

The West Partnership presents:

St Monica's (Milton) Primary, Glasgow City Council

Family-centred transitions with Harry the Dinosaur



This storyboard details how St Monica's (Milton) Primary school, in Glasgow, adapted its programme of transitions in response to the pandemic. We hear how the team used Harry the Dinosaur to creatively engage pupils and their families through remote transitions.

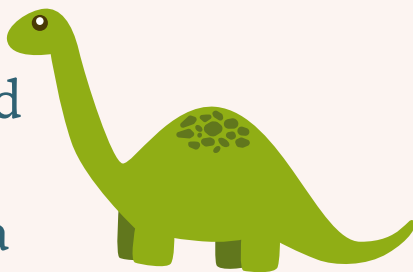
What was the problem?

Prior to the pandemic, St Monica's transitions activities were mainly completed in person. In September 2019, the school community had focused on improving their transitions activities to aid pupils and their families in moving between the school's partner nurseries. The team had aimed to implement a more family-centred approach. Although this change to practice had begun prior to COVID19, the pandemic meant the school had to respond again to ensure an effective transition process took place remotely.



Why is this important?

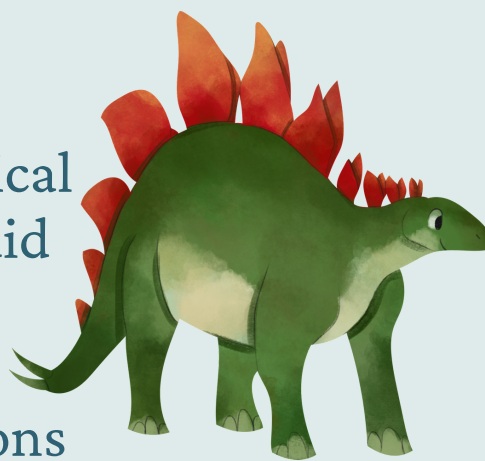
Positive transition experiences have been linked to wellbeing, attainment and appear to be correlated with reduced pupil and parental anxiety. Research has begun to understand the importance of family-centred transitions, with some evidence pointing to improved transitions experiences when parents and carers are engaged deeply in the transitions process. Ensuring a positive family centred transition was important to St Monica's Primary.



Aims of the change to practice

The school had two main aims in their change to practice:

- 1) To support children and families with physical resources and digital information that could aid transition and encourage family learning.
- 2) To provide an effective and playful transitions programme that generated excitement amongst incoming pupils and their families.



What did you do?

The team quickly realised that normal in-person transitions activities could not take place. In collaboration with the school's family learning worker and partner nurseries, the team designed a transitions pack that included key information and resources. At the heart of the transitions pack was Harry the Dinosaur, an EVA dinosaur that would hatch from a small egg placed in water. Family learning activities, such as playdo modelling and join-the-dot drawing of the dinosaur, were encouraged with resources provided in the transitions pack. To increase excitement around the dinosaur, staff at both the primary school and the participating nurseries engaged in several activities. Staff at the nurseries would ask questions and read stories about the dinosaur. Primary school staff developed video content where they would detail their favourite dinosaur. Pupils and their families were given a personalised invitation to come to the school and pick up their transitions pack. This was completed in the school grounds and adhered to social distancing regulations.

What happened?

The school began giving out their transitions packs in June 2020. They were pleased that 75% of incoming pupils collected their packs on the first day. A total of 98% of pupils/families collected their pack, with the team directly communicating with those who had not picked up their packs at the first opportunity. The school had 62 incoming pupils, meaning 61 learning packs were distributed, with 1 family unable to pick up the pack as they were not in Glasgow at the time. The team received a lot of informal feedback on their packs. Some families posted comments and pictures on Facebook. When entering their new school, a few pupils identified their new teachers as they had seen them in the 'my favourite dinosaur' videos.



What are the key points you have learnt?

The team have identified a number of key points from their change to practice. Firstly, the team placed importance on being flexible, adaptable and open to change. Without these traits the team could not have delivered family-centred transitions in the unique circumstances caused by the pandemic. Secondly, the team believe their new approach to transitions had led to better pupil engagement. They believe that encouraging family learning had led to better engagement from both the child and their family. Thirdly, the team place importance on partnership working, especially with their family learning worker and their partner nurseries. Excitement around the packs was enhanced by a joined-up approach. Finally, the team believe their change to practice, which was aided by PEF funding, had created a noticeable impact for relatively little cost.



What next for the project?

The team have considered their next steps in their transition work. They intend to continue using Harry the Dinosaur and associated activities and are considering further ways to develop the theme. The team also intends on gathering more formal evaluation data to further understand the needs of their learning community. In the short term, the team aims to investigate opportunities to further engage families, nurseries, and supportive agencies in the context of COVID restrictions. As the short term remains uncertain the team aim to continue being dynamic and responsive to new situations.

