

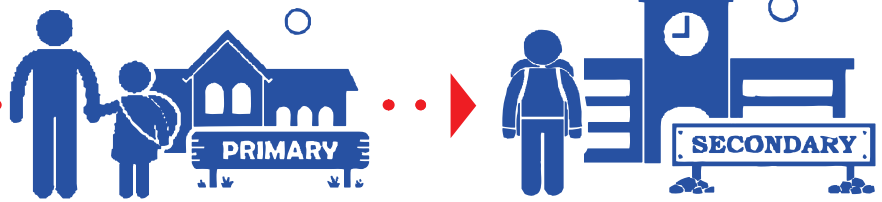
Transition to Secondary School

By Fintan O'Regan

for children with ADHD

Moving to a secondary school or academy can be a stressful time for most children and their parents but this is even more so if that child suffers from ADHD.

THE ADDITIONAL VARIABLES OF SECONDARY SCHOOL TO PRIMARY CAN BE SUMMED UP AS



• Dependent travellers	• Independent travellers
• One main classroom	• Multiple classrooms
• Emphasis on how to learn	• Emphasis on what to learn
• Access to few activities	• Greater access to various activities
• Pupil age range 5-11 years	• Pupil age range 11-18 years
• Interaction with few staff	• Interaction with multiple staff
• Specific homework tasks	• Extended homework tasks

Changing from the mostly one class teacher environment of Year 6 can be a big hurdle for most children. However, for children with ADHD who like consistency and the familiarity of their main class teacher, the impact of having multiple staff and multiple classroom situations can feel very unsettling. I say "can" as this assumes that the Year 6 experience was a productive one. Alternatively, if the child with ADHD enjoys change and variety then the transition to secondary school can also be a very rewarding one.

For parents of children with ADHD it will be an extremely important decision when choosing a school that understands and is able to meet the learning, behavioural and socialisation needs of their child for the next 5 to 7 years of their educational life.

Although it can be difficult for parents to know exactly how the school will respond to the needs of their child, one recommendation is to try and meet key SEN and pastoral staff prior to choosing a school. These informal interviews will help to establish their approach with regards to teaching and managing children with ADHD.

Conversations with other parents at the school, who currently have children with ADHD or other SEN issues, can further confirm how these students are managed.

The SENCo will obviously be a key person in terms of supporting the child with ADHD, as well as the Form Tutor and Year Head. So any opportunities for parents to meet with them in advance of joining the school should be taken.

Additionally, it will be important if the child with ADHD has a statement, or is going through the process of getting an Education Health and Care Plan, that the paperwork from the primary school is delivered to the SENCo of the secondary school without delay. For this reason I always advise parents to make copies of all relevant paperwork regarding their child's needs in case this goes missing in transit.

All schools are unique and will have different approaches to teaching and learning.

All children with ADHD are unique, however as a starting point some tried and tested strategies for teaching and management should be as follows:

ISSUES FOR PARENTS TO CONSIDER WHEN CHOOSING A SECONDARY SCHOOL COULD INCLUDE:

- 1 Does the SENCo have experience of supporting other children with ADHD in the school?
- 2 What arrangements are there if the child needs to take medication?
- 3 Encourage the child to visit the school in advance to discuss rules and expectations.
- 4 How does the school find out if a child has not taken medication as expected and what actions will the school take in response to this?
- 5 What arrangements are made for supporting children with ADHD with regards to organisation, homework, making friends?
- 6 Is there a full commitment to teach and manage children with ADHD from the Senior Management Team?
- 7 How does the school communicate with parents?
- 8 Are all teaching and support staff trained in recognition, teaching and management of these students?
- 9 Who does the parent contact if they have information they wish to pass on?
- 10 Are there positive and realistic academic and socialisation expectations within policies outlined at the start - with parents fully in the loop?