

REPORT

Fixing the Transition Gap: Manchester's Model for Equity, Belonging and Attendance

There is a well-used phrase which goes *“While data alone cannot solve a problem, no meaningful solution can be achieved without it”*. This has long been recognised within education. The challenge comes in getting the right data to the right people in the right way and then, and this is the crucial bit, allocating the time and resources to enable action on the information provided.

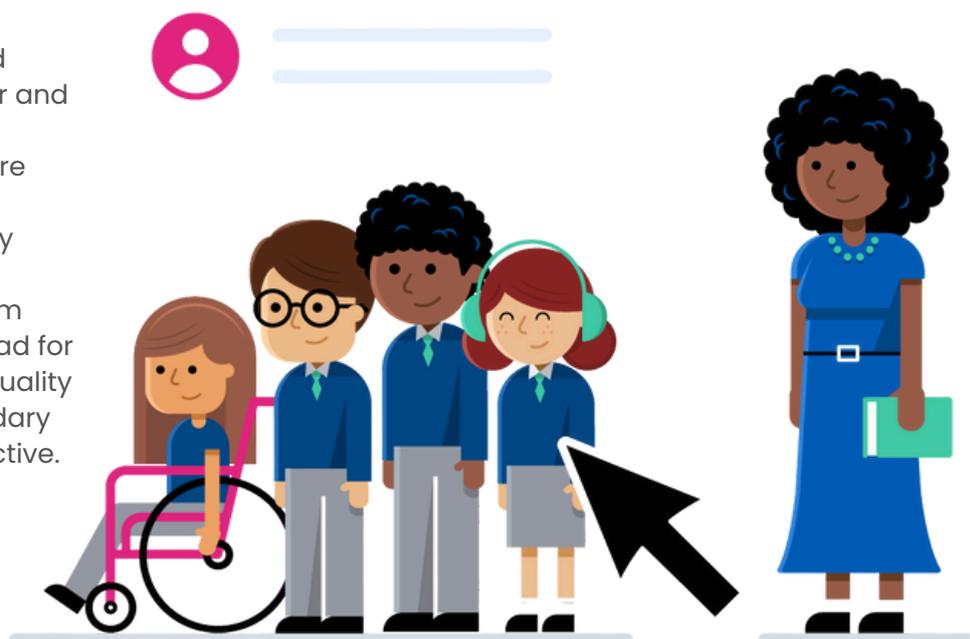
Our recent seminar showed what can happen when this challenge is met within the field of primary to secondary transition. We had two speakers, both passionate about their work and clearly speaking on behalf much wider teams.

Jessica Harrop is the transition manager at Loreto High School in Chorlton, which sits within Manchester City Council and Keith Bardsley, the Senior Schools Quality Assurance Officer at the Council. The purpose of the seminar was to see to how the adoption of SixIntoSeven at a city-wide level enabled Jessica and her team to ensure all children welcomed at Loreto High School in September will enjoy a smooth and inclusive transition. This is critical, because if there is no impact at pupil level, there is something wrong with the system.

SixIntoSeven – A City-Wide Approach From Primary to Secondary Transitions

In Manchester, the transition from primary to secondary school presents significant challenges, especially for vulnerable pupils. With 187 schools across the city and over 50% of them academies, creating a joined-up approach has been difficult. Many primary schools feed into up to 10 different secondaries, often across local authority borders, resulting in inconsistent information sharing and support.

To address this, Manchester has introduced SixIntoSeven, a structured digital platform that facilitates earlier and more effective transition planning. Previously, transition relied on insecure spreadsheets and limited communication, often constrained by GDPR concerns. Now, SixIntoSeven streamlines data sharing directly from school MIS systems, reducing workload for Year 6 teachers and improving the quality and timeliness of information secondary schools receive to plan and be proactive.



THE CHALLENGE

Attendance and a sense of belonging have emerged as key focus areas. Manchester continues to experience high levels of disadvantage – 40% of children live in poverty—and the city has seen EHCP numbers more than double since the pandemic. Attendance rates, especially in areas like Wythenshawe, have not recovered to pre-pandemic levels. Research shows that pupils who miss the first week of secondary school are more likely to remain persistently absent. A strong start is therefore critical.

SixIntoSeven supports a tiered model of transition. Teachers can identify and focus on pupils who need extra support, while the platform tracks children even if they change school following appeals or late admissions. Although some schools were initially reluctant, all primaries and secondaries are now engaged, encouraged by LA funding that has underwritten the programme for three years.

Loreto High School – Using SixIntoSeven to Ensure No Learner is Left Behind

BACKGROUND

The school has approximately 160 pupils in each year group and works closely with six partner primary schools. This year, it is also collaborating with an additional 32 primary schools, having worked with 54 last year.

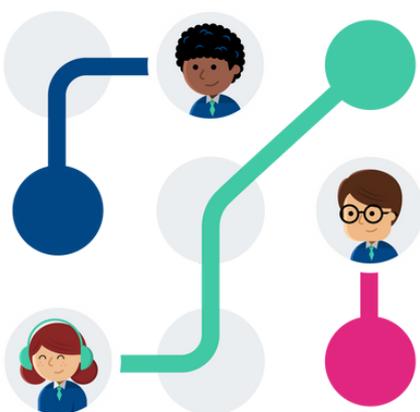
The transition team is structured around several key roles: the headteacher, a head of transition, an assistant head for SEND, a director of personal development, and an administrative assistant. Their collective purpose is to oversee Year 6 admissions, build strong relationships with primary schools, and collect and use information and data on incoming pupils to ensure smooth transitions.



BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS WITH PRIMARY SCHOOLS

Before requesting data or engagement with platforms, the team prioritised relationship-building with primary schools. They strongly believe that such relationships must be developed throughout the year, not just during the summer term of Year 6. Ideally, transition work begins from Year 3 onwards.

The school invites Year 5 pupils to participate in science masterclasses and art workshops and conducts both autumn and summer roadshows. During these visits, the headteacher and head of transition visit as many primary schools as possible to introduce pupils to the school. By Year 6, pupils are already familiar with Loreto.



USING EARLY INFORMATION EFFECTIVELY

In previous years, the Manchester transition form was due in the first week of July – too late for effective action. With the introduction of SixIntoSeven, the school began receiving information as early as March or April. This earlier access, combined with the use of data flags, has enabled much more focused planning, especially for the most vulnerable pupils.

SEND TRANSITION PROGRAMME

For SEND pupils, early identification has allowed the school to create an enhanced transition programme. This year, 18 SEND pupils participated in a three-week programme, which included scavenger hunts, school tours, and interactive activities to help familiarise them with staff and the school environment. Primary school staff and teaching assistants were also invited to join sessions.

ATTENDANCE PLANNING

Access to accurate attendance data has enabled the team to make more informed decisions and target support early. Pupils with concerning attendance records have received personalised invites to events such as "Life at Loretto," "Friendship Day," transition day, summer school, and September drop-in sessions. Parents of these pupils have also been contacted to build engagement.

SUPPORTING DISADVANTAGED PUPILS

With early insight into children identified as PP, CIN, or subject to child protection plans, the school has held focused conversations and gathered lists for uniform support. Understanding these pupils' contexts has helped reduce anxiety about starting secondary school.

BEHAVIOUR MANAGEMENT

Monitoring groups have been established for pupils flagged with social or behavioural concerns. Interventions such as art and drama therapy, started in primary school, will continue at Loretto—a new development enabled by early data sharing.

WHOLE-SCHOOL PLANNING

Access to cohort-specific information has allowed the school to begin tailoring the curriculum. The PHSE and formation sessions are being adapted to address prevalent themes such as online safety, social interaction, communication, and body image.

Looking ahead

The Manchester case study shows what's possible when data is shared meaningfully, consistently, and early. SixIntoSeven has enabled city-wide coordination, built stronger relationships between schools, and given educators the time and insight needed to plan purposeful, inclusive transitions. By focusing on what matters most, belonging, attendance, and early support, Manchester is not only improving transition outcomes but laying the foundations for long-term educational success.

As more local authorities look to tackle transition challenges, this model offers a compelling blueprint for what can be achieved when systems, schools and people work together with clarity and shared purpose.

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