

Starting School/Moving On Session Case Study

Lord Lawson of Beamish Community School, Birtley, County Durham

Background

Lord Lawson of Beamish Community School is situated in the Birtley area of County Durham near to the town of Chester Le Street.

The socio-economic profile of the area is mixed with a combination of social and private housing.

The School provides education for 1500 pupils; the school is also the site of a community college. Recently the school has gone through an extensive period of redevelopment with most of the school now housed in new buildings.

Parents, staff and pupils have all been very excited to watch the development grow into their new school building, the head teacher said;

"The school will be a state of the art building which will allow students to access a much more personal curriculum with a wide choice offering balance and motivational courses."

In 2006 the school was successfully Ofsted inspected and achieved a grade 1 for all major areas of the inspection framework. The head teacher said;

"I would like to place on record my thanks to all the staff who work closely together as a team; governors who provide support and challenge (recognised in the report), and parents who support both the school and their children. Of course, the main contributors to our success are our students, whom I have thanked and congratulated in assemblies since the inspection."

Planning

Across the Local Authority Gateshead have taken a strategic co-ordination approach to the development of the Starting School/Moving On project. All schools who wish to take part in the programme submit an action plan detailing the proposed activity. This action plan is then agreed with the local steering group. Each school is allocated a trained facilitator to support the session delivery.

Within Lord Lawson the year 6/7 Transition Manager took the lead on session development and delivery.

The parents of pupils joining year 7 had been invited into the school for a formal transition evening at the end of the summer term.

The Event

The event took place on a weekday evening, and was a follow up session from the formal transition evening in the summer term. The year 7 pupils had been in their new school for three weeks. Over 120 children were represented at the evening which equated to three quarters of the cohort.

The session was opened by the head teacher who talked about the new school and its aspirations for all pupils. Communication was a key message from the head who said;

“We always try to get things right, but we can only do that if we hear from you.”

The session was then delivered by the year 6/7 transition manager who presented a power point focussed on how to support your child to be Happy, Safe and Learn. Around ten slides with three key points were presented to the parents, they all had clear messages for parents to understand and take away. The delivery was warm and genuine and parents responded well to this. There was an opportunity to talk to other parents about what had gone well in the first few weeks and any problems experienced. Parents were then invited to feed back on this. Parents did speak up with positive feedback; issues around some practical problems were also dealt with for example locker allocation. Parents then went on to meet the form teacher for a short presentation. The evening finished with refreshments in the café and a chance to meet with local providers, the school Educational Welfare Service were present along with the local youth substance misuse advisory service.

All parents received a pack of information with tailored fact and information sheets on a range of subjects including drugs and alcohol, bullying, and a top tip sheet on helping your child learn.

Outcome

The evening had been a great success for the school and the transition manager was already starting to think how this momentum could be built on.

The educational welfare officer commented that some of the parents attending had never been into school before with previous children but had attended that evening.

Clearing the Starting School/ Moving On steering group along with the school staff will be keen to look at the reasons for this.

A follow up evaluation of the evening is planned to inform further development.