

- **Establish clear, supportive and slightly flexible routines.**
- **Listen to what students have to say about their pandemic experiences, and acknowledge and build on those.**
- **Ensure students are supported by peers when they need to move about school.**
- **Promote physical activity where/when it is realistic to do so.**



This is an exciting time for Year 7 students as they see their friends again, and move up to secondary school. However they will arrive back at school with a very wide variety of experiences, losses and learning over the pandemic period. These will not necessarily align with socio-economic background or prior attainment as communicated by their primary school. Many, especially those with particular learning needs, or from badly-hit groups, will feel particularly insecure or concerned after missing usual year 6 transition routines, and having experienced little 'normal' schooling over the previous 6 months. Those with the greatest concerns or with experience of significant trauma may not be able to accommodate new expectations, or concentrate, as well as they normally would. Some might even worry about the size and noise of a secondary school more than usual. Reduced physical activity also threatens wellbeing further. Here teachers can help, by demonstrating positive expectations and providing opportunities for physical engagement with learning where possible. The emphasis here should be on student and teacher welfare rather than seeking learning gains in isolation, in the context of everyone adapting to a new way of approaching schooling.

Photos: Kirsten Holst for UCL



Good transition is supported by strong student peer and teacher relationships, yet some students will have experienced weakened friendships over the pandemic. They might be missing friends made in primary school, and be anxious about making new friendships. That might be particularly true of those who are less socially adept, and in addition, some students may have become less skilled at relationships as a result of social isolation during the pandemic. Students may not have had the opportunity to meet secondary teachers or new peers, and be anxious about changing teachers. On the other hand, some will see new teachers as dynamic, fun and knowledgeable, offering them new and different subjects and experiences.

- **Make particular efforts to establish productive, interactive and engaging relationships with the range of students**
- **Facilitate working with a variety of peers within each student's 'bubble'**
- **Be particularly sensitive to developing peer relationships, or lack of them, during less structured times in the school day.**
- **Talk explicitly and positively about new opportunities to work with subject specialists, and in a secondary environment with enhanced facilities, and ensure students experience those so far as is possible within any virus-related constraints.**

Vertical alignment of curriculum, materials and learning environments is needed for positive transition, yet opportunities to achieve that this year have been limited. Learning variation will be greater than usual, and may represent up to a year's worth of learning loss in some instances. Although students from more disadvantaged backgrounds are more likely to have greater learning gaps as a result of school closures, large proportions of students in all groups have learned different things, and to different extents, than usual. They may not have synthesised primary learning, and may take up to two years to recover in-school learning habits and confidence. Attainment data provided by feeder schools may be of a different form and reliability, but students need to know they are moving forward in their learning. The pandemic hiatus has, further, highlighted the importance of a variety of academic and digital skills, including organisation for learning, self-regulation and metacognition, the ability to follow instructions, the ability to work independently or in groups, and to use problem-solving to find solutions in new situations; also of emotional and learning resilience.

- **Plan to move forward with a largely secondary, but flexible, curriculum, especially alert to gaps in learning and particularly to insecurities in prerequisite knowledge and skills.**
- **Recognise and affirm idiosyncracies in home learning, capitalising on them where possible, particularly if students display advanced knowledge driven through personal interests.**
- **Use whole class teaching or flexible grouping where possible, avoiding irrevocable decisions based on short-term assessments, e.g. movement of students to fixed sets or streams.**
- **Plan for, expect and embrace a rich variety of prior learning within any class.**
- **In the medium term, plan to build on and extend a range of wider learning and digital skills needed and developed during the remote learning period. These should include digital platform skills as well as traditional paper-based approaches.**

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## About Us

The 'Moving Up' research project is funded by the UCL Coronavirus Response Fund and led by Dr Sandra Leaton Gray and Dr Jane Perryman at the UCL Institute of Education, supported by Professor Divya Sindal-Snape. This leaflet is based on work by Dr Jennie Golding and Professor Eleanore Hargreaves, who are part of the research group.

We are looking at transition from primary to secondary school during the coronavirus pandemic. As part of our project we are designing useful publications and materials for teachers and students.

We are always looking for teachers to be involved in our research, and you can complete our survey and/or volunteer to be interviewed here. <https://is.gd/movingupteacher>

Or you can email us at [ioe.movingup@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:ioe.movingup@ucl.ac.uk) if you would like to know more.