number of respondents suggested that, in the first instance, schools look to the local education authority for advice drawing on the authority's local knowledge and experience. It was not proposed, however, that LEAs have a formal role in the resolution of disputes.

Administrative Arrangements

Q13. What sorts of costs do you consider will be incurred for schools in preparing the initial Transition Plan?

Responses identified staff time as the main cost to be incurred in the development of a Transition Plan to facilitate an initial round of meetings with partner schools to flesh out and agree the overall approach to be taken. The initial work would then need to be underpinned by time for the development and agreement of the plan including consultation. Associated costs would include travel and provision for production and printing of papers and documentation.

A number of schools confirmed that resources had already been allocated for a transition co-ordinator either on all-school or departmental basis. In addition, use was being made of the additional INSET provision for transition to facilitate meetings of clusters of secondary and primary schools. However, the majority view was that current posts would need to be recast and supplemented to support the development of an initial Transition Plan.

In this context, the proposal that 2006-07 be used as a planning year to put arrangements in place was welcomed. In many instances schools would, therefore, be able to build on existing resources and it was noted that support for transition was also provided through INSET and the Better Schools Fund. However, ongoing consideration would need to be given whether additional resources might be provided in 2006-07 to support the initial development of Transition Plans.

Q14. Do you agree that costs for maintenance and review of plans thereafter will be broadly cost neutral?

A significant number of respondents agreed that maintenance and review of plans once in place would be broadly cost neutral. Set against this, the majority view was that maintenance would produce ongoing costs. Such costs would lie primarily in staff time to attend meetings, associated travel and costs for compiling and consultation on plans. However, it was acknowledged that such costs could be minimised if review was built into existing arrangements for cluster meetings and use of INSET. Similarly it was suggested that review should be drawn in as one element of planning underpinning school development plans.

Annex A

11 of the 57 respondents indicated that they preferred their responses to be kept confidential.

Primary School

- 1 Tywyn Primary School, Port Talbot
- 2 Ysgol Plas Coch
- 3 Deighton Junior and Infants, Tredegar
- 4 Golftyn C.P. School
- 5 Withheld
- 6 Withheld
- 7 St Anne's C.I.W. Infant School
- 8 Withheld
- 9 St Mary's Catholic Primary School, Bridgend
- 10 Ammanford Infants School, Ammanford
- 11 St Mary's C.I.W. Aided, Wrexham
- 12 Cwmglas Primary School, Swansea
- 13 Alexandra C.P. School, Wrexham
- 14 Mr N J Williams, Llangollen
- 15 St Thomas Primary School, Swansea
- 16 Withheld
- 17 Withheld
- 18 Withheld
- 19 Ysgol Derwen
- 20 Withheld
- 21 Brynmill Primary School, Swansea
- 22 Ysgol Cefn Meiriadog, Denbighshire

Secondary School

- 1 Porthcawl Comprehensive School, Vale of Glam
- 2 Ysgol Gyfun Y Strade, Llanelli
- 3 Bassaleg School, Newport
- 4 Ysgol Glan Y Mor, Gwynedd
- 5 Bishop Gore School, Swansea
- 6 Ysgol Ardudwy, Harlech
- 7 Tonypandy Community College, Tonypandy
- 8 Ysgol Emrys Ap Iwan, Conwy
- 9 Llanishen High School, Cardiff

Union

- 1 NUT Cymru
- 2 WSSA (Headteachers & Deputy Heads)
- 3 UCAC
- 4 NAHT Cymru

LEA

- 1 Withheld
- 2 Ceredigion LEA
- 3 Curriculum Support, Mold
- 4 Neath Port Talbot LEA
- 5 Flintshire LEA
- 6 Withheld
- 7 Pembrokeshire County Council
- 8 Powys County Council
- 9 Glamorgan School Improvement Service
- 10 Wrexham LEA

Diocesan Body

- 1 Monmouth Diocesan Office
- 2 Educ Dept - Presbyterian Church of Wales

Others

- 1 Withheld
- 2 Dr John Parkinson (Swansea School of Ed)
- 3 Brackla Community Council
- 4 Continyou Cymru
- 5 Carmarthenshire County Council
- 6 Estyn
- 7 Dyslexia Unit - University of Wales Bangor
- 8 Welsh Language Board
- 9 Withheld
- 10 Letter from ACCAC⁽¹⁾

⁽¹⁾ General response - No impact on statistics of individual questions

Annex B – Statistical Summary of responses received from Consultation

Q1. Do you agree that the requirement for a Transition Plan should be applied to the categories of maintained secondary and maintained primary schools identified in para 2.2?

	No. of Responses	%
Yes	56	100
No	0	0

Q2. Do you agree that a primary school be designated as a feeder primary school of a particular secondary school where more than half of the Year 6 cohort has transferred to the secondary school at the end of the last school year?

	No. of Responses	%
Yes	43	76.8
No	13	23.2

Q3. Are there any circumstances that would need to be considered in framing regulations where, if a school was defined as a feeder primary school, it would not be appropriate for a Transition Plan to be put in place?

	No. of Responses	%
Yes	20	35.7
No	36	64.3

Q4. Do you agree that regulations should require the governing body of a secondary school and the governing bodies of its feeder primary schools to work together to develop and maintain a single Transition Plan?

	No. of Responses	%
Yes	44	78.6
No	12	21.4

Q5. Do you agree that pupils and parents from the secondary school and its feeder primary schools should have the opportunity to contribute to the development of the plan and comment on the action proposed?

	No. of Responses	%
Yes	49	87.5
No	7	12.5

Q6. Do you agree that local education authorities should be given the opportunity to comment on Transition Plans as they are developed and that they be provided with a copy of the plan once complete?

	No. of Responses	%
Yes	54	96.4
No	2	3.6

Q7. Do you agree that the areas identified in para 2.15 be identified in regulations as the core requirement to be addressed in every Transition Plan?

	No. of Responses	%
Yes	49	87.5
No	7	12.5

Q8. Do you agree that the timetable referred to in paragraph 3.1 is suitable?

	No. of Responses	%
Yes	49	87.5
No	7	12.5

Q9. Do you agree that a Transition Plan should have a lifespan of 3 years?

	No. of Responses	%
Yes	43	76.8
No	13	23.2

Q11. With reference to paragraph 3.6, do you agree that review should be automatically triggered by these circumstances?

	No. of Responses	%
Yes	49	87.5
No	7	12.5

Q12. Do you agree that the regulations should provide for the Assembly to determine any disputes relating to the definition of a feeder primary school?

	No. of Responses	%
Yes	46	82.1
No	10	17.9

Q14. Do you agree that costs for maintenance and review of plans thereafter will be broadly cost neutral?

	No. of Responses	%
Yes	16	28.6
No	40	71.4