



Young People's Guidance for East Sussex Schools

*Teaching & Learning Recommendations from our
team of Young School Wellbeing Inspectors*

Supporting New Year 7s at your secondary school

For Pastoral Leaders, Head of Years, and Year 7 Form Tutors

East Sussex
Community Voice



*Brought to you by the Youth Inspect & Advise Group
@ East Sussex Community Voice*



This report was prepared through The Youth Inspect & Advise Group *Youth-Led Mental Health Investigations and Guidance for East Sussex schools*



This report was coordinated by:

ed.peasgood

Edward Peasgood

Youth Participation Worker

East Sussex Community Voice (ESCV)

ed.peasgood@escv.org.uk

This report gathers ideas and insight from our 15 Young Volunteers (aged 11-18) who form the Youth Inspect & Advise Group in East Sussex, hosted by East Sussex Community Voice.

Our volunteers (who participate as School Wellbeing Inspectors) were recruited through both schools and youth groups (including the East Sussex Youth Cabinet, CAMHS Download Group, Seaford Youth Forum, SCDA Newhaven Young People's Forum, Hastings Youth Council, The Youth PPI Cafe, and the Children in Care Council).

With lots of lived experience of mental health, we strive to share our recommendations with decision-makers to help them guide other young people through challenges they might face in schools.

We hope you find this guide useful and that it helps you to support your new cohort of Year 7 students!



Contents Page

What does this guide include?

From the start, our group has been focused on providing solution-focused guidance for schools in order to benefit student wellbeing. This guide is no different, focusing on both what young people highlighted as the issues, as well as the solutions;

1) What our young people shared with us, including:

- a) Challenges during transition
- b) What they wish they knew during transition
- c) What they wish staff knew about Year 7s



2) What our young people recommend, including:

- a) A checklist for offering pastoral support
- b) Promoting inclusion
- c) Building Friendships
- d) Coping with increasing homework and workload





The biggest challenge faced during Transition

Before we get into our recommendations, here are some of the challenges and worries that our young people associated with transitioning from Year 6 to 7. This is an important tool for thinking about young people and transition, and what it really means to them.





One thing I wish I'd known upon starting Secondary School

→ I wish I'd known where pastoral support was in my secondary school - "what can I access? Who can I talk to?"

→ I wish I'd known how many different clubs and activities are available to me - "they were so helpful for meeting lots of people and doing new exciting things"

→ Keep on track in school but make sure to have fun too - homework doesn't start piling up too much until later on in school! So enjoy your free time as much as possible in Years 7 & 8.

→ Simplify the way you organise your work and build good habits from Year 7 (such as where you keep all your notes, books and homework) - this will make everything so much easier when you get to exam years like Year 11 & 13.

→ I wish I'd known that I can always email teachers if I need their help and that IT can help you understand emailing - 'I struggled at first with understanding how to use my emails so I would often shy away from emailing to ask for help'.





Things to be mindful of about new Year 7s

- **New Year 7s tend to be tired a lot!** They are not always used to doing this much walking around a building. They are also not used to carrying their backpack/bag all day, as they wouldn't have done this at Primary School.
- **New Year 7s are still adjusting to being in a larger building.** They may be still getting used to being in a setting with many more people in it.
- **New Year 7s are impressionable.** Primary School students often see their class teachers as role models, and they will often see their Secondary School Form Tutors in this way too.
- **New Year 7s often need support in building friendships.** We recommend using learning partners, paired work and group work in Year 7 lessons, as much as possible, so they can meet lots of new people in a safe classroom environment.
- **New Year 7s are susceptible to low-level bullying.** It's important to notice small signs of teasing or 'banter' early on, because these things can escalate quickly if they aren't picked up on.





What our Young People recommend: Our Checklist for Year 7 Pastoral Support

Pastoral Staff Team = Head of Year, Pastoral Leader/Manager, Year 7 Form Tutor, School Counsellor, etc.

Do you (pastoral staff team) have some knowledge of students who were identified by their Primary school as requiring some extra support?

Do you (pastoral staff team) have an understanding of potential low-level issues that can be associated with transition (we highlighted bullying, friendship issues and fatigue from longer school days than they're used to) and ways that these can be supported?

Do you (form tutors) have an understanding of what bullying, teasing, inappropriate comments or unfair 'banter' can look like? Do you have a set phrase/response to this behaviour?

Do your Year 7s know where their nearest pastoral support office/room is?

Have your Year 7s met their Head/Director of Year and their Pastoral Support staff member (e.g in assembly)? Do they know what these two key members of staff look like?

Year 7s may often find email communications a difficult thing to get the hang of. Do your Year 7s have, written out or saved somewhere, the email addresses of their form tutor, head of year and any other pastoral staff members? Will using the email system form part of their ICT learning?

Do you have posters in a discreet area (such as the toilets) which have the contact details of different support mechanisms in your school? Do your Year 7s know that these posters exist? With staff names & photos?





What our Young People recommend: Promoting Inclusion with Year 7s

- Look out for signs of bullying and intervene before they can escalate and develop into long-term patterns.
- Set clear guidelines around what language is and isn't appropriate when discussing equality & diversity - aim to educate, and be aware that they may be hearing some of these terms for the first time.
- Promote Normalisation - even if your PSHE curriculum does not cover equality, diversity and inclusion until later in the year, use tutor-time activities to start these conversations early on.



What our Young People recommend: Supporting Year 7s to build friendships

- Incorporate group tasks and paired work into your balance of lesson plans, in order to allow Year 7s to engage with as many different students as possible. But also be flexible as it can be daunting to have to work with new people - this needs to be a gradual process.





- **Signpost young people to clubs both in the school and the local community** - these are great ways for them to make friends with similar interests, and to socialise in a safe environment with professionals (e.g. teachers; youth workers).
- **If you do carry out interventions to help ‘buddy up’ students who may be struggling with making new friends, do this as discreetly as possible** - understand that pulling students out of lessons or overtly intervening in friendship groups can lead to reputational problems or further issues.
- **If you run clubs or groups for students struggling to make friends, potentially arrange for them to be run by students in higher year groups.** There is power in youth-led activities, and this provides them with a role model that looks a lot like them and has been through similar situations - it shows younger students there is a *light at the end of the tunnel*. This is also a good activity for student leaders to engage with.



What our Young People recommend: Helping Year 7s cope with the increased workload at school

- **Mid-week check-ups from form tutors on how students are doing with their workload (classwork & homework).** Potentially using mentoring slots or google forms to see who is up-to-date, and providing some support to those who aren't up-to-date, such as giving them revision tips or supporting them to make a study plan.





- **Communication between teachers of different subjects** - this can be facilitated by SLT or Head of Year 7. This is so big homework tasks don't all fall on the same day/time.

It's important that subjects aren't asking too much, and that there isn't too much homework being asked of Year 7s across all the subjects. **Be aware & mindful of how much work your colleagues in other departments are setting for students that you teach too.**

- **If punishments are given for late homework or missing homework** - this punishment should be accompanied with some direct support from a form mentor or tutor, to have a chat with the pupil about some ways that they can stay *afloat* with their work in the future. **This will all help to build good revision and homework strategies and a healthy relationship with work** for when they reach exam prep years (Y10, Y12) and exam years (Y11, Y13).

- **Build up to the high workload** you will have at GCSE gradually across the first 5 years.

- **Enable students to prioritise subjects which they may be struggling with, and recognise this as a factor when trying to understand missing work.**



- **Teach students organisational techniques right from the start, not in year 11 (when it's too late)!**

- **Let students use different formats for homework and provide them options; everyone works differently.**



Thank you and About Us

This consultation and report was brought to you by East Sussex Community Voice (ESCV).

ESCV is an independent Community Interest Company (Reg no. 8270069) set up to champion the voices of the public.

East Sussex
Community Voice



We deliver the Healthwatch functions in East Sussex, It Takes a Village to Raise A Child (VRAC), The Youth Inspect & Advise Group, and we also commission NHS Complaints Advocacy in East Sussex.

Please get in touch with ESCV to hear more about our projects and the young people who work with us.

Staff contact for this piece of work:

ed.peasgood@escv.org.uk greta.anderson@escv.org.uk

Our Office Email:

info@escv.org.uk

Our Office Telephone:

01323 403590

Where we are:

East Sussex Community Voice
Barbican Suite
Greencoat House
32 St Leonards Road
Eastbourne
East Sussex
BN21 3UT

