



Defence
Children
Services

Defence Children Services

Transition Guidance for Parents



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Introduction

High rates of pupil-mobility are a defining feature of Defence Children Services (DCS) schools and almost all DCS pupils attend several schools. Given the high overall mobility rates of Service children, many young people experience part of their education in DCS schools. It is our aim that children experience a smooth educational and emotional transition throughout each stage of their learning to ensure that all children continue to make the very best progress from their starting points.

Note: This document will be reviewed in line with the development of the Education and Care Strategy redevelopment in 2028.

Terminology

- **Transition** describes the movement that takes place from home to school or an early years setting, between stages in education, between schools and into adulthood.
- **Service child** is the term given to:
 - a. children who have at least one parent serving in the military.
 - b. children whose parents are stationed outside of the United Kingdom as part of military or civil service activities. The parents of these children are generally:
 - i. Diplomatic Service
 - ii. Government dependants
 - iii. Civil servants

Equal opportunities and inclusion

Staff, children, parents, School Governance Committee (SGC) members, and other agencies are actively involved in the process of transition and their perceptions about transition are explored and valued. Measures are taken to ensure all children are given the opportunity to experience a similar ease of transition.

Core transition principles

In our schools and settings, the following principles surrounding transition apply:

- Approaches to teaching and learning remain consistent wherever practicable at the point of transition.
- Planned learning is based upon assessment of prior information which is obtained from the previous class, educational stage of learning or educational setting.
- There is a professional regard for the information from the previous educational setting and stage of learning.
- Children can enjoy new approaches at transition.
- Transition motivates and challenges children.
- Effective transition takes time, and our DCS Schools and Settings staff understand this as a process rather than an event.
- Feedback from children and parents is encouraged and valued.

DCS Commitment

DCS school leaders and staff are committed to supporting the children and parents through transitions at all stages. DCS embrace transitions and change is celebrated and supported. We understand that it is essential to manage transitions carefully and sensitively. Although it may initially be a daunting and unsettling experience for any child, we ensure that children feel secure, prepared and ready for the next challenge.

We do this in several ways. Starting in the early years setting, moving from one room to another, changing settings or starting primary school is an exciting time for children, but can also be a challenging and anxious time for both children and their parents – we recognise and support this.

We are committed to making transition as easy and as smoothly as possible. Our schools and settings have high mobility rates due to their locations. This means our staff are exceptionally talented in handling transition as part of normal educational processes.

What pupils can expect

All DCS schools provide support to help pupils adjust to new environments, expectations, and routines.

Pupils who have followed a different curriculum from the English National Curriculum can expect this to be considered in the transition planning.

Older pupils are entitled to key information about examination course work and syllabi.

What parents can expect

A well-planned transition that ensures all information is sought from the previous setting or communicated clearly to the new setting to meet the child where they are in order to provide positive outcomes.

Parents are entitled to expect DCS to deal with transitions in a highly skilled manner to ensure minimal disruption to academic progress at whatever age and key stage transfer takes place.

The following statement underlines each stage of transition and is followed by all leaders within DCS Headquarters and at DCS Schools and Settings:

All transitions are not overlooked or left to chance, but thought about and well planned.

Whilst the transition points above are the most poignant, the following are the DCS core expectations which leaders are expected to follow for each element of transition.

For full, localised operational procedures (including mid key stage and mid-year transitions) please see the individual school or settings transition information.

Transition from the UK to a DCS School or Setting.

Contact with the DCS school or setting is encouraged prior to the move. A virtual tour may be available on request, please contact the school or setting for more information. If your child has special educational needs, please contact the school and arrange a meeting with the SENDCo.

On arrival at their new school, children and parents will have an induction which will be carried out by a senior leader or designated member of staff. The induction might include:

- Full tour of the school.
- Visiting the child's new classroom to meet the teacher and new classmates.
- Meeting key members of staff who will help the transition process.

Following the induction tour, leaders will ensure all paperwork is up to date and complete and ensure that parents have purchased uniforms (if appropriate to the year group) ready for the first day of school. Children will generally start school the day following the induction tour – this will be agreed at the time of the tour.

Transition from home to an Early Years Setting

For many parents, this is their first introduction to education as a parent and for many children this is the first time they will have been away from their parent for a regular number of hours each day.

Early years setting leaders ensure that the transition process is carefully constructed to support both the parent and child. Parents are invited to an initial meeting which is used as an opportunity to introduce parents to staff, rooms and the concept of an education environment.

In many of our schools, children have a staggered induction to Foundation Stage 1 before starting full time.

Transition from an Early Years Setting/Foundation Stage 1 to Foundation Stage 2

Parents are invited to a meeting which is used as an opportunity to introduce parents to FS2 staff and learn about the differences between FS1 and FS2.

Whilst these are DCS expectations of good practice, we acknowledge every school is different so there might be processes (including in-year transitions) unique to the school's individual circumstances and context. Please see the school website for more details and specific examples of how the school supports parents and children at this important stage of transition.

Transition from Foundation Stage 2 to Year 1

Parents will be invited to a meeting which is used as an opportunity to introduce parents to staff.

Foundation Stage 2 visit the current Year 1 for a shared activity towards the end of Term 3. Children attend at least half a day in their new class with their new teacher to familiarise themselves with their new learning environment.

Handover / transition meetings should be held in Term 3 as part of the normal school procedures and involve the current and future class teachers (where able).

Whilst these are DCS expectations of good practice, we acknowledge every school is different so there might be processes (including in-year transitions) unique to the school's individual circumstances and context. Please see the school website for more details to see specific examples of how the school supports parents and children at this important stage of transition.

Transition in subsequent primary years (Years 2 - 6).

Children meet the teacher at a planned transition session in new classroom in Term 3 where the new teacher will share the differences of the year group and lay out expectations for the coming term.

Whilst these are DCS expectations of good practice, we acknowledge every school is different so there might be processes (including in-year transitions) unique to the school's individual circumstances and context. Please see the school website for more details to see specific examples of how the school supports parents and children at this important stage of transition.

Secondary school

The transition from primary to secondary school is exciting for children and marks a new phase in their lives. Children recognise it as part of growing up and are aware that their lives are about to change in an important way. For some children in DCS schools it may mean they are moving to a boarding school whilst their family remains in the overseas location. These children will receive additional transition support from their DCS school.

Most children will manage the transition to secondary school successfully. However, it is quite normal for children to experience a range of emotions during transition. They might feel happy and confident one minute or nervous or anxious and back again as they find their feet.

Transition from Key Stage 2 (Year 6) to Key Stage 3 (Year 7)

Where appropriate and depending on location, children will visit their secondary school for at least one day in Term 3. This transition day might include a tour of the school, sample lessons and spending breaktimes / lunch times with other secondary children.

Transition will continue into Year 7 and pastoral support will be given to support children's emotional transition from a primary setting to a greater independent and personal curriculum.

Special emphasis is given on:

- Managing multiple subjects, teachers and classrooms.
- Taking responsibility for homework, schedules and deadlines.
- Navigating new social dynamics and peer relationships.

On transition to a DCS secondary school, standardised assessments/test like ALIS and CAT4 will be completed.

Transition from Key Stage 3 (Year 9) to Key Stage 4 (Year 10)

Marking the start of GCSE qualifications and optional subject choices, Head Teachers will ensure both parents and children are fully equipped with the changes occurring in this milestone. This might include supporting:

- Optional subject choices that will have impacts on future careers.
- Increased academic rigor and assessment focus.
- More independent study skills.
- Consideration to Post 16 qualifications.

Transition from Key Stage 4 (Year 11) to Key Stage 5 (Year 12)

Marking the move to more specialised study and preparation for university, further training, or the workplace. Head Teachers will ensure both parents and children are fully equipped with the changes occurring in this milestone. This might include supporting:

- Optional subject choices that will have impacts on future careers.
- Increased academic rigor and assessment focus.
- More independent study skills.
- Consideration to Post 18 qualifications.
- Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance (CEIAG).

Transition from Key Stage 5 (Year 13) into the workplace, further or higher education

Marking the movement from educational settings to the workplace, training, apprenticeship, military application or university is possibly the largest transition a child will undertake. Head Teachers will make every opportunity for children and parents to be fully supported at this final educational transition. This should include:

- Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance (CEIAG).
- Preparing for university / college applications.
- Preparing for interviews (including interview skills and application guidance).
- Handling the increasing workload and academic pressure.
- Development of university ready study skills and personalised time management.

Transition to a DCS school

Assessments will be completed when a child relocates into a new school in line with the expectation of the age group and the curriculum stage. Where children are transitioning through a DCS school, leaders will ensure full handover meetings are held in Term 3. For more information, please see the DCS Assessment, Recording & Reporting Arrangements document.

Wherever possible (and if practicable) the following information is passed to the next teacher to support the assessment processes in the following year.

- Reading book band colour
- English Work Books
- Themed Learning / Pathway Work Books
- Mathematics Work Books
- SEND Files
- Medical records
- EAL Levels

Releasing schools should ensure that information required by the new DCS school is complete, accurate and up to date. Parents should know exactly what information is passed on and to what purpose. Arrangements to ensure the onward transmission of this information and receipt should be secure.

All DCS requirements for information transfer should be met in a timely fashion. Staff dealing with additional needs support i.e. SENDCo's should contact the receiving DCS school to discuss the special needs and current additional provision for the transferring pupil. There should be a secure and routine arrangement for storing and retrieving key information, in case it is required or fails to arrive at the new DCS school. Releasing schools should prepare pupils for their next move in general terms through their PSHE programmes and through the wider curriculum.

Parents

Information on individual DCS schools and settings can be found [here](#). If the information is not available, parents can request this from the school using contact details listed. Parents should be able to make an initial enquiry and contact by email, other web-contact, telephone, post or in person. DCS schools and settings encourage early contact by incoming parents. Some parents will access initial information via the Families Offices and station HIVES of their present unit.

All children aged 0 to 18 years of age require confirmation that their support needs can be met in the overseas location before accompanying their parent on an overseas assignment. Service personnel whose children or other dependents have identified special educational needs are required to inform their posting authority beforehand and may have to go through the MOD Assessment of Supportability Overseas (MASO). Further details can be found [here](#).

Secondary schools

In secondary schools, particularly at Key Stages 4 and 5, students should be encouraged to bring their coursework and records of achievement to their new school along with clear information regarding courses and examination boards. If the receiving school offers a different course or a different examination board, every effort should be made to ensure the pupil meets the necessary standard to reach their full potential. In DCS, this may include 14-19 partnership working with other schools or accessing on-line courses.

Children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)

DCS recognises that transitions can be difficult for all children. The processes outlined within this document will ensure the majority of children and families feel supported during a move to location. However, for some children, their Special Educational Needs or Disability (SEND) might mean there needs to be an enhanced level of planning and oversight, to make the transition as smooth as possible.

The SEND Code of Practice 2015 emphasises key elements involved in good transitions, and these are relevant for all children and young people:

- Good preparation
- Working with parents around transition planning
- Reviewing the support being provided in the current setting or school
- Good information sharing between the current and receiving setting or school
- Joint planning to undertake a supported transition.

If your child has additional support needs, it is very important to obtain a record of what support they are receiving and why. It is crucial to provide adequate notice and allow appropriate time for transition for any child with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) or another coordinated support plan. Please contact the DCS school or setting and arrange to speak to the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Coordinator (SENDCo). Additional transition support can be arranged in this meeting.

Share all plans or reports relating to your child in school with the new DCS school or setting. This includes any plan for support within the classroom, general end of year reports, and reports written by external agencies. e.g. an Educational Psychologist's Report, or a Speech and Language Report.

Our Head Teachers and Setting Managers implement a comprehensive approach that includes early identification of individual transitional needs.

Where possible, our leaders organise collaborative planning meetings involving parents, SENDCo and relevant professionals to plan bespoke timelines to fully support the child's transition. Often this will include:

- Additional familiarisation visits.
- Tailored visual supports.
- Access to a designated key person to discuss transition

For more detailed information please see the DCS Local Offer and DCS SEND Directive available on the SEND webpage on the DCS website.

Settling in

Every transition is unique based upon the child and their parents' needs. Some children find transition easy, others do not, and then a gradual process is generally adopted.

Where needed start dates can be staggered to ensure that new children have the opportunity to settle with their staff. Early years practitioners and teachers will support parents during transition, letting them know how their child is settling and providing feedback throughout.

Transition from a DCS School

Transition is not only about moving into or through a school. Children leaving a school may experience similar or heightened emotions on top of the normal concerns over transition. These emotions are heightened if the move also includes a change of country or location.

For many children, leaving the DCS school also means leaving the country in which they have called home for a few years. Leaders work with parents to make this transition as easy and seamless as possible, remembering that each child's departure is unique to the child and that not all eventualities can be preplanned.

When leaders are notified of a child leaving a DCS School, they ensure that there is a process in place for the child to discuss the move with an adult in school. For some children this meeting will be very short but for others there may be need for further additional meetings and more in-depth discussion about transition.

Generally, the meeting will include:

- Talking about saying goodbye and what this means to friendship groups etc.
- Sitting with the child and visit the new school's website
- Contacting the new school to introduce the child and discuss any additional needs (if relevant)
- Ask the child what they are concerned about when they move from the country or the school.

If a child has had support for their additional needs, they may have documentation relating to their support in school. This could be an Inclusion Support Plan (ISP) and reviews or a Service Children's Assessment of Need (SCAN). Local Authorities must have regard to these documents, in England. Parents are entitled to ask for and receive these documents and to ensure that the new school is aware of your child's needs, it is vital that they are able to access records of previous support.

The DCS school or setting SENDCo will provide support for parents of children with SEND to ensure that the transition is as smooth as possible. DCS's specialist services teams can support parents who are experiencing difficulties with the transition process. Your DCS school or setting SENDCo can signpost you to the appropriate team.

Once a child has left all records are passed onto the new school promptly including safeguarding and / or child protection records.

If there are issues arising about securing a new school placement, parents should inform the DCS school, who will notify DCS specialist service teams who can offer support and advice.

Finding a new school

Parents are encouraged to research schools in the new location, DCS are unable to recommend specific schools. The use of websites, local forums and networks to find information on the schools available can be helpful. Once parents have chosen a school/s they should contact them directly to see if they have spaces available in the year group of their child/children.

School visits

If possible, arrange a meeting with the leadership of the school. This could be done virtually if it is not feasible to visit in person. An initial meeting is important as it gives an opportunity for parents and pupils to see what the school is like and to tell the school all about the child/children. It is best to make an appointment so that the relevant staff are able to give some dedicated time. If the child has any special or additional needs, parents may wish to ask to speak to the Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENDCo) or the person in charge of children with additional needs.

During this meeting, parents should ask for the opportunity to meet members of staff that your child will have contact with, their class teacher or form tutor for example. Where feasible, a tour to become familiar with the layout of the school, and what classrooms look like may go some way to alleviating a little bit of transition anxiety which is natural for all children.

Applications for a school place

If you are applying for a place in Reception or Year 7 starting in September, you will need to apply through the normal admission round. DCS would advise that you follow the local authority's application process: information will be available on their website. Key dates for coordinated school admissions in the UK typically revolve around the application deadlines and offer days. For primary school admissions, the deadline for applications is typically January 15th, with offer letters sent out on April 16th. For secondary school admissions, the application deadline is usually October 31st, and offer letters are sent on March 1st. Late applications are processed after these dates, often in subsequent rounds of allocation.

All other admission applications in England are 'in-year' applications (including for places starting in September for other year groups) and in the first instance we would advise that you contact the school directly so that they can inform you of the relevant admission process.

Devolved authorities

In Scotland and Wales applications for primary school places usually open in September and close on January 15.

Pupils starting Scottish secondary school the application period typically opens on September 1 the year prior to the year they will start, and the deadline is October 31. In Wales the deadline for secondary school admission is the end of November prior to the year they will start the school.

In Scotland and Wales, "in-term admissions" refers to applying for a school place during the school year, rather than at the normal start of the academic year. This typically happens when a family moves to a new area or decides to change schools mid-year. The process usually involves contacting the school directly or the local council to inquire about available spaces and how to apply.

More information for any of the devolved authorities can be found on school and local authority websites in the specific location.

Points to note

Please be aware that in England and Wales, places can be allocated in advance of arrival into the area for children of Service Personnel so please ensure that the school/local authority are aware that you are a Service family.

Please be aware that in certain parts of the country school places are very difficult to obtain – this is for everybody including children born in the area. The Armed Forces Covenant (AFC) is an aspiration signed by every Local Authority to try to ensure that members of the Armed Forces and their families do not suffer any disadvantage. It is often thought that the AFC will ensure the school place of the parents' choice, but this is not the case. If you are not successful in gaining a place at your preferred school, please be reassured that you are able to appeal this decision and EAT(UK) can provide support through the appeal process. Please note, you must have applied and been denied a school place to be able to appeal.