



## TRANSFER REVIEW 2001 - Summary

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### Introduction

This paper describes the outcomes of a review carried out during 2001 by a team of teachers and advisers into what happens when pupils transfer into their next school. The review was planned to investigate progress that has been made since the initial Suffolk transfer review of 1996 and following three years of support through the Education Development Plan (EDP).

The Suffolk context is interesting and challenging as there is a mixture of two and three tier systems of school organisation. Within the compulsory school age range, there are transfer points between:

- infant and junior schools (year 2 to 3)
- first and middle schools (year 4 to 5)
- primary and high schools (year 6 to 7)
- middle and upper schools (year 8 to 9)

This paper also draws on other evidence collected through EDP support between 1999 and 2002 which has focused on the following areas of activity:

- Improving the flow of attainment data to schools including the development of a "Schools Portal" where data can be picked up from a secure Internet site. This work has also involved collecting teacher assessments in Key Stages 1, 2 and 3 on behalf of QCA so that these levels can be transmitted to the next school as early as possible. In 1999 a deputy headteacher was seconded to undertake a short review of the effectiveness of attainment data transfer between schools.
- Developing SPARKS school based assessment software, by 2000, to accommodate the National Transfer Form and File. This school based software also provides data for the LEA central Pupil Attainment Database (PAD).
- Development of a variety of transfer strategies as a set of case studies covering most subjects. Many were published and shared with schools following a School Improvement Forum in 2000.
- Collaboration with the University of Cambridge School of Education (UCSE) to provide schools with a means for analysing the success of transfer projects. These methods focussed on classroom observation techniques, interviewing pupils and questionnaires designed to elicit pupil attitudes. Over 180 schools attended training in the use of these materials.
- A two-year project with UCSE to evaluate the effect of a transfer strategy in six pyramids of schools. Three of these focussed on continuity of writing from year 4 to 5 and three looked at mathematics from year 6 to 7.

- Link adviser support to encourage pyramids of schools to work together in planning action to improve continuity on transfer.

Prior to the 1996 review there was evidence from analysis of reading test results in Suffolk which suggested that a “dip” in progress followed a move from one school to the next. Other evidence, summarised in DfES Research Brief No.131 (1999), suggests that this dip in progress is widespread nationally and affects progress in most subjects.

### **Analysis of attainment data on transfer for the whole LEA**

The 1996 investigation of pupil transfer was, in part, prompted by concerns about the clear dip in the progress of pupils as measured by reading tests following transfer. All Suffolk pupils are given a nationally standardised reading test at 7, 9, 11 and 13 years of age. This is invaluable in tracking progress in reading over time.

Slower progress in reading is found following transfer from Year 6 primary schools to Year 7 high schools and transfer from Year 4 first schools to Year 5 middle schools. These “dips” in reading progress have continued since 1996 despite the improvements in transfer processes and continuity of learning noted elsewhere in this report. Because roughly half the county is two tier and the other half three tier with similar socio-economic circumstances, it is possible to make direct comparisons of progress in the two systems using value added methods. The reading test data suggests that pupils take more than two years to catch up after they transfer, but they do then catch up. For example, pupils transferring to middle schools from Year 4 make similar reading progress to their contemporaries in the two-tier system by Year 8.

Recent statistical research in Suffolk has focused on value added in the two tier and three tier systems using the reading test as an “input” score, since it is statistically a good indicator of later educational potential and therefore likely attainment. Value added data showing progress from Year 4 to Year 6 National Curriculum tests over three years using average points shows that, on average, pupils in the two tier system make 2.5 months more progress than those in the three tier system. Between 1999-2001 middle schools have improved raw scores at a slightly faster rate than primary schools, but pupils in primary schools still made more progress by Year 6.

Value added data showing progress from the Year 8 reading test to average points in the KS3 National Curriculum tests confirms that pupils in the same high school throughout KS3 make more progress than those who move from middle to upper schools at the end of Year 8. Pupils in the two-tier system made 4 months more progress in 2001 than those in three tier system between January of Year 8 and the end of KS3.

Overall progress in the two systems has also been compared for three separate cohorts (1999-2001) from the Year 4 reading test to Year 9 KS3 NC tests average points. This confirms the findings above. Using a three year average there would appear to be around 3 months more progress overall in the two tier than the three-tier system up to Year 9, where pupils have undergone one transfer rather than two.

It must be emphasised that in both upper and high schools attainment at KS3 has steadily improved over the past three years, but it has improved faster in high schools where pupils

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make more progress. The schools chosen for the investigation on which this report is based were selected because they were known to have adopted practices and processes which might lead to improved progress on transfer. The data research indicates that these particular school pyramids are adding more progress than many others.

A similar exercise from Year 4 to Best 7 GCSE points (English and Maths and 5 next best subjects) based on three cohorts (1999-2001) gives on average a one GCSE/GNVQ Best 7 grade difference in value added terms between the two systems at the end of compulsory schooling. This will continue to be closely monitored over the next few years. Overall, Suffolk GCSE attainment is good in both the two tier and three tier system. It exceeds that of most of our statistical neighbours and the rate of improvement has been above the England average for many years. The attainment and progress differences between the two systems are therefore not currently considered significant enough to warrant the re-structuring of education in Suffolk, with all the negative effects that that would have on the learning of several cohorts of pupils. We believe that these differences in progress can be overcome with LEA support, through effective transfer processes and the training of teachers to handle the continuity of learning issues.

### **The 2001 review of transfer**

There is still a national drive to improve standards to meet targets at the end of each Key Stage and if pupils lose ground when they move from school to school it is unlikely that these targets will be met. Evidence from the first Suffolk review in 1996 suggested that discontinuity was greatest between year 4 and 5 as pupils moved from first to middle schools and from year 6 to 7 from primary to high schools. For this reason the 2001 review focused on these two points of transfer. In addition there was a small scale review of transfer from infant to junior school – this was not a part of the 1996 review.

The review of transfer in 2001 was designed to fulfil three purposes:

1. To contribute to a wider examination of transfer issues.
2. To identify progress made over five years since the 1996 review.
3. To highlight transfer strategies used by schools which appear to be more effective than others and make recommendations for future action.

The 2001 review is not as ambitious in scope as the 1996 review and was funded through the LEA Education Development Plan. Limitations on staff availability and time were the main constraints. Although the methodology and focus were similar, there were two significant differences. Firstly, the 2001 review teams were made up of a mixture of teachers and advisory service staff. Secondly, the 2001 review teams used materials adapted from our EDP collaboration work with the University of Cambridge School of Education. We are grateful to Professor Maurice Galton for his support with this project.

## **Main Findings in 2001**

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- The pitch of work in receiving schools is better than it was found to be in the 1996 review of transfer in Suffolk. Where there are well organised transfer projects, pupils are being more appropriately challenged in their new school.
- Many schools are actively working on projects to improve continuity on transfer. Key Stage 3 funding to support transition activities from year 6 to 7 and year 8 to 9 will further extend this work.
- The most successful strategies involve teachers working in each others' classrooms across phase, have a focus on pupils' work and are well planned within a pyramid of schools.
- Teachers in receiving schools do not always understand and take account of what was expected of learners in the feeder school. Teaching styles often vary between schools and some pupils are thrown by the change.
- The flow of attainment data from one school to the next is improving. LEA produced SPARKS software has been successfully developed to match national transfer requirements and this software, with its links to a central LEA pupil attainment database, has helped to improve the quality of attainment data passed from school to school. Work by the LEA team to facilitate this has improved the systems involved, but there are still problems in keeping the "Schools Portal" information up to date.
- Trust and confidence in prior attainment data is growing, particularly where teachers in the receiving school have spent time in feeder school classrooms or have looked carefully at examples of pupils' work.

## **The Nature of the 2001 Review**

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The investigation was carried out in the summer and autumn of 2001. Teams of advisory staff and teachers visited feeder schools, watched work in classrooms, judged standards of work and talked to pupils. During the summer term the focus was on year 4 pupils in first schools and year 6 pupils in primary schools. In the later part of the autumn term, the same pupils were revisited in their new schools - in year 5 for middle schools and year 7 for those in high schools. Their progress in learning was analysed and judgements made on the degree to which schools were building on prior attainment of each pupil. Schools use a variety of strategies to develop continuity in learning on transfer and teams noted the impact made by various mechanisms.

Initially, pyramids of schools with an effective strategy in place to promote continuity in at least one subject were identified. Then a representative sample of receiving schools in urban and rural locations was chosen from this shortlist for the investigation. Each receiving school was invited to nominate two of its feeder schools to complete the sample. The sample was purposely skewed to include schools with known effective practice.

The investigation was developed in four strands in each pyramid: the subjects of English, mathematics and science and a fourth area which examined the attitudes of pupils and

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parents to changing schools. Each strand was led by a specialist in that area and this summary is based on more detailed reports produced by each team. Team leaders developed a methodology appropriate to the strand. In English and mathematics it was closely related to the 1996 review. In science a case study approach was adopted for 2001. Materials developed by Cambridge University were used as the basis for the strand which focused on pupil and parent attitudes. This included the use of questionnaires and semi-structured interview schedules requiring pupils to respond to pictures. All four strands used criteria and observation forms developed by Professor Maurice Galton and his team to focus on learning styles within classrooms. These observation schedules were developed from the ORACLE project and included sections on classroom organisation, engagement of pupils, pupil response and pupil activity.

The UCSE materials are available from <http://creict.homerton.cam.ac.uk/transfer/> or from the Suffolk SLAMnet Internet site at <http://www.slamnet.org.uk/transfer>

In addition, to include the very small number of infant and junior schools in Suffolk, a small-scale investigation tracked 12 pupils as they moved from year 2 to year 3. This was not a feature of the 1996 review and is the first time that this point of transfer has been looked at in Suffolk schools.

In total, six teachers and eleven advisory service staff were involved with a focus on two infant schools feeding two junior schools, eight primary schools feeding into four high schools at age 11 and eight first schools feeding into four middle schools at age 9. In total more than 170 pupils were tracked through to the new school, 107 lessons were observed and researchers spent over 30 days in the 24 schools involved.

The full reports for English, mathematics, science, pupil attitudes and infant to junior school transfer are available on the SLAMnet Internet site at <http://www.slamnet.org.uk>.

### **Detailed summary of findings from the investigation**

The following summary attempts to highlight improvements made since the 1996 transfer review in Suffolk and tries to answer seven key questions:

1. Is the pitch of work appropriate for pupils in their new schools?
2. Has the receiving teachers' use of attainment data improved to enable them to build on prior attainment?
3. Are there significant changes in expectations for pupils as learners from one school to the next?
4. Are there significant changes in teaching from one school to the next?

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5. How do pupils feel about transfer to a new school? Do their responses provide any indications about what can be done to sustain the pitch of learning?
6. Is there any indication about the types of strategies which are successful in maintaining the progress of learning?
7. Are there any lessons to be learned for schools and for planning the second EDP which is due to begin in April 2002?

### **1. Is the pitch of work appropriate for pupils in their new schools?**

*"I'm looking forward to going to the big school because there will be lots of books for me to read" (Y4)*

Receiving schools are good at building on and extending the good standard of reading in feeder schools. Pupils enjoy reading and are enthusiastic about the books they read. Writing tasks in first and primary schools are challenging for pupils and result in high standards. In middle and secondary schools, where pupils are often located in ability sets, this challenge is continued for high and middle ability pupils but low ability pupils are not so extensively challenged. This is a change from the 1996 survey where higher ability pupils were found to be significantly under challenged on transfer. Ability grouping in English is used more widely than it was in 1996.

*"The work is a bit more challenging and it's different but it's not more difficult" (Y7)*

Opportunities for speaking and listening activities are more limited in middle and secondary schools than in first and primary schools. In feeder schools the impact of the literacy strategy involved pupils in responding to questions and engaging in discussion about shared texts. In middle schools this was continued, but to a lesser extent. Most of the lessons observed in high schools involved only writing tasks.

In mathematics there has been an overall improvement in the continuity of pupils' work when they change schools. The pitch of work in receiving schools is generally appropriate given the prior attainment of pupils and, with a few exceptions, they had moved on since they were seen in their feeder schools. There was one instance where too much challenge was applied and expectations of pupils were too high. Pupils expect to be challenged with harder work in the next school, and this was usually the case – however some were disappointed. There was one area for concern. A scrutiny of maths work across all schools in the sample showed a disappointing lack of improvement in literacy skills used in mathematics in the receiving school.

The 1996 Suffolk review suggested that although there was a dip in progress in science it was not as significant as that found nationally (DfES Research Paper 131). In the 2001 survey, attainment levels during the first term were generally appropriate although the most able pupils thought that work should be harder. It is possible that for these pupils opportunities to work at a higher level were limited. This would suggest that teacher expectations were sometimes inappropriate.

It would appear that the efforts of Suffolk schools to address the dip in progress on transfer have been moderately successful. The current position is much improved on the 1996 survey and the pitch of work provided for new pupils is generally more appropriate for them. There is still work to be done to maintain and “universalise” this situation and areas of speaking and listening and literacy across the curriculum require further attention in the future.

## **2. Has the receiving teachers’ use of attainment data improved to enable them to build on prior attainment?**

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The flow of prior attainment data from one school to the next has improved since 1996. The short survey carried out by a seconded deputy head teacher in 1999 confirmed this and the school survey during the recent OFSTED inspection of the LEA also suggested that schools were pleased with the information which they received. Attainment data is getting to receiving schools and is generally being well used to inform grouping within sets and teaching groups. All teachers have access to national test results along with Suffolk reading and maths test outcomes but this does not mean that the information is being consistently used to inform planning and teaching.

Some receiving schools in this survey are re-testing pupils within the first few weeks and evidence of use of data from feeder schools to inform teaching in classrooms was patchy – particularly in English. The exchange of information between schools is often too late for it to be fully utilised in planning to pitch work correctly. It is problematic due to the national test and marking timetables which inhibit the best use of the data. The LEA has developed a secure “Portal” which enables schools to access data as quickly as possible using Internet technology but time scales for transfer of data from one school to the next are extremely tight.

LEA developed SPARKS software was matched to the Common Transfer Form in 2001 and a consistent file structure for electronic transfer of data was used effectively between many Suffolk schools. Recent uncertainty over national developments has led to confusion in schools and this has had a detrimental effect on electronic transfer of data within pyramids.

There is evidence of greater confidence from teachers in the reliability of national curriculum levels (particularly where A/B/C sub-levels are used) and work in receiving schools is more often appropriately pitched than it was in 1996. In particular, the development of the Numeracy Strategy has helped teachers to use levels with more confidence. The “clean slate” approach which was encountered in 1996 was less commonly found in 2001.

A number of schools indicated that joint transfer / bridging projects with feeder schools often provided useful and reliable teacher assessment data for helping teachers to pitch work appropriately. This information was often used in preference to national test results. These projects also produced a fuller set of information about pupils which was available at the right time. However, the projects were often subject based and the information tended to stay within the specific department in the receiving school.

### 3. Are there significant changes in expectations of pupils as learners from one school to the next?

#### 3a) Transfer from first to middle schools

2001	Feeder First School (Y4)	Receiving Middle School (Y5)
English	<p>Greater variety of learning styles expected            Teachers allow pupils greater flexibility            Pupils use full range of reading strategies            Pupils are keen readers and talk confidently about books            Pupils expect more time for writing</p>	<p>Teacher expectations higher            More time to complete tasks            Teachers exercise greater control            Writing against deadlines more common            Writing related mainly to fiction            More independence given to pupils            More creativity and discussion</p>
Maths	<p>More opportunity to suggest ideas            More “doing” activities            Balanced use of mental / written strategies            Enjoy mental maths activities            All work deemed “new” and “interesting”            Majority of work focussed on individuals            Some whole class work            Some paired or group learning            Time on task lower than other subjects</p>	<p>More mathematical discussion with teacher            Focus more on written strategies            Fewer mental maths activities            Some work deemed “repeated” and “less fun”            Majority of work focussed on whole class            Individual learning opportunities reduced            No group or paired learning observed            More on task and engagement time higher</p>
Science	<p>Work in groups            Extensive practical work            More “doing” activities            Discussions about what they already know prior to starting a topic / new work</p>	<p>More formal writing up of experiments with tables of results and conclusions            Express results in a graphical medium            ICT used to record data            More recall of information and following instructions</p>
Overall in the new school	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is less group work - more individual work and whole class work</li> <li>• Time on task remains constant at about 70% of the time – there is little difference between boys and girls engagement               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The balance changes to more listening than speaking</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Reading and writing activity increases with the proportion of writing becoming higher</li> </ul>	

## 3b) Transfer from primary to high schools

2001	Feeder Primary School (Y6)	Receiving High School (Y7)
English	<p>Greater variety of learning styles expected Pupils are keen readers and talk confidently about books More time for writing</p>	<p>Pupils read less for pleasure Less time for reading Writing against deadlines more common Writing related mainly to fiction More independence given to pupils Increased work as whole class Less practical activity</p>
Maths	<p>More opportunity to suggest ideas More “doing” activities Enjoy mental maths activities All work deemed “new” and “interesting” Little use of manipulative equipment</p>	<p>More on task More mathematical discussion with teacher Experience fewer mental maths activities Some work deemed “repeated” and “less fun” Some use of manipulative resources</p>
Science	<p>Groups with extensive practical work Reviewing and refocusing work Mind mapping used Predicting from data presented Use of own ideas to solve a problem More creativity More discussion</p>	<p>Thinking skills more highly regarded Looking for relationships in information collected More constrained approach with parameters set by teacher More individual work More listening More copying and following instructions</p>
Overall in the new school	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is less group / team work – more emphasis on the individual or whole class</li> <li>• Time on task remains constant at about 80% engagement – there is little difference between boys and girls</li> <li>• There is an increase in reading and writing at the expense of observing and doing</li> <li>• There is a change of balance from speaking as the dominant activity to increased listening</li> </ul>	

*\* It should be noted that the literacy and numeracy strategies had not been introduced to Key Stage 3 at the time of the investigation.*

#### 4. Are there significant changes in teaching from one school to the next?

##### 4a) Transfer from first to middle schools

2001	Feeder First School (Y4)	Receiving Middle School (Y5)
English	<p>Objectives clearly explained to pupils Mainly mixed ability Follow literacy hour format for lessons – often highly structured approach Level of reading well matched to pupils Choice of individual reading books guided Greater variety of teaching styles Shared writing and reading expected Guided reading and writing common Shared reading and writing common</p>	<p>Objectives not always clear Often in sets Follow literacy hour format for lessons but structures less rigidly adhered to Book choice more with pupils but some guidance about appropriate books More library and research work Speaking and listening activities more limited Similar time allocation to first schools</p>
Maths	<p>Three part lesson common More differentiated work More time on mathematics Rarely taught in sets Standards of mathematical literacy good Seating in groups often by ability No observed use of manipulative equipment by teachers More group work More pupil focussed</p>	<p>Three part lesson used but with narrower range of activities Work less differentiated Less time spent on mathematics Often taught in sets Presentation and mathematical literacy expectations are lower Some manipulative resources in use Seating in rows increased individual / pair work More whole class teaching Homework increased More teacher focussed</p>
Science	<p>Scaffolding given to support recording of the work Small group work Questioning by their peers on what they knew Feedback usually verbal</p>	<p>More emphasis on tests More teacher lead Targeted questioning KS2 SAT material used in class Feedback by prose</p>
Overall in the new school	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pupils are less clear about the learning objectives / intentions and success criteria <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seating is more likely to be in rows or pairs</li> <li>• Teacher interaction is similar but with less group discussion</li> <li>• Resources used by pupils and teachers broadly similar</li> <li>• Pupils are more likely to be organised in ability groups</li> </ul> </li> <li>• A wide range of types of feedback to learners is provided – pupils may find this inconsistency difficult to understand</li> </ul>	

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4b) Transfer from primary to high schools

2001	Feeder Primary School (Y6)	Receiving High School (Y7)
English	<p>Objectives clearly explained to pupils            Follow literacy hour format for lessons            Greater variety of teaching styles            Greater use of group work            Shared writing and reading expected            Guided reading and writing expected            Mixed ability groups            More time on English            Level of reading well matched to pupils            Choice of individual reading books guided            More opportunities for speaking and listening activities</p>	<p>Objectives not always clear            Three part lesson not observed – literacy strategy yet to make an impact*            Greater independence expected            Greater emphasis on individual work            Less time spent on English            Often taught in sets            Less time on English            Book choice more with pupils            More library and research work            Speaking and listening activities more limited</p>
Maths	<p>Three part lesson common            More differentiated work            More time on mathematics            Rarely taught in sets            Standards of mathematical literacy good            Seating in groups            More group work            More pupil focussed            Little use of specialised maths resources and equipment            Low teacher interaction compared to other subjects</p>	<p>Numeracy strategy yet to make an impact*            Work less differentiated            Less time spent on mathematics            Often taught in sets            Presentation and mathematical literacy expectations are lower            Seating in rows            More whole class teaching            More homework            More teacher focused with more questioning            Extended use of calculators            Staffing shortages sometimes led to shared classes / non-specialist teaching            Teacher interaction even lower than in year 6</p>
Science	<p>High degree of independent working            More collaborative work with seating in groups            Some confusion over language of Sc1            Individual questioning common</p>	<p>More whole class teaching            Some repetition of content            Still confusion over language of Sc1            More emphasis on tests            “Writing up” of experiments is new            Differentiation clear by the amount of scaffolding provided</p>
Overall in the new school	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organisation in groups becomes less common – seating usually in pairs or rows               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Resources used in year 6 and 7 are broadly similar</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Teacher interaction is constant except in mathematics where it falls significantly               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pupils more likely to be organised in ability groups</li> </ul> </li> <li>• A wide range of types of feedback to learners is provided – pupils may find this inconsistency difficult to understand</li> <li>• Pupils are less clear about the learning objectives / intentions and success criteria</li> </ul>	

\* It should be noted that the literacy and numeracy strategies had not been introduced to Key Stage 3 at the time of the investigation.

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Pupils are more commonly placed in ability groups in receiving schools than in 1996. This appears to have helped in pitching work appropriately for middle and upper ability pupils, but there is some evidence that the challenge for lower ability pupils is not always appropriate.

The quality and type of feedback to pupils varies greatly in schools of all phases. There is little or no consistency in the types of feedback and marking which learners receive between the feeder and receiving schools. Feedback is crucial in helping learners to improve their work. Pupils may need to be helped to understand and cope with changing expectations and the ways in which they are communicated. In science, for example, feedback about progress in receiving schools often comes from tests. In feeder schools there is more regular feedback which usually relates to learning intentions.

### **5. How do pupils feel about transfer to a new school? Do their responses provide any indications about what can be done to sustain the pitch of learning?**

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*"I'm really nervous about today. It's going to be so different than usual" (Y6)*

*"This is going to be great. We're all moving up a stage in life" (Y6)*

The self-esteem of pupils is crucial in sustaining them through the transfer process. The positive view of many pupils in Suffolk prior to transfer seems to help them in dealing with the many concerns which they have, some of which are real and some imagined.

*"We will get more lessons and more work" (Y4)*

Pupils generally felt that they were working as hard if not harder than in their feeder schools. Concerns centred round new ways of working, harder work, increased homework, size of the new school, the apparent strictness of new teachers and relationships including bullying and losing friends.

The vast majority of pupils like their new school and appear to have settled well. As noted in the 1996 review, pastoral support to pupils in moving schools is very effective. Pupils moving from first to middle schools tend to hold and retain a more positive attitude to school on transfer than those moving from year 6 in a primary school to year 7 in a high school. There are some gender differences – boys tend to be more optimistic about moving school whilst girls are more worried about losing friends.

*"I'm looking forward to going to big school because there will be lots of books for me to read" (Y4)*

In a few schools there were interim arrangements and temporary class allocations before pupils were grouped by ability later in the term. This left pupils feeling in limbo.

*"We are not working as hard as we might in some lessons because we have not been settled yet" (Y6)*

Negative attitudes expressed post-transfer were linked mainly to disliking specific aspects of a subject rather than the more general features of everyday life. The least popular subject cited was mathematics. Pupils indicated that their preferred subjects in the new school were those with a new and increased range of opportunities – art, design and technology, PE and science were most commonly mentioned.

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Pupils were undecided about whether reading was easier or about the same in the new school. They said that they read less for pleasure in their new schools, but the value of introducing more challenging texts was evident in some receiving schools. Pupils indicated that English teaching gave them more independence in middle and high schools. However, the pupils who liked this freedom often spent the least time on task in the classroom!

Pupils interviewed prior to transfer believed that there would be an increased use of ICT in mathematics lessons at their next school. When interviewed in the autumn term they were disappointed that this was not the case.

There was a definite perception that teachers would be more strict in the new school. Pupils found that classroom control and teacher approaches in middle and high schools were more varied than in first and primary schools. They now have to accommodate the expectations of several members of staff.

*"I have to learn what each teacher wants" (Y4)*

Pupils welcomed the change in relationship with teachers and the greater independence which they got in middle and high schools.

*"They treat us like adults but in primary school they treat us like children" (Y6)*

A sample of 230 parents drawn from most of the schools in the investigation completed a questionnaire in which they gave their views about how their children felt about the experience of transfer between schools. The evidence suggests that parents are much more anxious about transfer than their children. Schools would benefit from providing parents with more information to reassure them about the process and enabling them to support their children more effectively.

### **6. Is there any indication about the types of strategies that are successful in maintaining the progress of learning when pupils move to a new school?**

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All the schools in the 2001 survey had some type of transfer or bridging project for English or literacy work. Projects often revolved around exercise books which were started in feeder schools. Use of these exercise books varied – some schools had themes which were followed through, others focused on targets set by primary school teachers and built on these in the new school. Where there were no marking or feedback comments, the books were of much less use to teachers in the receiving school. Pupils felt devalued if "bridging" work was set but never used by middle or high school teachers.

In mathematics the picture was similar for most schools in the survey. Some used exercise books to promote continuity others used the QCA bridging projects starting mid way through the summer term and continued in the autumn. These bridging projects provided a framework which teachers often developed – particularly for the most able pupils. One high school asked pupils to evaluate the bridging project and used this information to develop it for the next year.

Where bridging projects were used in science they were valued by pupils who felt that they were extending previous studies in a new environment. Bridging projects were positively

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received by teachers and pupils – where they were the most successful, teachers from each phase visited each other's lessons.

In all three subjects, liaison between feeder and receiving schools was stronger and better organised than in 1996. Pyramid meetings often discuss curriculum and pedagogic issues with a real focus on pupils' work. There is little evidence from this review that any one strategy is more or less effective than any other, but there are some emerging general principles:

- A focus on pupils' work makes a vital contribution to liaison activity.
- When real examples of pupils work and prior attainment information are linked they promote an increasing confidence in the reliability of National Curriculum levels.
- Teachers must engage in discussion about how pupils are used to learning and how this experience can be built upon in the new school. It is important that the new school can accommodate and prepare pupils for changes in learning style.
- Transfer or bridging projects are a useful catalyst – they bring teachers together and provide a framework for action.
- Teachers are more likely to use information from transfer / bridging projects than from tests to inform planning and to decide on how work should be pitched for individuals.
- Pupils like the continuity when teachers are openly engaged together in work across the transfer years.
- The most important thing which school managers can do is to encourage teachers to observe and understand the learning that takes place on either side of the transfer break. The mechanism for doing this is relatively less critical – the important thing is that it happens.

### **7. Are there any lessons to be learned for schools and for planning the second EDP which is due to begin in April 2002?**

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- **Developing an understanding of how learners learned in their previous school is crucial.**

*To do this, teachers need to work in each others' classrooms across the transfer gap and focus on the way pupils are used to learning. The Key Stage 3 Strategy provides funding and support for this to take place and it should be strongly encouraged. Time spent by receiving teachers observing the way pupils learn in feeder schools will help them to "induct" pupils to new ways of working and learning in the new school.*

- **Devising specific strategies to help pupils cope with learning in the new school is an important way forward.**

*It is impossible to have a “seamless” transition but discontinuities can be identified and pupils helped to cope with them. Some schools are beginning to explore the development of induction activities which help pupils to come to terms with differences in teachers’ expectations and learning styles. EDP activity should develop and support this work.*

- **A continued focus on pupils’ work in liaison activities – including test outcomes – is important in developing a shared understanding of expected standards.**

*Without this focus it is too easy to dismiss judgements made by the previous teacher as unreliable. It is not possible for receiving teachers to focus in this way for all pupils but there should be work from a representative sample of new pupils and all receiving schools should have active contact with some of the schools that feed them. This helps to ensure that the pitch of work in the new school is appropriate for different groups of pupils and that receiving teachers are fully aware of curriculum developments in the preceding phase. They need a clear understanding of typical work produced by pupils across the ability range.*

- **Transfer or bridging projects across phases should continue to be developed as they are an important mechanism for encouraging teachers to work together.**

*They provide some continuity, but their most important function is to provide a focus on pupils’ work which is shared between teachers. Pupils like the continuity provided by transfer projects – it makes them feel that teachers are working together.*

- **It is not practical to run transfer projects for all subjects and this raises questions about how information generated can be useful to all subjects in the receiving school.**

*Information from a such a project in one subject, for example science, which relates to literacy or numeracy attainment could be provided to all relevant teachers in the receiving school. Some pyramids are already investigating the feasibility of a whole curriculum approach. There is a need to develop effective ways of designing bridging projects which can contribute information to the wider curriculum.*

- **The flow of attainment data between schools is improving, but there are still problems about the timing of transfer of information from year 6 to 7.**

*The LEA should continue to promote early transfer of data and where possible teacher assessments should be passed to the next school by June with other test results sent when they are available. Where middle schools receive new pupils the data from Key Stage 1 is available early in the summer term, but latest teacher assessments for year 4 should be transferred by June. Proposals for the six term year may be helpful in solving timing problems.*

- **Some schools still need to develop the use of attainment data to help teachers pitch work appropriately in classrooms.**

*The use of data must be linked to a continuing focus on examples of pupils' work so that trust in levels awarded is built.*

- **Schools would benefit by providing parents with more information about the transfer process.**

*This would enable parents to understand the experience of their children better and would help them to support their children more effectively in accommodating changes to learning styles expected by teachers in the receiving school. There is evidence that the views of parents about transfer between schools do not always match the views expressed by their children. This is an area which would benefit from further investigation and development.*

- **Pupils with poor attendance records and pupils from ethnic minority groups may find transfer between schools more difficult to cope with than other pupils.**

*Evidence about the progress made by these groups has not been collected and will need to be a focus of future work. Schools need to be aware that such pupils are vulnerable when transferring from one school to the next.*

- **Schools should monitor the impact of increased grouping by ability on the pitch of work for the least able pupils.**

*There is evidence that the least able pupils are not always being challenged and this may be an outcome of increased setting in receiving schools since 1996. Schools will need to check that work in lower sets is appropriately pitched.*

**Suffolk Transfer Web Site**

**<http://www.slamnet.org.uk/transfer>**

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