

Transition for parents – what we do and why we do it!

Transferring from primary to secondary school is a major event in any student's life, but there are many things that schools can do to make this process a positive and stress-free experience. The key to successful transition for all students is linked to their ability to develop good relationships with staff and peers. This is the aim of our transition programme at IGS.

Recent research has indicated that there are five indicators of a successful transition system. These are:

1. Students develop new friendships and improve their self-esteem and confidence.
2. Students settle in so well that they cause no concerns to their parents.
3. Students show an increased interest in school and schoolwork.
4. Students get used to their new routines and school organisation with ease.
5. Students experience curriculum continuity and avoid any potential learning dip.

This same research also identified a range of strategies that children felt helped them to best settle into their new school. Listed below are the findings of the research and what we do 'in reality' at IGS as part of our transition programme.

Visits to School:

Many of our new students have brothers and sisters at IGS and will be familiar with the site, but others may not. There are many opportunities to visit IGS before the first day of term in Year 7. Our Open Evening is held in October and we hold several induction days. Additionally, many students also visit the school either individually or in small groups for a wide variety of reasons, from anxiety to mobility issues, in the summer term of Year 6.

The Provision of Induction and Taster Days:

As has already been mentioned we currently run two different types of Induction Day for all new students. Both are held in the Summer Term of Year 6. The two **Discovery Days** are a chance for us to Discover how our new students best learn and for new students to familiarise themselves with our somewhat complex site whilst participating in a variety of creative activities. These days are run for separate primary schools. Additional days are organised for students from 'out of district' schools. The second induction event is the **Student Welcome Morning**. This session allows students to meet their new form tutor and other students who will be part of their new form. In addition to these days, a wide number of curriculum taster days exist including 'The Art of Maths', a 'Science Discovery Session' and the ever popular Transition Sports, held annually in the summer term. All these activities take place either on our school site or at our playing fields.

Getting Familiar with a New Site:

We help students to get to know their way around school by setting them a 'photographic treasure hunt' around the site as part of the Discovery Day experience. Students are also provided with a site map and are given a full tour of school by their new form tutor on Student Welcome Morning.

Useful Student Friendly Information:

During the summer term, the Year 7 Year Leader or the Year 7 Pastoral Support Worker visits each of the six main feeder schools along with two current Year 7 students to talk to Year 6 students about what to expect at their new school. At these sessions Year 6 students have the opportunity to ask any questions they may want to. In addition to this, each new student will receive a 'top tips' booklet on the Student Welcome Morning. In addition, current students have uploaded a variety of video clips onto the transition section of the IGS website that will help new students become a little more familiar with 'IGS life'.

Sole use of the School on the First Day:

Traditionally we always have only Year 7 and 12 students on site for the first day of term in September. This allows new students of all ages to get to find their way around in a slightly less crowded environment. In addition to this, for the first few weeks students in Year 7 have a slightly extended lunch break to allow them to familiarise themselves with a new dining hall system.

Relaxing the Rules in the Early Weeks:

Although we have a clear Personal Best rewards and sanctions system, all tutors and subject staff will use this flexibly in the first few weeks. No pupil should fear 'getting a comment' for being late to a lesson as a result of getting lost!

Offering Organisational Support and Assistance:

On the first day of term, every student is given a 'student planner'. This is an invaluable resource with many pages of helpful information, a place to write a timetable and a space for each day of the week where home learning and important notes can be recorded. The planner is also a vital home-school link and we hope that new students will be able to show off their 'stamps' with pride at the end of the school day!

Activities planned for the first day in September are also very much centred around familiarisation and preparation for the weeks ahead. Our dedicated team of Year 7 form tutors, many of whom are specialists in the transition process, are always on hand to listen and offer assistance throughout the year.

The process of transition from primary to secondary school, however, does not end on the first day that new students start at IGS, but continues throughout the whole of Year 7.

Personal Development Matters:

As previously stated, every effort is made to ensure that students enjoy their time at school and have positive relationships with contemporaries and adults alike. We do this in a number of ways:

- Year 7 tutor groups are carefully constructed to allow the possibility for new friendships to develop and students to be supported in an effective way. **There will usually be at least one other member of the tutor group from a student's feeder primary school, but it should be noted that this is unlikely to be a 'best friend'**. We realise the fact that many students may have 'been together' since reception, but also recognise the importance of forming new friendships with students from other backgrounds. Lessons are for learning and there are plenty of opportunities to socialise with established friends at break and lunchtime and through extra-curricular activities.
- We have a 'Meet the Tutor' evening in October when parents are encouraged to bring their son/daughter to discuss the start that they have made at IGS. Discussions focus on transition and the bedding in process rather than academic progress. At this meeting parents are also asked to complete a survey regarding their impressions of the transition process, be they positive or developmental.
- Students in Year 7 complete a 'reflective review' of their transition experience for their form tutor at the end of the first half term.
- SEAL skills (Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning) and ICREST skills (Personal Learning and Thinking Skills) are central to the content of the Citizenship curriculum throughout Year 7.
- We have well-established systems of peer mentoring and support. Post 16 iLeaders are not only attached to all tutor groups but also assist with numeracy and literacy support and the running of a weekly youth club.
- We find that many children believe they can 'facilitate their own transition' if they adopt a positive attitude. As a result, the development of key transitional skills including responsible citizenship, teamwork and communication is the focus of our tutor programme, assemblies, some curriculum time and also enrichment opportunities such as the band day at Nell Bank which takes place in the first few weeks of term.

Curriculum Matters:

Every effort is also made to ensure that pupils 'hit the ground running' academically when they join IGS. We aim to provide learning opportunities that are new, exciting and challenging in all Curriculum Areas and for all abilities.

- Subject leaders spend time liaising with colleagues in primary schools to ensure that schemes of work do not overlap in terms of content.
- Information is obtained from Year 6 teachers regarding the level of skills and understanding that students have in particular subject areas prior to their arrival at IGS.
- Tutor groups are created in such a way that there is an equal distribution of students of all abilities, both within individual groups and across the band, so maximising the effectiveness of teaching.
- Students have the chance to discuss their academic progress throughout the first term after the closing of the first tracking window during the November Review day. A single target is then set as a result of these discussions.
- Tracking is sent home to parents termly, students receive a more detail written report in the Easter Term and there is an academic Parents Evening in July when parents and students can meet with subject teachers.