

# Norwich Opportunity Area Transitions

Interim report 2



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## 1. Introduction

### 1.1. Background

This document is the second in a series of three reports that present an evaluation of the Norwich Opportunity Area transitions project work 2019 – 2022 (for the first report see Kirkman et.al., 2021). Starting in February 2021 we have focused on examining the projects which took place during Summer 2019-2020.

Our aims are i) to collate the projects undertaken by each school and how many students they directly affected, ii) establish the success of the range of approaches and interventions delivered by the transition projects in relation to

- a) Student resilience and behaviour
- b) Academic and behaviour understanding
- c) Parent/carer engagement in the transition process
- d) Value

The series of three reports together provide an account of the impact of the transitions projects and will consider this in the light of the initial financial investment in the projects.

### 1.2. The structure of the report

This report should be read in combination with the Norwich Opportunity Area Transition Evaluation Interim Report 1 (Kirkman, et al. 2021). Following an introduction to the evaluation and review of the research design and timeline, we examine some key areas of interest which emerge from the literature, and which provide a context for the analysis which follows.

Each of the Norwich Opportunity Area Transitions projects is then reviewed in turn drawing on data from the teacher interviews, survey, document analysis and from the pupil focus groups. These are then used to make an evidence-informed judgement about the impact of each of the projects, based on the evaluation criteria developed during phase one.

#### *1.2.1. Student groups and metrics*

It should be noted that the transitions activities with students and parents began in the summer of 2020, so children who were in year six during the first year of the projects were at the end of year seven and aged 11-12 in 2021. Thus, for the purposes of this report, the relevant priorities and targets from the Norfolk Opportunity Area Deliver Plan are:

#### Relevant Priorities 2-4

2. Raise attainment through targeted, evidence-based continuous professional development (CPD) for teachers and stronger system leadership support
3. support children at risk of exclusion from school
4. give young people the information and support they need to move successfully between school, college, university and into work)

#### Relevant Targets e and f

- e) By 2021, the gap between the attainment of disadvantaged pupils and all pupils will be half what it was in September 2017
- f) In 2020/21, the rate of fixed term and permanent exclusions will have reduced by two thirds from the rate in 2016/17

## 2. The evaluation processes

The following section outlines key updates to the research design as it has continued to emerge across the project in the light of the COVID pandemic and related challenges.

### 2.1. Research questions

We began the project by identifying five research questions from the project brief and divided the focus of these across two project phases. phase one was initially from February to June 2021 and phase two was from July 2021 to January 2022. Following an extension in project funding, these timeframes were adjusted in July 2021 to phase one: February 2021 – September 2021, phase two: September 2021 – June 2022.

Phase one focussed on the following questions:

RQ1) What was the qualitative nature of the 2019-2020 school transition interventions?

RQ2) Who was involved in the school transition interventions?

RQ3) To what extent do stakeholders perceive an impact of these school transition interventions?

The phase two research questions are:

RQ4) What was the impact of project activities running during Spring/Summer 2021 on: student resilience and behaviour, academic and behaviour understanding, parent/carer engagement in transition processes, and value.

RQ5) What was the impact of project activities running during Spring/Summer 2021 on individual year six pupils in relation to: student resilience and behaviour, academic and behaviour understanding, parent/carer engagement in transition processes, and value.

### 2.2. Research design

As outlined in Kirkman et al. (2021) we adopted a two-phase mixed methods approach (Creswell & Clark, 2011). Informed by a constructionist epistemology (Crotty, 1998) and using an embedded design (Creswell, 2003), placing the emphasis on explanation, and understanding.

Phase one examined and described each project/intervention and identified their successes. Following an initial review of the documentary evidence, a review of pertinent grey and academic literature allowed us to clearly articulate the key areas of focus for the evaluation, to define key terms and to define the project and

holistic evaluation questions that would help to frame our thinking in relation to the subsequent data collection processes. For further details see Kirkman et al. (2021).

Owing to the challenges of access to school data, school and staff engagement, COVID-19 restrictions, and project timings (see below) we adapted our original design and focussed on a smaller teacher survey (year seven staff only) and online pupil focus groups rather than a pupil survey. While the data gathered cannot claim to represent the views of *most* school teaching staff and year seven pupils across the Norwich Opportunity Area, we do feel they are a good representation of the key subjects arising in relation to each project and have a 'robust enough' level of representation to allow for meaningful conclusions in terms of the evaluation of previous work and the development of further practice. At the end of phase one we designed a self-assessment audit tool, for use at the school and local level, to facilitate stakeholders to engage in ongoing evaluation of the transition and transfer provision. This provides a means to pilot aspects of the tracking tool during phase two.

Whereas phase one focused on the projects themselves and teacher perspectives, phase two focuses on pupil perspectives, school impact data and project management. Data is being collected from pupil focus groups, interviews with school leadership and school statistical tracking data. This phase addresses the needs of research questions four and five. Together with the audit tool, it facilitates the trialling of the pupil tracking process which has been developed to allow for tentative, but evidence informed, links to be made between pupil and school involvement in transfer and transitions activities and student outcomes over time. This tracking process carries a degree of risk in that it requires access to anonymised pupil-level school tracking data about behaviour (low impact and exclusions), attendance, attainment, special educational needs and disabilities, other school interventions and pupil characteristics (age, access to free school meals, vulnerable pupil, child in need, primary school). However, with the assistance of school leaders, we are confident that we can support schools in the Norwich locality to gain a deeper insight into the impact of transitions projects on pupil outcomes.

### 2.2.1. Updated mapping of research questions to methods

The research questions map to the data collection methods as shown in tables 2.2a (phase one) and 2.2b(phase two).

Table 2.2a: phase one data collection

<b>Phase one: Feb 2021 – Oct 2021</b>					
Research question	Review of literature (497+)	Document review (342+)	Interviews and discussions (23)	Teacher survey (n=20)	Pupil focus groups (n=4, Y7)
RQ 1	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
RQ 2			✓	✓	✓
RQ 3	✓		✓	✓	✓

Table 2.2b: Planned phase two data collection

Research question	School / student data tracking (5 secondaries)	Pupil focus groups (n=10)	Interviews with SLT & transition coordinator (n=5)
RQ 4		✓	✓
RQ 5	✓		

n = number of responses

### 2.2.2. Project timeline

The project timeline is shown in figure 2.2. Following on from the July 2021 report, each aspect of the project is discussed in turn below.

Norwich Transitions Project																		
Project Timeline																		
		Phase 1								Phase 2								
		Feb	March	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan-22	Feb	March	April	May	June
	Project Planning Phase 1 including Ethics																	
	Review of literature																	
	Document collation and analysis																	
	Interviews and analysis																	
	Teacher Surveys and analysis																	
	Pupil focus groups and analysis																	
	Success/evaluation criteria																	
	Design tracking process																	
Milestone	Report 1						*											
Milestone	Report 2									*				*				
	Project Planning Phase 2 including ethics updates																	
	Audit tool																	
	School data tracking and analysis								D1	Revisions and consultation				D2 *				*
	Pupil focus groups and analysis												*					
	Interview with SLT and analysis															*		
	Tracked data 1 and 2															*		
	Tracking tool handover																	*
Milestone	Report 3																	*
Milestone	Paper 1													*				
Milestone	Paper 2														*			*
Milestone	Policy briefing																	*

Figure 2.2: Revised transitions evaluation project timeline

N.B. As of May 2022, the final phase has been lengthened to allow schools more time to gather the data necessary for the requested pupil tracking and analysis.



## 2.3. Update on the project areas (July 2021 – Jan 2022)

The following section provides an update on the project focus areas that were active between July 2021 and Jan 2022. These are: tracking process, phase two design, audit tool, school data tracking and analysis, pupil focus groups and analysis, and tracked data 1 and 2. Each is discussed in turn.

### *2.3.1. Tracking process*

The process of designing the tracking tool began in June 2021 and continued throughout August 2021. Drawing on the review of literature, analysis of documents, interviews, focus groups and surveys a tool was designed to map school data on individual pupils and pupil and school project involvement against student outcome indicators (such as behaviour data, attendance, attainment, and effort grades). At the same time, we have developed an audit tool that provides tools to evaluate four aspects of transitions programme delivery (see below for further details). Taken together with the school data tracking tool, these resources together provide a set of tools that assist in the process of using a broad range of types of data to evaluate and improve school transition support over time. From this point forward, the ongoing development and refinement of these tools relies on the continued engagement of school leaders. With this in place, we are confident that we can support schools in the Norwich locality to gain an insight into the impact of transitions projects on pupil outcomes. This work is ongoing, and the completed tool is on schedule for delivery by the end of June 2022.

### *2.3.2. Phase two design*

We have also amended the phase two design due to challenges around access to school data, school and staff engagement, and COVID-19 restrictions. While phase one now focuses on the project design and teacher perspectives, phase two focuses on pupil perspectives and wider impact. Alongside this, the legacy impact of the projects is captured and enhanced through the transitions audit (see below and separate audit tool) and tracking tools which have been developed and refined during phase two. The timeline for phase two is given in section 2.2.2.

### *2.3.3. Audit tool*

The transitions audit tool was developed between July and September 2021. It was soft launched in October 2021 and is being refined in collaboration with the NOA transitions school leads. The resources in the audit tool are designed to be used to help school transitions leaders to conduct an evidence-based review of current support for transitions activities as well as planning for future development. The resources may be used in their entirety or focused towards particular areas of need and/or concern. The areas for review are drawn from wider research literature as well as from the Norwich Opportunity area Goals set out in the Norwich Opportunity Area Delivery Plan (Crown Copyright, 2017), and the Transitions Programme Core Aims (NOA Transitions group, 2019). We took the

approach that an audit in this context should be a developmental process and a helpful part of a strategic development cycle that provides an understanding of 'where you are now' and 'what you need to do next'. As well as an introduction to the audit tool, the audit contains four workbooks that focus on a different area and anticipated priority based on the stage of development of their transitions activities: : workbook 1 provides resources to evaluate the current school context and the key needs of the school community, workbook 2 provides resources to evaluate the current transitions management structures, communication processes, and relationships, workbook 3 provides resources to evaluate current transitions support coverage, and workbook 4 provides resources to evaluate current projects and outcomes. See Kirkman et al (2022) for further details.

#### *2.3.4. School data tracking and analysis*

A data tracking process was designed between Sept – Dec 2021 and a spreadsheet and data collection instructions were circulated in early 2021. This was delayed due to the impact of Covid on schools' capacity to engage with the project and the resulting need for a delay in circulating the request and support for data collection. The request for data was followed up with offer of support via email and via Teams calls so that schools would be able to provide completed copies of their data by the end of March 2022. This process is ongoing.

#### *2.3.5. Pupil focus groups*

A second set of pupil focus groups was carried out early in 2022. These were organized with the secondary schools in the Norwich Opportunity Area. In a similar way to phase one, communication challenges and delays, as well as engagement with the evaluation process continued to pose difficulties.

#### *2.3.6. Interview with SLT and analysis*

A set of interviews with school senior leadership was carried out in late 2021 to complement the collection of school data. These focused on consolidating understanding of school-level approaches to transitions ahead of the final report.

#### *2.3.7. Tracked data 1 and 2*

The original two phases of statistical school tracking data were synthesized into a single phase to reduce the burden on schools and to streamline the collection process (in the light of the challenges noted above). The target for collection is now the end of June 2022 as some schools have been unable to meet previous deadlines of March 2022 and Easter 2022.

## 2.4. Evaluation criteria

During the first phase of the evaluation and due to the emergent nature of the transitions projects, we sought to develop a set of evaluation criteria that was fit for purpose, and which drew on the specific and broad intentions and likely emergent outcomes of the projects. Kirkman (2021) outlines the process through which we identified these evaluation criteria. These are used in the current report and outlined in table 2.4a.

We first identified those themes within the literature that would provide potentially useful indicators of project efficacy in relation to the primary areas of focus as defined in the project brief: student resilience and behaviour, academic and behaviour understanding, parent/carer engagement in the transitions process, and value. We then turned to the broader goals of the Norwich Opportunity Area to define a further six areas of focus which come from the Priority Areas and Targets of the Norwich Opportunity Area Board: student attainment, continuous professional development (CPD) for teachers, system leadership support, fixed term and permanent exclusion, transfer and transition, disadvantaged pupils. Finally, we added themes emerging directly from the academic literature itself. Our rationale for inclusion of this third level was the initial practical starting point for the transitions project work. This final stage revealed a further eight factors associated with effective support for school transfer and transition: building inclusive shared values and positive relationships, multi-agency collaborative support, clear shared and enacted policy, local and school level support, focused support for specific identified: whole-school, group, individual, organisational/administrative support, psychosocial support, student voice/involvement in decision making.

Table 2.4a: specific broad and emergent evaluation criteria.

Focus	Key questions
<b>Student resilience and behaviour</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To what extent does this project create external support for resilience?</li> <li>• To what extent does this project foster internal support for resilience?</li> <li>• To what extent does this project foster positive teacher-student interactions?</li> <li>• To what extent does this project foster positive student-student interactions?</li> </ul>
<b>Academic and behaviour understanding</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To what extent does this project foster peer acceptance?</li> <li>• To what extent does this project foster positive classroom relationships?</li> <li>• To what extent does this project foster feelings of being a part of the school?</li> <li>• To what extent does this project foster feelings of self-determination?</li> <li>• To what extent does this project make achievements more visible?</li> </ul>
<b>Parent/carer engagement in transition processes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To what extent does this project foster direct participation from parents?</li> <li>• To what extent does this project foster academic encouragement from parents?</li> <li>• To what extent does this project foster attainment expectations from parents?</li> </ul>
<b>Value</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To what extent does this project deliver support for school transfer?</li> <li>• To what extent does this project support transition more widely?</li> <li>• To what extent does this project contribute to achieving the priorities of the Norwich Opportunity area?</li> <li>• To what extent does this project contribute to achieving the targets of the Norwich Opportunity area?</li> <li>• To what extent does this project contribute to achieving the priorities of the Transitions working group?</li> <li>• To what extent does this project maintain engagement from pupil?</li> <li>• To what extent does this project maintain engagement from parents?</li> <li>• To what extent does this project maintain engagement from teachers?</li> <li>• To what extent does this project maintain engagement from school leaders?</li> </ul>
<b>Student attainment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To what extent does this project support individual attainment in Y7?</li> <li>• To what extent does this project support an improved individual attainment trajectory?</li> </ul>
<b>Professional development and support (CPD) for teachers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To what extent does this project provide support to teachers for relationship building?</li> <li>• To what extent does this project provide specialist support to teachers?</li> <li>• To what extent does this project provide support to teachers' further ongoing development?</li> <li>• To what extent does this project provide support to teachers' ongoing development to teaching and learning?</li> </ul>
<b>System leadership support</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To what extent does this project provide support for leaders to facilitate conditions that enable others to foster social change?</li> <li>• To what extent does this project provide support for leaders to see the whole system?</li> <li>• To what extent does this project provide support for leaders to use reflection and dialogue to move the focus from reactive problem solving to building futures?</li> </ul>

<b>Fixed term and permanent exclusion</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To what extent does this project help to prevent fixed-term exclusions?</li> <li>To what extent does this project help to prevent permanent exclusions?</li> <li>To what extent does this project help to prevent behaviour leading to fixed-term or permanent exclusions?</li> </ul>
<b>Transfer and transition</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To what extent does this project foster support for school-school transition?</li> <li>To what extent does this project foster support for pupil transitions?</li> </ul>
<b>Disadvantaged pupils</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To what extent does this project provide support for disadvantaged pupils?</li> <li>To what extent does this project provide support for vulnerable pupils?</li> </ul>
<b>Building inclusive shared values and positive relationships</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To what extent does this project support the development of inclusive values at whole-school level?</li> <li>To what extent does this project support the development of inclusive system/processes at whole-school level?</li> <li>To what extent does this project foster caring school staff?</li> <li>To what extent does this project attend to parent concerns?</li> <li>To what extent does this project attend to pupil concerns?</li> <li>To what extent does this project foster strong peer relationships?</li> <li>To what extent does this project foster strong external support networks?</li> </ul>
<b>Multi-agency collaborative support</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To what extent does this project foster inter-school/agency collaboration?</li> <li>To what extent does this project foster collaboration with parents?</li> <li>To what extent does this project foster collaboration with pupils?</li> </ul>
<b>Clear shared and enacted policy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To what extent does this project support the co-creation of policy?</li> <li>To what extent does this engage parents in the creation of policy?</li> <li>To what extent does this engage pupils in the creation of policy?</li> <li>To what extent does this engage parents in the process of enacting policy?</li> <li>To what extent does this engage pupils in the process of enacting policy?</li> <li>To what extent does this project foster consensus?</li> </ul>
<b>Local and school level support</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To what extent does this project draw together the expertise of a wide range of stakeholders?</li> <li>To what extent does this project promote consistency?</li> <li>To what extent does this project provide support for schools?</li> <li>To what extent does this project facilitate expertise sharing?</li> <li>To what extent does this project facilitate intelligence sharing?</li> </ul>
<b>Focused support at different levels: whole-school, group, individual</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To what extent does this project provide support that targets the needs of all individuals?</li> <li>To what extent does this project provide support that targets the needs of targeted individuals?</li> <li>To what extent does this project provide support that targets the needs of different groups of pupils?</li> <li>To what extent does this project provide support at a whole school level?</li> <li>To what extent does this project provided allow for support at individual, group, and whole school level?</li> </ul>
<b>Organisational /administrative support</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To what extent does this project foster positive relationships between schools and school staff before school transfer?</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To what extent does this project foster positive relationships between schools and school staff during school transfer?</li> <li>• To what extent does this project foster positive relationships schools and school staff after school transfer?</li> <li>• To what extent does this project foster good communication channels schools and school staff before school transfer?</li> <li>• To what extent does this project foster good communication channels schools and school staff during school transfer?</li> <li>• To what extent does this project foster good communication channels schools and school staff after school transfer?</li> <li>• To what extent does this project foster information sharing about individual children before school transfer?</li> <li>• To what extent does this project foster information sharing about individual children during school transfer?</li> <li>• To what extent does this project foster information sharing about individual children after school transfer?</li> </ul>
<b>Psychosocial support</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To what extent does this project provide support to help pupils to make new friends?</li> <li>• To what extent does this project provide support to help pupils to make maintain existing friendships?</li> <li>• To what extent does this project provide support to help pupils to feel confident that they fit in?</li> <li>• To what extent does this project provide support to help pupils to feel confident that they know what to do?</li> <li>• To what extent does this project provide support to help pupils to feel confident that they are safe?</li> </ul>
<b>Student voice/involve ment in decision making</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To what extent does this project allow the views of pupils to be heard as equal partners?</li> <li>• To what extent does this project allow pupils to make key decisions as equal partners?</li> </ul>

## 2.5. A note on the survey analysis and the impact of the COVID pandemic

A review of the survey responses for the transitions projects' outcomes reveals that the majority of responses to the question 'In practice (with COVID): In the light of COVID how did [the project] actually work last year?' were 'don't know'. Although the overwhelming majority also felt that the projects in principle were sound, they felt that their effectiveness was compromised because of COVID. At the same time, responses indicate that four projects were effective, even in the context of the challenges faced in response to the COVID pandemic. The table below breaks down the outcomes after implementation for each project during 2020.

Table 2.5a: Teacher evaluation of project effectiveness during COVID mitigations.

<b>Project</b>	<b>Majority Assessment</b>
The Bridging Project	Don't Know
CPOMS	Effective
Common Transfer Document	Effective
Interschool	Don't Know
Booklets	Effective
Summer Schools	Don't Know
STAR	Don't Know
Peer Mentoring	Don't Know
Parent Information Evenings	Effective
Emotional Literacy Support	Don't Know
Training to support SEND	Don't Know
YoungMinds	Don't Know
Transitions Week	Don't Know
Transition Working group	Don't Know

We also examined the overall project summary data for 2020 from teacher survey responses for the primary areas of focus, pupil resilience, pupil behaviour, pupil academic performance and parent/carer involvement in the transition process.

As with the main project 'effectiveness' measure, there is a large percentage on each principal that falls into the 'don't know' or 'NA' categories, in a similar way to the outcome of the individual project analysis above. This data *may* indicate that a robust evaluation of the projects is not possible due to the impact of COVID on delivery processes. It is also important to note that each principal (pupil resilience, pupil behaviour, pupil academic performance and parent/carer involvement) has a range of responses. At the same time, if we take out 'don't know' then the majority of responses are 'agree'. As a result, while indications are mildly in support of a positive impact, it is impossible to draw any clear conclusions from these results aside from the need to revisit this teacher perspective data when the impact of factors such as COVID is less prominent.

The figures below illustrate these results:

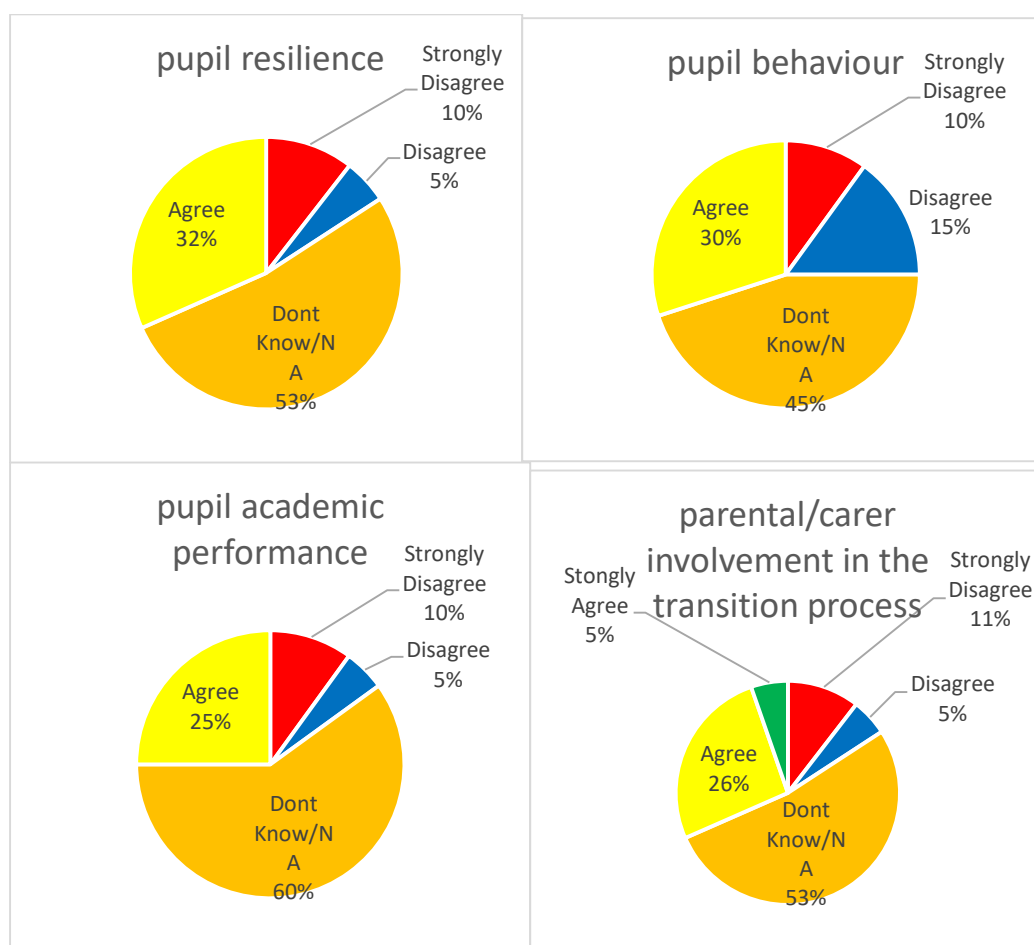


Fig 2.5: teacher evaluations of overall project impact on primary factors during 2020.

Considering the fact that so many of the projects and principles of this project have a significant number of responses in the 'don't know' or 'NA' category, it became necessary to consider why this may be the case. There were three major potential reasons why participants of the survey chose to select this option when thinking about the projects:

1. The participants were engaged with the projects, but COVID played a role in the outcome and created a feeling of being unsure of the projects' effectiveness.
2. The participants were engaged with the projects, but genuinely did not feel they knew if the projects were effective.
3. The participants did not engage or were not part of that particular project.

Alongside this, drawing on the qualitative survey comments on the projects as a whole, the majority of respondents also believed that support was a high priority for year seven students at their schools. Many stated that schools carry out activities to support transitions in addition to the NOA projects. The majority also agreed that their involvement in the NOA activities has both improved their own individual approach to support for pupils, as well as that of the school as a whole.



In response to questions 'recommendations for future projects' a few teachers suggested that these NOA projects were a good idea but that more uptake was needed from feeder schools to enable this to be more effective. They articulated the need for regular meetings between primary and secondary transition leads in addition to starting these projects earlier (for example in years 4 and 5) to address needs and concerns at an earlier point. However, it was also noted that respondents agree that transitions will be improved when they can have pupils in for the activities, without restrictions. Taken together, based on the increase in 'don't know/NA' responses after the projects were implemented, we noted the percentage difference between teacher perceived effectiveness before and after implementation. Owing to the reference to COVID in the question as well as teacher comments, we considered this 'difference' as a rough measure of a potential 'Covid effect' on the projects. Finally, it was also noted that projects which did not involve face to face or interactive measures (CPOMS, Common Transfer Doc and Booklets) reported a significantly lower Covid Effect than those which required this element. This supports our hypothesis that this decrease in perceived effectiveness is a COVID effect.

Presented below is table 2.5b which illustrates this 'COVID effect' for each project. The impact is presented as a negative percentage. This reflects our expectation that teachers perceptions of the effectiveness of implementation will increase in a positive direction approximately in line with this magnitude if projects take place in 'normal' circumstances.

Table 2.5b: Estimated COVID effect for each transitions project

<b>Project</b>	<b>Estimated Covid Impact (teacher perception of effectiveness)</b>
The Bridging Project	-20% <sup>1</sup>
CPOMS	-5%
Common Transfer Document	-15%
Interschool	-55%
Booklets	-10%
Summer Schools	-30%
STAR	-30%
Peer Mentoring	-65%
Parent Information Evenings	-30%
Emotional Literacy Support	-40%
Training to support SEND	-35%
YoungMinds	-30%
Transitions Week	-40%
Transition Working group	-20%
Average	-30.4%

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<sup>1</sup> So in normal/non-Covid times we would expect teacher perceptions of the effectiveness of the projects to increase by 20%. Other rows should be read in a similar way.

## 2.6. Three areas of focus during primary to secondary transitions

In the following section we outline some key areas of concern from the literature on transitions and support for school transfers. This is not a comprehensive review as this would be beyond the scope of the current evaluation. Rather we adopted a structured 'rapid umbrella' (Coe et. al, 2020) approach to the literature in an attempt to piece together a review that sought to be relevant and to compensate for preferences towards favoured perspectives or approaches. In addition to providing a brief overview of the opportunity area context and transitions, we introduce three key areas of focus during transitions from primary to secondary education which emerged from the literature review: 1) risk to pupil wellbeing, 2) parental involvement and 3) school-based responses.

### 2.6.1. Opportunity areas

The UK Government's Opportunity Area programme was announced in October 2016 as a 'Social mobility package' that aims to "see local partnerships formed with early years providers, schools, colleges, universities, businesses, charities and local authorities to ensure all children have the opportunity to reach their full potential" (DfE, 2016).

Norwich was one of the initial set of six areas (West Somerset, Norwich, Blackpool, Scarborough, Derby and Oldham) identified using the Social Mobility Index which suggests that these are among the least socially mobile areas of the country. The methodology of the Social Mobility Index examines in each of the 324 local authority areas both i) the educational attainment of children and young people across early years to HE, and ii) adults' prospects of 'good adulthood outcomes' through indicators such as average income, availability of professional jobs, and housing affordability (Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission, 2016).

Opportunity Areas have been defined as "places where change and growth can happen" (GLA, 2015 p.vi) and were primarily selected to improve the social mobility of citizens using education (DfE, 2017). As a part of the development strategy, education is seen as a key driver to ensure that all children have the opportunity to achieve their full potential whilst at school and college and become well equipped to take an informed decision about their future as adults (DfE, 2016). As a significant milestone and risk factor in young people's lives, it is easy to understand why transitions are seen as natural points of focus for intervention in these opportunity areas.

### *2.6.2. Transfer/transition*

Across different literatures, Transition and transfer are terms often used interchangeably to refer to the moves and adjustments that children make from one school system into another, particularly primary to secondary schools (Evangelou et al., 2008; Roberts, 2015). School transition also includes children's move between different years within the same school (Evangelou et al. 2008). Moreover, school transition is a time of change that requires pupils to build resilience and to negotiate new environments and social relationships (Roberts, 2015). It can also affect their socio-emotional and academic performances positively or negatively, depending on the experiences of the pupils (Roberts, 2015; Weiss and Baker-Smith, 2010). Hence, it is both an opportunity and challenge for children, their parents, and carers. A range of personal, parental, and school factors affect pupils' school transitions (Roberts, 2015). As indicated in the sections below, these factors either facilitate or hinder smooth and inclusive transition of pupils from and within schools. Each is discussed in turn.

### *2.6.3. Focus one: risk to wellbeing*

Transition is recognized across a range of literature, in academic sources as well as by government and charities, as a period which presents significant risk to pupils. The risk to mental health is particularly significant in the context of this project, given the impact of the COVID pandemic on current educational contexts and pupils. In addition, during periods of transition, key established risk factors that can cause children to struggle are additional learning needs, mental health issues, behavioural issues, reduced or absence of parental support, anxiety, bullying or being in care (MHS, 2021). These children have lower levels of attendance compared to other groups, have greater difficulties forming friendships and are more likely to do not feel like they belong at school; they may also exhibit negative behaviours and have lower interest and progress in school than children who do not exhibit these risk factors.

Transitions can damage psychological wellbeing, but despite that, not many internationally reported interventions focus on emotional resilience (Bagnall, 2020). Most children report having difficulty adjusting not just to the new school setting but also to the new social groups, lower self-esteem being a significant contributing factor in those experiencing poorer transitions (West, Sweeting and Young, 2010). Building social relationships with other pupils and teachers is crucial for the sense of community in a school (Coffey, 2013) and arguably, good communication between schools will help in building that sense of community. A temporary pause (Galton, Morrison and Pell, 2000) or even regression (Pietarinen, 2000; Weiss and Baker-Smith, 2010) in academic progress is to be expected, within the year after the transition (Weiss and Baker-Smith, 2010). Although this dip in attainment is attributed to different factors in multiple countries, studies broadly agree that pupils can be supported to develop academic and behavioural involvement and a sense of belonging.

#### *2.6.4. Focus two: parental involvement*

A second area of interest that emerges across a range of literature is that of parental involvement. LaBahn (1995) stated that a successful parental involvement in school consists of two interconnected points: active participation and commitment; it is with active participation and commitment that parents can support their children's' smooth transition and help them achieve success. There is extensive literature supporting the notion that parental engagement has a positive impact on pupils' learning outcomes. At the same time, it is clear that the nature of parental engagement changes significantly as pupils enter secondary school (Mac Iver et al., 2015). This change may be due to parents' beliefs that their children need to be more autonomous, their difficulty in helping with homework and explaining complex curricula or high school teachers' beliefs that parents are disinterested in supporting their children (Simon, 2004).

According to United Way Worldwide and Harvard Family Research Project (2011), parent focus groups in 8 districts in the USA indicated that parents felt unwelcomed and unprepared by the high school staff, reported lack of communication about their child's courses and progress, but also acknowledged their lack of time due to caring responsibilities, busy work schedules and transportation problems. In a quasi-experimental study, Sheldon (2007) found that schools' systematic efforts in engaging parents can improve school attendance and decrease disciplinary actions. Mac Iver et al. (2015) investigated how such systematic efforts and strong home-school partnerships can support school transitions and academic success and found that parents valued the importance of transition activities, such as organized school visits, parents' meetings, academic support to parents, English language lessons to EAL families, orientation meetings, and schools' setting expectations for attendance, behaviour, and progress before the start of the school year. These studies exemplify how substantial home-school partnerships can have a positive effect on pupils' transition in high school.

Parents' attitudes to schooling can also have a significant impact on pupils' success at high school. Parents become involved in the school life of their children to varying degrees through discussion of school at home, communication with the school about the student, participation in school activities and parental help with homework (Sui-Chi and Willms, 1996). Falbo et al. (2001) conducted twenty-six open-ended interviews with parents and their children in the USA to capture the actions parents took to support their children's transition to high school. Student success was perceived in terms of grades, school attendance and positive peer relationships. Sui-Chi and Willms found that Ghanaian parents eased their child's transition to high school and contributed to their child's academic success by helping with homework, offering support in stressful situations, creating social networks for their children, and actively participating in school activities. Wei-Bing Chen and Anne Gregory (2009) argue that parents who model appropriate behaviours and positive attitudes toward school positively impact pupils' perception of school. Parents who demonstrate their own valuing of education by showing an active interest in school activities and offering positive reinforcement can support pupils' academic development. Taken together it is clear that home-school partnerships, teachers' expectations from parents, and parents' experiences

of and engagement with schooling can all contribute to pupils' academic progress and behaviour at the start of high school.

### *2.6.5. Focus three: School-based responses*

A third area of focus arising from the literature is around schools responses that seek to mitigate the impact of transitions on pupils. Notably, in the USA Anderson et al., (2000) point out that environmental contexts rather than developmental characteristics appear to have a stronger effect on the success of school transitions. In other words, the age or developmental characteristics of the pupils themselves is arguably a less important factor to consider than the organizational demands placed on them. More recently, in their study of UK transition, Bagnall et al., (2020) demonstrate the significance of achieving an appropriate balance between exposure to school transition provision and consistency during the transition period. In line with Hammond (2016), they note that the insight into secondary school life can be beneficial with appropriate support and limits but may also cause anxiety and feelings of overwhelm if appropriate support is unavailable. Thus, schools need to be mindful of the degree to which their provision maintains consistency and gives appropriate support for pupils, while also considering the degree of exposure to new contexts pupils face, and the content of the transitions support activities themselves.

Schools tend to view transitions as a time of apprehension for pupils (Evangelou et al., 2008) arising from the need for pupils to manage change and adapt to a different and perhaps more challenging school environment. These challenges are often related to new or different academic structures and requirements as well as social interactions with pupils and teachers (Rice et al., 2021). As a result, schools reportedly tend to adopt strategies which help to mitigate either pupil apprehension, understanding of the new structures and requirements, or both. Successful school transition appears to require coordinated efforts from various stakeholders, with a particular emphasis on parents, pupils and teachers (e.g., Anderson et al., 2000; Bailey & Baines, 2012; Coffey, 2013). Alongside this, schools play a significant role in providing experiences and information that can alleviate apprehension and promote understanding of the destination school requirements. From our review, the most frequently cited strategies are toolkits, school visits and summer schools. Each is discussed in turn.

#### *2.6.5.1. Transition toolkits*

From the literature it is clear that schools with other partners, such as local authorities, charities or universities, often prepare transition toolkits or resources to ensure an inclusive and successful transition. These resources include information booklets, workbooks, activities, and questionnaires (Evangelou et al., 2008; Rice et al., 2019). Information booklets and activities are also used in combination with information events or transition induction meetings before and after pupils' admission. The UK-based School Transition and Adjustment Research Study' (STARS) sought to understand more about how children settle into secondary school (Rice et al., 2019). The study produced a four-item questionnaire which measures pupils' i) academic and behaviourally involvement and ii) their feelings of

belonging to school. This Secondary Transition Adjustment Research Tool ('START') and other questionnaires are administered to teachers, pupils or parents in secondary schools in order to identify pupils' and parents' key concerns, predict pupils' adjustment, and assess school interventions to support pupils including those with special educational needs. The START tool suggests that successful transition involves functioning well in involvement and feelings of belonging. In contrast, other tools focus on attainment gains (or prevention of attainment losses) as an indicator of successful transitions (e.g. (McGee et al., 2003; Bharara, 2020). Nevertheless, transition resources can provide pupils with information about their new schools. They can also equip parents with the necessary knowledge and attitude to support their children's transition to secondary schools.

#### *2.6.5.2. School visits*

A second area of activity that features across a significant range of literature is visits between schools, both for staff and pupils. There is some discussion about the success of such initiatives as many studies highlight opportunities for positive school visits (Anderson et al., 2000; Evangelou et al., 2008; Jindal-Snape et al., 2019) while Bharara (2020) notes the lack of evidence for the success of these programmes. Perhaps more significant than the visits themselves are the ways in which school visits form part of a programme that provide what van Rens et al. (2018) call 'essential components of a transition model': developing a planning team, generating goals and identifying problems, developing a written transition plan, acquiring the support of all those involved in the transition process and evaluating the process (Anderson et al. 2000).

Schools have different academic and social environment depending on various factors such as their ethos, resources, location, and the community around them. School visits, therefore, can help parents, pupils, and teachers to understand the conditions of pupils and/or the school and make relevant preparations for their transitions. Such visits often make the pupils' first impression of their future schools and can help them and their teachers to identify and address potential problems and to foster common understandings of initial goals. They also help the children (and their parents) to select schools that match their needs and interests (Evangelou et al., 2008). Moreover, inter-school visits between teachers can help staff to identify any curriculum gaps or unfinished projects and explore ways of building links and continuity to complete or continue projects that pupils began in primary school (Rice et al., 2019).

#### *2.6.5.3. Summer schools*

A third significant area of activity that emerges from the literature on transitions takes place during summer schools. Pupils are sent to summer schools to meet other new pupils, gain experience of the school, receive help with building supportive relationships and understanding the expectations of their new school (Anderson et al., 2000; Evangelou et al., 2008). The expectations are that these schools help pupils to gain confidence and skills for secondary school transitions. The one to two-week summer programme is often expected to create curiosity in pupils and boost their motivation for learning (DfE, 2021a).

In addition, summer school can support pupils' transitions into secondary schools as they can meet new classmates, learn new systems, and become familiar with the new school environment. Summer schools also enable pupils, parents, and schools to get more detailed information about particular needs and provide additional support. Pupil engagement with summer schools help parents to give feedback to schools and helps schools to know their new pupils and to identify those who need special support. Summer schools are often targeted towards particular groups of pupils (DfE, 2021a) including for those with specific needs (Anderson et al., 2000) and there is some evidence to support the use of this type of differentiated support (Jindal-Snape et al, 2019).

Having identified some key areas of concern while considering transitions and support for school transfers in the context of the Norwich Opportunity Area, we will now turn to a review of the project activities themselves.



### 3. Project reviews

The following section reviews each of the opportunity area projects including, where relevant, staff and pupil perspectives, links to wider literature that provide helpful findings on similar projects and a final summary evaluation that draws on the evaluation criteria. Given the qualitative nature of the evidence evaluated during this phase, this evidence is considered alongside the likelihood of impact in each of the focus areas and reported as highly likely, likely, or unlikely. Overall evidence for the impact of the project is reported as strong, weak, or moderate. For further notes on the methodology see appendix 1.



### 3.1. Project focus – Bridging Project

This was completed in 2020. In this project the English Department of two secondary schools collaborated with three Junior Schools. This intervention was created due to the fact that different approaches were used when teaching the primary versus secondary English curriculum and pupils were not engaged in learning. The lessons/teaching resources/and lesson plans for the English lessons are available on the project website (NOA 2021a).

This project was facilitated by interschool visits which enabled staff to understand the gaps in the curriculum which could benefit from a bridging project. As well as the English project, the Maths project has been taken up to be developed further by the local Maths Hub who produced a 'Theme Park' bridging resource and Farmyard Maths resource in collaboration with schools across Norwich.

#### 3.1.1. Staff Perspectives

The Bridging Project was mentioned in four interviews, representing both secondary and primary school perspectives. One secondary school interviewee claimed that they had considered, but rejected, taking part in the project as the topic was too similar to another thematic project that they taught later in the year, and it interfered with their timetable. But those who took part had positive things to say about it. Aside from general comments of it being *"really useful"*, and *"producing something really beneficial for the children"*, more specifically interviewees noted both the benefits for themselves as staff and for the children. As one of the teachers involved in the design of the project stated:

Effectively the end goal of it was to have a piece of work that the children can take up with them to high school and they can show off to their high school teachers that is around the same topic. So that when they go to their first few lessons, they already know what they're talking about, and they've got that confidence.

The theme of the project appeared to be fantasy stories. The project began at the end of year six, involved some homework to be completed in the summer holidays and then was picked up by English staff in the new school at the beginning of year seven.

It was *"a project where they could be excited about things, they were going to learn at secondary school in order to build their confidence."* According to interviewees, the aim of the project was to develop a resource which was fairly flexible, adaptable, and non-prescriptive, that schools could use independently, year in year out, to bridge the transition from primary to secondary English learning. One primary school even discussed extending the project into other subject areas, such as history and drama.

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<sup>2</sup> All transcribed speech employs the following conventions: single quotation marks (') = paraphrased quotation; double quotation marks (") and italicised = direct quotation; indented quote = longer direct quotation.

There was a general sense that it was a really enjoyable project that used teachers' skills and time appropriately and unhurriedly, enabled them to grow through collaboration, and also had positive impacts on the children's confidence and learning:

"My children really benefited from it. And, you know, I had two weeks of planning there which benefited me as a sassy [?] teacher at the end of the school year. It was quite nice to be able to just go, 'ah, brilliant, I can take this and run with it'".

One teacher noted that, in particular, they could see the positive impact for children who might ordinarily be very challenged by the transition:

"What was nice was that some of our more SEN pupils and things like that, pupils with learning difficulties particularly stood out to me as being more confident when they came up, because they knew the words, they knew some of the content."

A key aspect that interviewees felt led to the project's success was that it kept the momentum going at the end of year six when teachers felt children often start to "*switch off*" after their SATS because they know the end of primary school is approaching. It became a "*goal*" to work towards, or a "*carrot*" to keep them going. Teachers also felt that the project brought together pupils from different primary schools into the same key stage 3 class, because it gave them something they could share that they all had knowledge of: "*it gives them something to expect in the unexpected...a familiarity as well*".

Another key point the teachers mentioned was that it was not just the resources of the project that were beneficial, it was the development of the relations between teachers from the primary and secondary schools that also helped with the transition, and perhaps crucially, the children *knowing* about this connection: "*I think that was one of the biggest impacts*" said one teacher. One interviewee suggested a more 'joined-up' approach would be better, if all schools were taking part. At the moment, 'it is just up to the school to find the information and resources and take part, and it is a little *ad hoc*'. Another suggested that schools have become more fragmented since academisation. It is harder to develop joined-up approaches across boroughs or counties, as schools look inwards within their Academy Trust. A further interviewee suggested that the project would benefit from longer timescales for collaboration that would allow for more visits and more conversations between schools.

### 3.1.1.1. Survey

The results of the survey data specifically linked with this project are presented below. The data shown identify the respondents' views both before the project was implemented (indicating how effective they envisaged the project to be) and after the project had been carried out (to analyse the projects actual effectiveness).

Fig 3.1a: Respondents views of The Bridging Project in principle:

The bridging project is an effective way of supporting students' transfer to secondary school

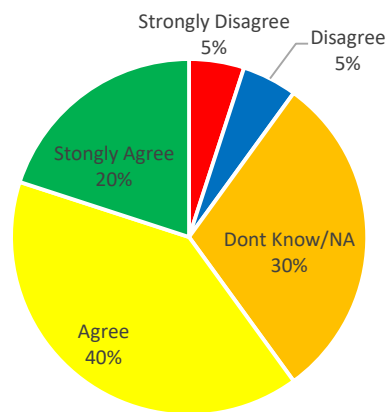
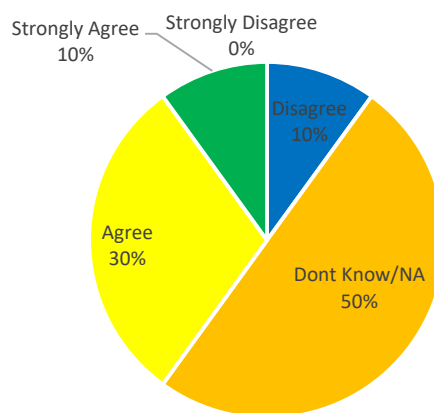


Fig 3.1b: Respondents views of The Bridging Project on implementation:

The bridging project was an effective way of supporting students' transfer to secondary school



Before the project commenced, the consensus among the teachers was fairly positive, with the majority of them (sixty percent) in agreement that this project

would be an effective way of supporting pupils' transfer to secondary school. There were, however, some elements of doubt with 10 percent disagreeing with its effectiveness and thirty percent feeling unsure. On reviewing the project after it had taken place, this agreement reduced to forty percent in the light of COVID-19, with the majority (now fifty percent) stating they were unsure and the remaining percentage disagreeing with the bridging project's effectiveness in supporting pupils' transfer to secondary school.

### *3.1.2. Pupil Perspectives*

There were no bridging projects experienced by pupils who participated in the focus groups. It is believed that another secondary school had attempted to undertake the bridging project, but none of the focus group participants had attended primary schools where the first part of the bridging project had been implemented.

### *3.1.3. Summary evaluation*

The summary below draws on the evaluation themes discussed above (see section 2.4 and Kirkman et al. 2021) and presents a summary evaluation of the Bridging Project, based on the available data. It is important to note that these are an estimation of impact based on the data available and the impact of engagement in the evaluation process and COVID 19 must be taken into account (see section 2.5).

Table 3.1a: Evaluation of the Bridging Project impact

Focus	Impact in this area:
Student resilience and behaviour	Likely
Academic and behaviour understanding	Highly likely
Parent/carer engagement in transition processes	Unlikely
Value	Highly likely
Student attainment	Highly likely
Continuous professional development and support	Unlikely
System leadership support	Unlikely
Fixed term and permanent exclusion	Unlikely
Transfer and transition	Highly likely
Disadvantaged pupils	Highly likely
Building inclusive shared values and positive relationships	Unlikely
Multi-agency collaborative support	Unlikely
Clear shared and enacted policy	Unlikely
Local and school level support	Likely
Focused support at different levels	Unlikely
Organisational/administrative support	Highly likely
Psychosocial support	Highly likely
Student voice/involvement in decision making	Unlikely

The strength of the evidence of impact in the above areas is **strong**.

**Summary:** Based on the evidence provided by the teachers, school leaders, children and literature, the Bridging Project is highly likely to have impacted positively on areas such as transfer, academic understanding, attainment, organisational support and the psychosocial support of the children. There is strong evidence of its impact on its target areas of academic behaviour and transfer.

## 3.2. Project focus – CPOMS project

CPOMS is a database tool that is designed to help to monitor safeguarding concerns as well as well-being and pastoral matters. It is accessible through multiple logins and so can track staff interaction with relevant individuals. It can provide chronologies of pupils and reports for meetings, committees and inspections. Alternatives popular packages include [www.safeguardmyschool.co.uk](http://www.safeguardmyschool.co.uk) and [www.myconcern.co.uk](http://www.myconcern.co.uk). It is unclear what, if anything, makes CPOMS better than the alternatives or why this particular system was chosen. CPOMS offers a variety of 'views' that can be used for different purposes such as reflecting the 'voice of the child' or providing an 'overview' of data.

Responses were generally positive from schools that used CPOMS, and some were already using CPOMS prior to the NOA project. Some barriers were also noted such as: staff having to get used to using this new software when they were previously using other programmes, prohibitive costs, or the lack of a single regional system meaning mismatches between feeder and destination schools, especially those outside NOA. Some of the schools were still keeping records on paper, which made sharing documents more difficult.

### 3.2.1. Staff Perspectives

Interviewees mentioned that their schools were using CPOMS. Several said they expanded its use beyond safeguarding issues and used it to share information also about children and families. One respondent said that their school also use it for monitoring pupils with special educational needs or disabilities, while another said that their school use to log information about "behaviour" and parental contact.

The experience of CPOMS was positive across the interviews. However, where mentioned this tended to reflect the views of primary feeder schools. Respondents were generally positive about the system: "*I just think it's a very useful system really!*", "*CPOMS is brilliant*", "*It's a great system, yeah [...] we use it for our kids and it's brilliant, yeah*". However, few interviewees commented on its utility in school transfer processes.

Staff commented on the utility of CPOMS in reducing paperwork and to coordinate information around particular children and their needs, as well as to avoid several staff members communicating separately with the same parents about different issues, and to track responses. They found it quick and easy to use on staff tablet computers to log incidents for example, and to retrieve information on a particular child; for example, when Children's Services need information. One respondent noted that the platform enabled information and communication to be transferred to the destination secondary school although had not experienced this. One respondent was keen to highlight that

It doesn't replace those face-to-face conversations as well, so we're still very much having those conversations and people, you know members of staff, will still come and speak to people and put it on CPOMS so it's not replacing it but it's supplementing it.

However, while CPOMS was developed to aid the process of protecting children and keeping them safe, with its expansion to include behaviour monitoring. One interviewee explained that they used CPOMS to enter, store and share pupils' general confessions and concerns expressed in conversations with teachers at school, for example regarding transitions to secondary school, the pandemic (presumably only regarding children for whom there are active safeguarding issues, although this was unclear). The staff member suggested that it would then be useful for the secondary school to read on CPOMS and be able to know what the child had been saying and their wider concerns. Another interviewee mentioned how secondary school can be a useful "fresh start" for a child which can sometimes be negatively affected by well-meaning teachers sharing stories about their family. This can negatively affect some student as 'labels' are carried from one context to another and can affect future behaviour. Thus, it seems that a balance needs to be struck between ensuring children's safety is ensured in transfer to a new school and sharing too much information (for example about behaviour) that might affect teachers' perspectives.

### 3.2.1.1. Survey

The results of the survey data specifically linked with this project are reported below. The data identifies the respondents' views both before the project was implemented (indicating how effective they envisaged the project to be) and after the project had been carried out (to analyse the projects actual effectiveness).

Fig 3.2a: Respondents views of the CPOMS in principle:

Use of CPOMS is an effective way of supporting students' transfer to secondary school

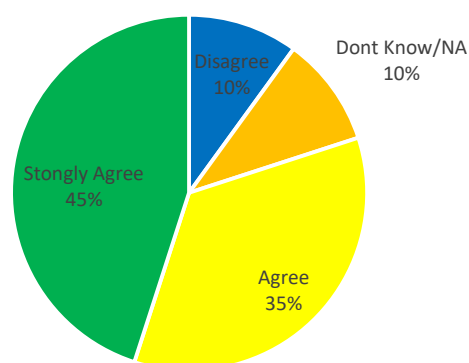
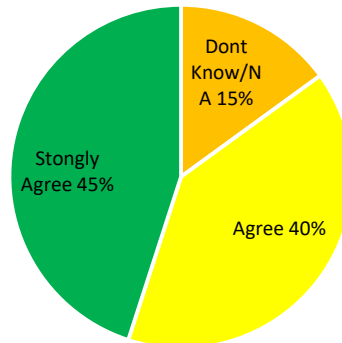


Fig 3.2b: Respondents views of The Bridging Project on implementation:

Use of CPOMS was an effective way of supporting students' transfer to secondary school



The survey findings indicate that both before and after the project was assessed, a large majority of participants rated this project as being an effective way of supporting pupils' transfer to secondary school with just twenty percent feeling unsure or disagreeing with its projected success. Upon examining the results post implementation, it can be seen that those who disagreed with its effectiveness prior to carrying it out in practice, changed their response in the post project analysis. No respondents disagreed that CPOMS was effective and just fifteen percent were unsure. Overall, this appears to be a successful project, despite potential Covid related challenges.

### 3.2.2. Pupil Perspectives

The pupils who participated in the focus groups were not aware that some schools have moved towards the common use of CPOMS to manage their personal information.

### 3.2.3. Summary evaluation

The summary below draws on the evaluation themes discussed above (see section 2.4 and Kirkman et al. 2021) and presents a summary evaluation of the CPOMS project, based on the available data. It is important to note that these are an estimation of impact based on the data available and the impact of engagement in the evaluation process and COVID 19 must be taken into account (see section 2.5).



Table 3.2a: Evaluation of CPOMS project impact

Focus	Impact in this area:
Student resilience and behaviour	Unlikely
Academic and behaviour understanding	Unlikely
Parent/carer engagement in transition processes	Unlikely
Value	Likely
Student attainment	Unlikely
Continuous professional development and support	Unlikely
System leadership support	Highly likely
Fixed term and permanent exclusion	Likely
Transfer and transition	Highly likely
Disadvantaged pupils	Highly likely
Building inclusive shared values and positive relationships	Likely
Multi-agency collaborative support	Likely
Clear shared and enacted policy	Unlikely
Local and school level support	Highly likely
Focused support at different levels	Highly likely
Organisational/administrative support	Highly likely
Psychosocial support	Unlikely
Student voice/involvement in decision making	Unlikely

The strength of the evidence of impact in the above areas is: **Moderate**.

**Summary:** Based on the evidence provided by the teachers, school leaders, children and literature, the CPOMS project is highly likely to have impacted positively on areas such as transfer, organisational support, support at a whole school and local level with particular support for disadvantaged pupils. There is moderate evidence of its impact on its target areas of organisation, transfer and communication between schools and supporting those more vulnerable.

### 3.3. Project focus – Common Transfer Document

The Common Transfer Document project was designed to coordinate NOA schools' efforts to capture and share key student information prior to transfer between schools. It was provided in the form of an excel template with an accompanying best practice document, which contains guidelines for good transition.

The Common Transfer Document template contain several of tabs to be completed of reach child relating to:

- a. The secondary school the child will go to, their name and surname
- b. Details of the teacher completing the form (name, e-mail address, school)
- c. The statement 'this child will settle in well at secondary school'. The areas/tables that are filled in are: academically, socially with peers, socially with teachers, to new routine.
- d. SATS in Maths, Reading and Writing
- e. Information about SEND, EAL, CLA, Safeguarding, Young Carer
- f. Any concerns about the child
- g. Any information that might assist their class teacher not listed elsewhere. Please include all positives!
- h. Attendance percent this academic year, pupil premium, Free School Meals, Concern for the Safer School Team.

This information allowed teachers to pass on down a significant amount of information to the new school. It is free to use and can be shared securely through cloud-based storage systems.

All NOA schools were sent the document and instructions on how to use the software with the intention that all NOA high schools would have used the new document with their feeder primary schools for the cohort intake 2020-2021'. The evaluation found evidence that many schools used it successfully and intended to use it again the following year.

#### 3.3.1. Staff Perspectives

Representatives of both secondary and primary schools mentioned the Common Transfer Document, with at least three having been involved in its design. Staff reported that the spreadsheet format enabled schools to log both quantitative and qualitative data about pupils, including achievement data, attendance data, information on friends, hobbies/interests, SEN, behaviour, mental health support needs, safeguarding concerns, medical history and so forth. The template also contains a comments section where primary school teachers can add extra information about each child. Reportedly, all NOA primary schools agreed to use it. In these cases, information was transferred to the NOA secondary schools in a streamlined fashion. This impacted positively on Primary school teacher workload. At the same time, staff noted that secondary schools who chose not to use the Common Transfer Document required them to complete additional paperwork.

Some interviewees felt this was disappointing and an inefficient use of primary staff time: *"it's wasteful!"*

Before the Common Transfer Document project, secondary schools were receiving different information from feeder primary schools in a variety of formats. Coordinating information from hundreds of children from *"sometimes up to 14 schools"* can be time consuming, said one interviewee, or *"an absolute nightmare"* as another put it. Staff views about the Common Transfer Document were generally positive with some highlighting areas for improvement.

Interviewees reported that *"it provides consistency"* and creates a *"common understanding"* of what information is needed; *"[it] helps build a picture of the child...it is more simple and slicker...quite quick to fill in"*; *"it just saves loads and loads of time...basically it gave me a place to start"*. One staff member reported that *"we use it as a sort of bible...a baseline reference to go back to"*. Another reported that in their school *"everybody seems happy to use it"*.

Staff reported that some secondary schools use the Common Transfer Document to group pupils for setting and banding, for seeing what support needs should be put in place for certain children, and admission staff use it to place children in form groups. *"We use it extensively"*, said one interviewee. Another secondary school staff member reported that their school use the Common Transfer Document to help them to identify who may be vulnerable children and to prioritise them for extra support. Prior to the Common Transfer Document, secondary schools would *"just have to try to talk to teachers and ask if they felt anyone needed extra provision and of course this is quite ad hoc"*. One secondary school teacher acknowledged that they still have face-to-face meetings with feeder primary schools, but that the Common Transfer Document now provides a starting point and a quick way into the process of understanding their new pupils. A Primary school staff member reported that their school used the document as a starting point for a video meeting about the transfer process. As one staff member noted, it became particularly useful during the pandemic:

*"...because there were no SATs results for that year, so the information provided in the Common Transfer Document gave the new schools something to go on"*.

One secondary school staff member suggested that the comments section completed by teachers was particularly useful as it gave them a good idea of what pupils were like. Another teacher pointed out that a small write in box was beneficial, as they were forced to write in a succinct way. Alongside this, a different staff member said the Common Transfer Document was good as it:

*"...eliminated more anecdotal teacher judgements and provided a more rigorous assessment of pupils and their needs...it's more formal"*.

At the same time, they went on to comment:

*"Doing the face-to-face meetings, it can be quite easy to start drifting into...ales about the family, which there's no place for that in the common transfer document"*.

Another teacher felt that the document was useful as it was possible to hide data for security reasons, and only show the data necessary for each school. One teacher felt the SEND numbering system, which asks teachers to rank pupil need, was particularly useful. A secondary school teacher felt that it was efficient because it helped to highlight safeguarding work that was needed much earlier than would normally be the case.

A challenge reported as arising during the pandemic was that some primary schools were not ready to submit their information when the secondary schools needed it. There was less enthusiasm about the document design amongst interviewees who had not been involved in designing the document, with one teacher suggesting that the document did not have much impact. At the same time, they acknowledged that the face-to-face meetings between primary and secondary schools, which the document enabled, *were* impactful.

One teacher felt that the document needed some refining:

"I'm much happier that it's on one format, because it's much better than being emailed eight different things and trying to work out what goes on what. But I think it needs a lot of refining. I think the idea behind it is fabulous, I really do. But it needs some refining."

Some staff noted difficulties with formatting, font sizes, drop-down menu design, *"and so forth"*. 'A more sophisticated database or at least *"front-end"* would make things easier for data entry'. One teacher suggested that a big *"centralised database"* would be a positive idea although there would be data protection challenges to be overcome in relation to this idea. Another suggestion regarding the form itself would be adding a column:

"I think a column that just says, 'do you need a meeting about this child' would be quite useful".

Teachers also felt that some communication would be helpful from the receiving school to let the primary schools know what the document is being used for, what level of detail is appreciated, who is the target audience, and which categories on the document are most useful. A primary school teacher reported: *"I'm left wondering, I wonder if people ever read these?"*. This teacher wondered if might be another piece of paperwork that did not achieve its purpose:

"Because actually if it is not working for them, and they're just looking at it and taking the grades off it, then what's the point in us filling out the rest of it?".

Some staff felt that the Common Transfer Document should not replace the face-to-face meetings 'as a spreadsheet was more anonymous'. One teacher stated that they preferred simply having a face-to-face meeting to discuss the pupils but admitted that 'if forms must be filled in, then one common form is certainly preferable'.

There was some indication that only schools in the NOA are part of the Common Transfer Document project, so if a secondary school has feeder schools from outside of the NOA, then they will receive other paperwork anyway. This issue may be a threat to the ongoing success of the initiative.

### 3.3.1.1. Survey

The results of the survey data specifically linked with this project are presented below. The data shown identifies the respondents' views both before the project was implemented (indicating how effective they envisaged the project to be) and after the project had been carried out (to analyse the projects actual effectiveness).

Fig 3.3a: Respondents views of the Common Transfer Document in principle:

Use of the Common Transfer Document is an effective way of supporting students' transfer to secondary school

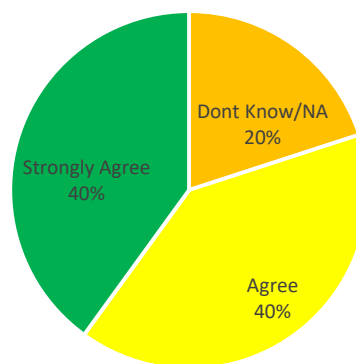
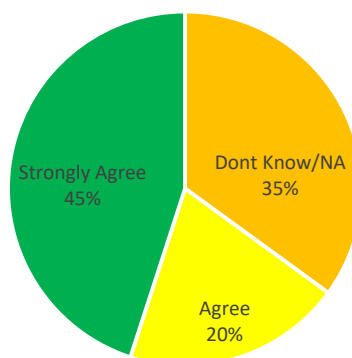


Fig 3.3b: Respondents views of the Common Transfer Document on implementation:

Use of the Common Transfer Document was an effective way of supporting students' transfer to secondary school



When looking at the survey responses regarding the Common Transfer Document project, a general agreement that the idea was a positive one can be seen at the beginning of this project (eighty percent) with no negative responses reported. Responses after implementation show an increase in 'don't know'.

Overall, this document was well received with the only comments and feedback from the survey indicating the need to modify the document for clarity between users. One user requested the document insert a column for medical needs as it was often found that users were imputing the wrong information in the wrong place and the need for further clarification was causing users to spend more time than necessary in transfer.

### 3.3.2. Pupil Perspectives

Pupils who participated in the focus groups were not aware that NOA schools have started to use a common transfer document to manage the transfer of their personal information from primary to secondary school.

### 3.3.3. Summary evaluation

The summary below draws on the evaluation themes discussed above (see section 2.4 and Kirkman et al. 2021) and presents a summary evaluation of the Common Transfer Document Project, based on the available data. It is important to note that these are an estimation of impact based on the data available and the impact of engagement in the evaluation process and COVID 19 must be taken into account (see section 2.5).

Table 3.3a: Evaluation of Common Transfer Document Project impact

Focus	Impact in this area:
Student resilience and behaviour	Unlikely
Academic and behaviour understanding	Unlikely
Parent/carer engagement in transition processes	Unlikely
Value	Likely
Student attainment	Unlikely
continuous professional development and support (CPD) for teachers	Unlikely
system leadership support	Highly likely
fixed term and permanent exclusion	Likely
transfer and transition	Highly likely
disadvantaged pupils	Highly likely
Building inclusive shared values and positive relationships	Likely
multi-agency collaborative support	Likely
clear shared and enacted policy	Unlikely
local and school level support	Highly likely
focused support at different levels: whole-school, group, individual	Highly likely
organisational/administrative support	Highly likely
Psychosocial support	Unlikely
student voice/involvement in decision making	Unlikely

The strength of the evidence of impact in the above areas is: **Moderate**.

**Summary:** Based on the evidence provided by the teachers, school leaders and literature, the Common Transfer Document is highly likely to have impacted positively on areas such as transfer, organisational support, support at a whole school and local level with particular support for disadvantaged pupils. There is moderate evidence of impact on its target areas of organisation, transfer and communication between schools and supporting those more vulnerable,

### 3.4. Project focus – Interschool visits

The NOA Interschool visits project involved staff members visiting paired schools to observe practice, build relationships, make notes, and design collaborative projects. The intention of these visits was to encourage communication and understanding so key staff could see what life was 'really like' in the secondary school for primary staff, or primary school for secondary staff. 11 primary schools sent staff to various secondary schools and staff from most secondary schools visited up to 8 primary schools. Some schools also regularly engage in additional visits outside the remit of the transitions project visits.

Both government initiatives and local authorities often promote Inter-school collaboration, and visits are part of that practice, with increased contact between schools helping make transitions easier (Atkinson et al., 2007). Communication between schools is strongly linked to successful transitions, because primary school staff members need to inform their secondary school colleagues about individual pupil needs, which is often in the form of a document that is shared between those professionals (UCL, 2021a). Since academic and behavioural engagement are important factors to transition (UCL, 2021a), it is a very important element of preparation and communication between schools.

#### 3.4.1. What staff say

Staff reported that this project took different formats. Primary school teachers went to spend the day at a secondary school to which their school was a feeder, and the secondary school sent teachers into a primary school also. Some teachers made a series of visits with "*learning walks*" around the school. They met with staff and pupils, had lunch together and observed classes. Staff release time was funded by the NOA. Staff feedback was generally positive: "It was a "really good example of an opportunity to collaborate", "*it was really useful*". Some staff felt strongly about the benefits of the project and said that it was "*exciting*" to look at other schools.

As a result of Interschool Visits project, secondary teachers acknowledged a realization that year seven pupils are far more able than had previously realised.

Staff reported finding that they were underestimating pupils' capabilities and "*downscaling them*", with one commenting that year seven pupils had a greater vocabulary than they expected. The staff member went on to suggest, "*we are almost wasting a year*".

Another teacher found conversations about curriculum across the two schools to be very useful. Indeed, this teacher also stated that the Bridging Project arose out of these Interschool visits.



One respondent asserted:

*It was a really positive learning experience and for me it was one of the most useful projects just in terms of learning about each other; learning about the pupils that we are getting" (A1 CNS).*

A primary school staff member who had been involved in the Interschool visits reported that: *"It was really useful to them to know where, what sort of learning environment the children were going in to."*

It was also reported that while the secondary school teachers were underestimating the children's academic capacity, primary school teachers were also not preparing pupils to move classrooms every period. One teacher gave the example of differences in expectations or understandings: for example, children at primary school being encouraged to get out of their seats to get what they needed, while at secondary school they are reprimanded for getting out of their seats in class. Staff suggested that primary school teachers enjoyed re-uniting with children they had previously taught, which arguably helps to further build the bridge between the schools. On a pragmatic level, one teacher pointed out the experience also helped them in terms of attempting to improve their OFSTED rating, as they felt it enabled them to improve pupil progress.

Constraints on teachers' time at a busy time of year was the only drawback pointed out, and the logistics of trying to organise teachers' time out of class. The benefits seemed to vastly outweigh these issues. One respondent asserted that they felt one limitation was that the project was not evaluated formally. She pointed out that *"if we actually had really powerful evidence that says these children have massively benefited from this, that would be really powerful I think."* In relation to impact, one teacher proclaimed that the Interschool visit project *"was a major success"*, it was *"hugely impactful"* and *"possibly the most successful project of the whole thing"* and felt that *"everybody should be made to do it"*. Another agreed that it made a much *"smoother bridge"*. It was the case that no specific project evaluation was undertaken at the time of the project, However, formal feedback was garnered from subsequent staff meetings, and one teacher felt that the impact was borne out in the activities that followed. This school reported that English, Maths and Science teachers in year seven have actually changed some of their practice based on what they have learnt from these exchanges.

Another teacher reported that they were seeing an impact in terms of increased awareness of teachers while yet another stated that the bridge that has been built between the *"sectors"* has been beneficial:

*"The positive outcome has been the dialogue and the relationships, for sure, between the different sectors. I know the names of the year six teachers now that teach the kids that come up. I meet them, I talk to them, I've got a relationship with them. That, in itself, is really important."*

One teacher professed *"I don't know how much impact it's had directly on the children"* but did recognise that if year six teachers are able to say to their children, *"we have been to secondary school, and this is what it is going to be like"* then they can speculate this will reduce the fear for children. Another primary school teacher

had first-hand experience of this impact on children: *"I can't give you numerical data [but] I could give you anecdotal data about the kids in my class that were just really excited that I knew Mr [A] and that we'd had a conversation"*.

This teacher was able to give a tangible example:

"There's one boy in my class who's very dyslexic and clearly terrified of secondary school English, because the primary school curriculum in writing is very strict, terrible if you're dyslexic, it's awful. So he came up really lacking confidence, but because he knew the words, he knew some of the vocabulary, he knew some of the techniques that his teacher had taught him, he really sat up taller, he was able to articulate his ideas, he has his hand up, and I think that's a student who would have fallen down the transition crevasse if you like".

She suggested that children were *"more confident and more excited about their learning"* and they *"felt more supported emotionally"* as a result of this exchange. Another primary teacher said that the parents also feel a lot happier knowing that she has met with the secondary school their child will attend.

#### 3.4.1.1. Survey

The results of the survey data specifically linked with this project are presented below. The data shown identifies the respondents' views both before the project was implemented (indicating how effective they envisaged the project to be) and after the project had been carried out (to analyse the projects actual effectiveness).

Fig 3.4a: Respondents views of the Interschool Visits in principle:

Interschool visits is an effective way of supporting students' transfer to secondary school

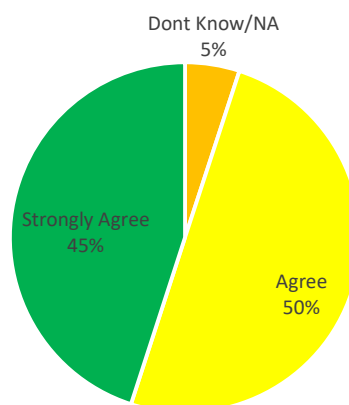
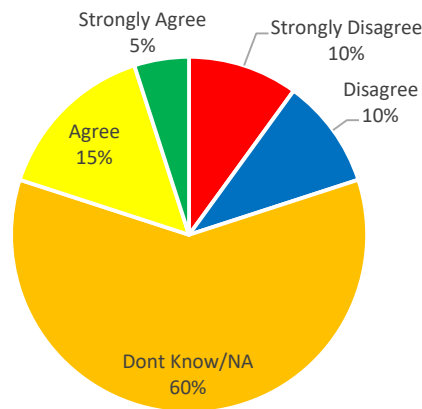


Fig 3.4b: Respondents views of the Interschool Visits on implementation:

### Interschool visits were an effective way of supporting students' transfer to secondary school



There was a vast difference in staff perspectives on this project before and after its implementation. Beforehand, nearly all respondents were positive about its potential effectiveness at ninety-five percent, with just a small five percent of people being unsure. However, when we compare this to the results from practice, the majority were subsequently unsure (don't know) about its effectiveness with an equal split between positive/negative responses for the remainder. This could be in response to COVID and the practicality of carrying this project out as intended. Comments from the survey indicate that the pandemic affected the way in which face-to-face transitions activities were implemented.

#### 3.4.2. What pupils say

The pupils who participated in the focus groups did not comment on the interschool visits project. This may have been because they were not aware of the project, because they were aware but had no views or for other reasons. Responses to this may have been affected by COVID and the fact that any visits may have gone unnoticed due to other disruption.

#### 3.4.3. Summary evaluation

The summary below draws on the evaluation themes discussed above (see section 2.4 and Kirkman et al. 2021) and presents a summary evaluation of the Interschool Visits Project, based on the available data. It is important to note that these are an estimation of impact based on the data available and the impact of engagement in the evaluation process and COVID 19 must be taken into account (see section 2.5).

Table 3.4a: Evaluation of Interschool Visits Project impact

Focus	Impact in this area:
Student resilience and behaviour	Likely
Academic and behaviour understanding	Highly likely
Parent/carer engagement in transition processes	Unlikely
Value	Unlikely
Student attainment	Unlikely
continuous professional development and support (CPD) for teachers	Likely
system leadership support	Likely
fixed term and permanent exclusion	Unlikely
transfer and transition	Highly likely
disadvantaged pupils	Likely
Building inclusive shared values and positive relationships	Unlikely
multi-agency collaborative support	Unlikely
clear shared and enacted policy	Unlikely
local and school level support	Likely
focused support at different levels: whole-school, group, individual	Unlikely
organisational/administrative support	Likely
Psychosocial support	Likely
student voice/involvement in decision making	Unlikely

The strength of the evidence of impact in the above areas is: **Weak**.

**Summary:** Based on the evidence provided by the teachers, school leaders and literature, the Interschool visits project is highly likely to have impacted positively on areas such as transfer and academic understanding. There is weak evidence of its impact on its target areas of communication and contact between schools and school staff.

### 3.5. Project focus – School Information Booklets

Transition Spring 2020 (Good Practice Guide): A guide to current practice in Norwich Opportunity Area schools' is a booklet designed to share good practice between schools, with the intention of encouraging school visits and exchange of ideas. There are a lot of good practice examples around the NOA area, but these are not always shared; this is where the booklet becomes very useful. 17 out of the 40 schools asked successfully contributed to this booklet. The booklet was intended as a 'good practice' document but became a 'snapshot of current practice', which is still very useful. The turnaround for the booklet was very tight, so it was rushed.

A Parent's Guide Transition booklet was also used during summer 2020 since transitions/school visits/open evenings could not be scheduled due to Covid. This drew on information from the School Transition & Adjustment Research Study (STARS) (UCL, 2021a).

A template for a year seven Welcome Booklet was also produced (year seven Transition Booklets) in lieu of interschool visits being cancelled because of COVID. These were repeated in summer 2021 when schools could not hold visits once more and includes a pupil evaluation form at the end of the booklet. Norfolk County Council has bank of additional resources for transition to secondary school, such as transition booklets.

#### 3.5.1. What staff say

Six staff interviews mentioned the information booklets. Each mention referred to a 'pupil welcome booklet', with some additional mention of the 'parent booklet'. The pupil booklet provided a general template with which each school could populate their own information, which included, for example, pictures of school staff; the timing of the school day; dining arrangements; library information; a map; information about school uniform; what equipment they need; and for some, even a section where year seven pupils described life in the school. One school talked about making it "*student friendly*" or "*child friendly*" adopting a cartoon style. Comments were, on the whole, positive. It was appreciated that the template standardises the practice across all schools, so no school has a "*better-looking*" brochure than the next, and it adopts a standard and format that repeats year on year, doing away with the problem of varying quality year to year. It was recognized that it is a "*quality looking product*" produced at no cost to the school. Some staff commented on being "*really happy*" with the "*professional*" look.

Staff pointed out that the pupil information booklet has taken on a new importance since the pandemic as there have been little, if any, face-to-face meetings. Two interviewees from different schools suggested that their schools already produced a booklet for prospective pupils. One interviewee said:

*"I'm not sure of the value of it", "we give out so much information already", "it just felt like we were kind of reproducing something that we already do".*

They highlighted the booklets as only a “*small part of a lengthy process*”. Other staff were more positive. One interviewee recognized that “*the more familiar we can make the place and the more at ease we can put them at [prospective parents and pupils], the better really*”. Another reported that the booklets were “*very much appreciated*” by the prospective families, although another said there was “*very little feedback*” from parents. In terms of future recommendations, one interviewee talked about producing a booklet next year aimed at parents, where parents can sit down with their children and read it *with* them. Another said that next time, the idea would also include QR codes which would link to further online videos about the school. Another future improvement suggested, was to make a more concerted effort to encourage parents to fill out the feedback form and to make the feedback online via a QR code, rather than paper feedback forms which are antiquated.

### 3.5.1.1. Survey

The results of the survey data specifically linked with this project are reported below. The data identifies the respondents' views both before the project was implemented (indicating how effective they envisaged the project to be) and after the project had been carried out (to analyse the projects actual effectiveness).

Fig 3.5a: Respondents views of The School Information Booklets in principle:

School information booklets is helpful for pupils when they start at the secondary school

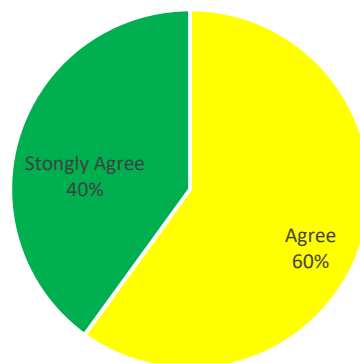
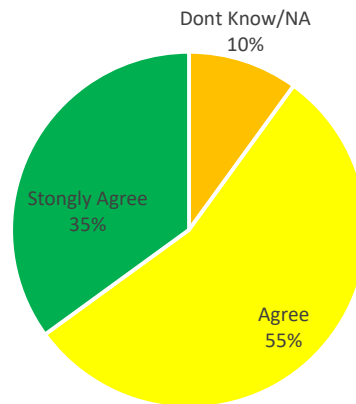


Fig 3.5b: Respondents views of The School Information Booklets on implementation:

### School information booklets were helpful for pupils when they start at the secondary school



From the survey responses, the information booklets appeared to be a successful project with all participants feeling positive about them before implementation and ninety percent agreeing to their effectiveness afterwards.

#### 3.5.2. What pupils say

Some pupils were aware of an information booklet about their new school, but thought it was aimed at their parents rather than them.

*"R1: Yeah, we got like, I think it was for our parents.*

*R2: It had a map of the school inside it and a lot of email addresses.*

*R3: And what house you were in.*

*R4: Yeah, and like the menu for the food.*

*R2: Well, most of it was for parents, but we got to read some of it, like what team we were in, the food and that." FG3.*

*Generally, pupils were vague about the information booklet, although there were some memories of reading something and then needing to go online for an activity.*

As an additional note, pupils reported that two secondary schools gave prospective pupils a *second* booklet, which was different from the NOA project information booklet:

*"It was really weird, there was a design your own uniform and what you're worried about and things like that, and you had to write it all down." (FG1)*

*"It was alright, wasn't it?" (FG1)*

*"It was booklet for teachers and other people to get to know us, like...what we did outside of school and different activities that we liked." (FG2).*

### 3.5.3. Summary evaluation

The summary below draws on the evaluation themes discussed above (see section 2.4 and Kirkman et al. 2021) and presents a summary evaluation of the School Information Booklets, based on the available data. It is important to note that these are an estimation of impact based on the data available and the impact of engagement in the evaluation process and COVID 19 must be taken into account (see section 2.5).

Table 3.5a: Evaluation of the School Information Booklets Project impact

Focus	Impact in this area:
Student resilience and behaviour	Highly likely
Academic and behaviour understanding	Likely
Parent/carer engagement in transition processes	Likely
Value	Likely
Student attainment	Unlikely
Continuous professional development and support (CPD) for teachers	Unlikely
System leadership support	Unlikely
Fixed term and permanent exclusion	Unlikely
Transfer and transition	Highly likely
Disadvantaged pupils	Highly likely
Building inclusive shared values and positive relationships	Unlikely
Multi-agency collaborative support	Unlikely
Clear shared and enacted policy	Unlikely
Local and school level support	Unlikely
Focused support at different levels: whole-school, group, individual	Unlikely
Organisational/administrative support	Unlikely
Psychosocial support	Likely
Student voice/involvement in decision making	Likely

The strength of the evidence of impact in the above areas is: **Weak**.

**Summary:** Based on the evidence provided by the teachers, school leaders, children and literature, the Information Booklets are highly likely to have impacted positively on areas such as transfer, student behaviour and support for disadvantaged pupils. There is weak evidence of its impact on its target areas of pupil support, transfer, and communication.



### 3.6. Project focus – Summer Schools

This is a common practice and is in line with the government initiative (DfE, 2013) which started in September 2011 (with the first schools starting their participation in 2012), was aimed at children on free school means (disadvantaged) and looked after pupils and provided targeted support in their primary to secondary school transition. The summer schools ran during the summer holidays, with the main aims being to prepare pupils socially and emotionally and to improve their learning engagement. Main activities involved team building, arts, and sports. Through these experiences, children become familiar with the school premises and staff, while staff members get to know more about their new pupils (including identifying additional needs).

Schools were able to design their programmes based on the needs their future year seven cohort had, and they could decide on the activities to be offered, how the participation days would be blocked. Non-disadvantaged pupils were also offered this opportunity, if eligible pupils turned down a place or if there was surplus funding; non-disadvantaged pupils made up 37 percent of the attendees.

#### 3.6.1. What staff say

Interviewees described a variety of approaches to summer schools. They target different pupils but usually last between three days and a week and take place in the summer holidays before children join their new secondary school. Three of the interviewed secondary schools ran summer school programmes before the NOA initiative. Another noted the importance of NOA in being able to deliver their programme. The aim was to *“get them used to school”* and *“get them familiar with routines”*. Some schools had a specific aim of supporting more vulnerable pupils in their transition.

One secondary school focused on English and Maths and worked alongside a mental health charity to deliver the project. Another ran a funded summer school which had a rewards system, and the first prize was a new bike. A third secondary school ran a three-day summer school in August focusing on children on pupil premium, or with SEN and mental health needs. Staff reported that they had *“always done it”* and have a good relationship with the feeder schools. As part of the admissions process, they also ask parents if they want their child to attend (so triangulating teachers' opinion with parents). This school also ends the summer school with a tea party for parents.

One school worked with the feeder primary schools to carefully target children who *“it would make a difference to”*. They also chose staff carefully so there would be a balance between 'strictness', and those who were *“good with lower ability groups”*. A further school chose to take children in smaller groups. Another school used the NOA funding to instigate a summer school, to which they invited the whole *“new”* year seven cohort to come to the school for the day (in groups of 30). They mainly used the funding to provide good food. The focus was on fun activities such as 'meeting the chickens, cooking, PE, as well as practical things such as orientation around the school'. One staff member, felt that the key

challenge is targeting and getting the right children who will benefit, rather than simply reproducing the challenge dynamics of everyday schooling:

*because what I don't want to do is baby sit confident kids for three days. Their parents think it would do them some good, because what I don't want is confident kids coming in and dominating the summer school and making our vulnerable kids even more nervous".*

They also felt they had to balance this need against the percentage of pupil premium pupils attending, because they perceived that the funding was for pupil premium pupils and 'there is an overlap, but they are not necessarily the same'.

One school reported that their summer school lacked some coherence because some children did not come every day due to other events running at the same time, or because of difficulties relating to their parents' employment arrangements.

One school that invited all prospective year seven pupils to attend their summer school reported that *"it was really successful"* and *"kids really engaged with it...they all went for it...they all got a lot out of it"*. They believed it to be a really successful way to *"build the community"* and consolidate them as a group.

A further staff member from a school who carefully targeted children for whom it would make a difference reported that it was *"really successful"*, and gave an example of the impact it had on one child:

*"The case study that for me is a young man. He spent the first two days crying nonstop. Just cried for two days and I'm not saying that glibly or as an exaggeration. It's actually what he did. We just could not stop him crying. And by the end of the week, he said, 'I love it here. I can't wait to come back.' He arrived in September and hit the ground running".*

This teacher concluded that *"it did exactly what we wanted to do"*. *"It got him ready for September when he came in"*. They also reported that expected issues did not transpire for several pupils who were on the 'targeted list' and indicated that this was evidence of the project's success. It is not clear whether this outcome can be attributed to the summer school but given the narrative, the project appears to have played a role in this pupil's successful transition. The teacher also gave an example of a boy who was predicted to have attendance issues and who refused to go to school. After coming to the summer school, and initially being 'prised' from his parents, he settled in well and had started school well. 'Not only is his attendance 100 percent, but he is also now on the school council' and *"doing really, really well"*. One staff member suggested that summer schools are a good mechanism to tackle school refusal issues with pupils who are anxious or nervous about coming to high school. She proposed that this initiative gives them the opportunity to make friends before they start, and it gives them *"the run of the school"* before the other older children arrive, and it provides them with a sense of ownership.

One teacher reported that a 'tea party for parents' was particularly useful to *"get parents onside"*, because 'part of the issue for their school' is that parents often had a negative experience of school. They suggested that when children start to refuse to go to school, it is difficult for these parents to force them, and the tea party aims to show the parents that the school is *"nice"* and *"caring"*. As a result, parents feel

more comfortable and confident to encourage their children to attend. This teacher proposed evidence of the impact of summer schools:

*"[the fact that] there isn't a single pupil who attended the summer school who has become a school refuser or has been taken off roll to be home educated"*

When compared with the previous year when the school 'lost two pupils this way, who had been invited to the summer school but didn't attend' she concluded: "

*"Since 2016 [...] when we started doing summer school, no student has ever been taken off roll to be home-schooled, if they attended summer school."*

Some staff suggested that studying summer school attendance and subsequent attendance data at school would be a useful evaluation. Staff also proposed that summer schools could last longer and include different pupils on different days to increase the scale in a manageable way. They felt that pupils could also be grouped according to their interests 'so they make friends'.

### 3.6.1.1. Survey

The results of the survey data specifically linked with this project are presented below. The data shown identifies the respondents' views both before the project was implemented (indicating how effective they envisaged the project to be) and after the project had been carried out (to analyse the projects actual effectiveness).

Fig 3.6a: Respondents views of Summer Schools in principle:

Summer Schools is a good way of supporting pupils who might struggle in secondary school

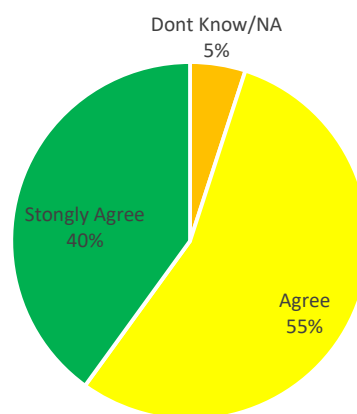
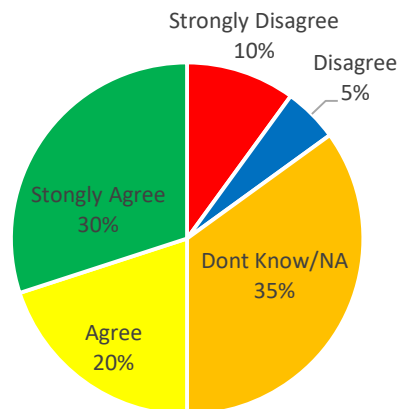


Fig 3.6b: Respondents views of Summer Schools on implementation:

### Summer Schools were a good way of supporting pupils who might struggle in secondary school



The summer school programme was reviewed very positively before implementation with nearly all participants being in agreement with its potential effectiveness. Whilst half (fifty percent) were still positive when reassessing the effectiveness, the remaining half were unsure with some negative responses. This could be due to COVID restrictions that were in place at the time of carrying out the project. This notion was supported by some comments on the survey regarding a reduction in face-to-face meetings. There was also the request that the provision for summer school was increased to enable more children to access it. One participant commented on how well those pupils who participated 'flourished' because of it.

#### 3.6.2. What pupils say

The summer school project was the intervention that most respondents at the focus group wanted to talk about. Summer schools varied in length and context, with one group of pupils attending for the two weeks and other pupils attending for just 'a few days'. The content included in the summer school included sample lessons (Art, PE, English and Maths were the lessons cited by the young people) and this was valued because it enabled them to meet teachers and other pupils, and begin to understand the variety of lessons they would be undertaking at secondary school:

"R: Yeah, it was good... going to see what high school I was going to go to before I properly went.

Int: Do you mean like see round the building and things like that?

R: Yeah, and like teachers and what's going to happen in certain lessons and stuff like that, what I was going to do." (FG2).

"It was good because there's usually quite a lot of stress on your first day, and summer school was really a chance to meet like teachers and pupils and stuff like that." (FG2)

Having provided sample lessons in the mornings, one school offered team building exercises in the afternoons, which were very popular.

R1 "Well, the teachers hid sticks around the school with letters on them and we had to find them, and they spelled out a word."

R2 "And we had to build a paper tower without it falling" (FG3).

In one instance, young people had been given a tour of the school by sixth form pupils. Pupils who had attended the summer school found it helpful and thought that those who had not attended had found the transition more difficult as a result; this was confirmed by one focus group member who had not attended the summer school and thought she had missed out. In two cases, the pupils had made friendships at summer school which they had maintained throughout year seven. The young people were unanimous in declaring summer school a helpful activity and were able to identify benefits, including knowing what to expect in terms of lessons, pupils, staff – and food!

### 3.6.3. Summary evaluation

The summary below draws on the evaluation themes discussed above (see section 2.4 and Kirkman et al. 2021) and presents a summary evaluation of the Summer Schools, based on the available data. It is important to note that these are an estimation of impact based on the data available and the impact of engagement in the evaluation process and COVID 19 must be taken into account (see section 2.5).

Table 3.6a: Evaluation of Summer Schools Project impact

Focus	Impact in this area:
Student resilience and behaviour	Highly likely
Academic and behaviour understanding	Highly likely
Parent/carer engagement in transition processes	Unlikely
Value	Highly likely
Student attainment	Unlikely
continuous professional development and support (CPD) for teachers	Highly likely
system leadership support	Unlikely
fixed term and permanent exclusion	Highly likely
transfer and transition	Highly likely
disadvantaged pupils	Highly likely
Building inclusive shared values and positive relationships	Likely
multi-agency collaborative support	Likely
clear shared and enacted policy	Unlikely
local and school level support	Unlikely
focused support at different levels: whole-school, group, individual	Highly likely
organisational/administrative support	Likely
Psychosocial support	Highly likely
student voice/involvement in decision making	Unlikely

The strength of the evidence of impact in the above areas is: **Strong**.

**Summary:** Based on the evidence provided by the teachers, school leaders, children and literature, Summer Schools are highly likely to have impacted positively on multiple areas such as transfer, student resilience, value, and multi-level. focused support. There is strong evidence of its impact on its target areas of transfer, team building, communication between schools and supporting those more vulnerable.

### 3.7. Project focus – STAR Survey

The team behind the STARS programme (Rice et al.) define the primary transition to secondary school as successful when: 'A successful transition involved functioning well in two areas: 1) being academically and behaviourally involved in school and 2) feeling a sense of belonging to school' (UCL, 2021a) which were measured by primary and secondary school teachers, using a custom scale developed by the researchers. These concerns tend to get better once the transition has happened. Interestingly, they found that children's self-control is associated with both positive classroom behaviour, academic attainment, and also positive health outcomes (this trait is also positively linked to parental warmth with long term effects). High level of parental concerns affected how children settled academically to their new schools. Parents need to be sensitive when sharing their own concerns. Friendship stability was important to the children undergoing transitions and it can have an impact in academic attainment, conduct and prosocial behaviours. The aim of this project was to provide baseline data that would inform project development, and which would also inform evaluations.

#### 3.7.1. What staff say

From staff interviews it was clear that schools adopted a variety of approaches to the use of the STAR survey. Several schools shared the findings of the STARS survey via PowerPoint presentations, and one included it in parents' leaflets. One junior school held a parents evening where they shared the findings of the STARS survey with parents. During the meeting they got the parents and pupils to fill in the survey and compare results with the national picture, revealing that their concerns were similar to others' and that the evidence shows these concerns largely dissipate as time goes on. This appeared to put parents at ease a little, "*it had that reassurance aspect*", as one interviewee put it. It provided a framework to address parents' concerns, "*the STARS survey really helped with kind of just, it gave us something to talk about really*". One staff member reported that they also used the STARS survey in PSHE as a resource to talk about anxieties, whilst also to open up a discussion about what they were looking forward to about secondary school.

Staff suggested that "*it's a good tool to use*" and "*the parents I hope were quite happy with it*". However, another asserted "*it's not something that is a major thing that we've done*". One interviewee reported that the benefits were "*normalizing anxiety*", *providing "reassurance" to parents that their fears were typical, and they would dissipate with time*". For example.

*"One parent had said particularly that actually she wasn't that worried anymore, having looked at all of the material and taking part in things, then it had really alleviated her concerns [...] so that was good. And just sort of speaking to other parents, I know they found the materials useful".*

### 3.7.1.1. Survey

The results of the survey data specifically linked with this project are presented below. The data shown identifies the respondents' views both before the project was implemented (indicating how effective they envisaged the project to be) and after the project had been carried out (to analyse the projects actual effectiveness).

Fig 3.7a: Respondents views of The STAR survey in principle:

Using the STAR survey is an effective way of supporting students' transfer to secondary school

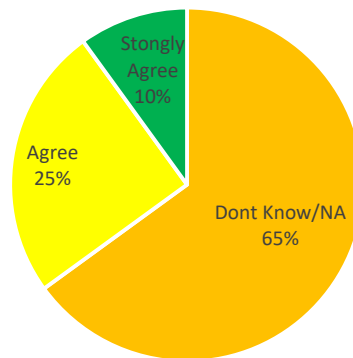
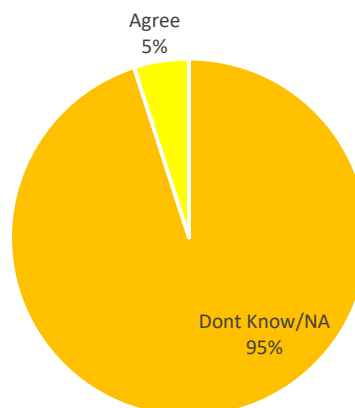


Fig 3.7b: Respondents views of the STAR Survey on implementation:

Using the STAR survey was an effective way of supporting students' transfer to secondary school



In data examining perspectives both before and after this project, participants shared a sense of not knowing whether this project was/is effective in supporting pupils' transfer to secondary school. At the beginning of the programme there was



a greater sense of positivity towards the programmes potential. However, this diminished to just five percent afterwards. At the same time, survey respondents were generally from secondary schools (with primary schools choosing not to engage with this form of data collection). Thus, the survey may reflect a weaker understanding at secondary level of the usefulness of the STAR survey prior to year seven. COVID and its associated challenges must also be considered here as the pupils' experiences of school will have been altered.

### 3.7.2. What pupils say

Pupils who participated in the focus groups did not discuss any factors related to the use of the STAR survey. This may have been because they were from schools who did not participate or because they did not recognize the process by this name.

### 3.7.3. Summary evaluation

The summary below draws on the evaluation themes discussed above (see section 2.4 and Kirkman et al. 2021) and presents a summary evaluation of the STAR Survey, based on the available data. It is important to note that these are an estimation of impact based on the data available and the impact of engagement in the evaluation process and COVID 19 must be taken into account (see section 2.5).

Table 3.7a: Evaluation of STAR Survey Project impact

<b>Focus</b>	<b>Impact in this area:</b>
Student resilience and behaviour	Highly likely
Academic and behaviour understanding	Highly likely
Parent/carer engagement in transition processes	Likely
Value	Likely
Student attainment	Unlikely
Continuous professional development and support (CPD) for teachers	Unlikely
System leadership support	Likely
Fixed term and permanent exclusion	Likely
Transfer and transition	Highly likely
Disadvantaged pupils	Unlikely
Building inclusive shared values and positive relationships	Likely
Multi-agency collaborative support	Unlikely
Clear shared and enacted policy	Unlikely
Local and school level support	Unlikely
Focused support at different levels: whole-school, group, individual	Unlikely
Organisational/administrative support	Highly likely
Psychosocial support	Likely
Student voice/involvement in decision making	Likely

The strength of the evidence of impact in the above areas is: **Moderate**.

**Summary:** Based on the evidence provided by the teachers, school leaders, children and literature, the STAR Survey project is highly likely to have impacted positively on areas such as transfer, organisational support, student resilience and behaviour and academic understanding. There is moderate evidence of its impact on its target areas of fostering a sense of belonging and behaviour understanding.

### 3.8. Project focus – Peer Mentoring

After visiting all the high school on their transition days in summer 2019, it was observed that all the schools had some sort of buddy system or similar for their new year six visitors. Peer mentoring was a way to establish and embed this practice and give better and more thorough training and confidence to those buddies and to encourage schools to start to use peer mentoring more widely across other year groups and when the year six started at the school as the new year seven. This was run by Essex Community CIC early this year (2021) and has not yet finished. Training was intended to help older pupils to support younger pupils: initially year eight supporting year six/seven. This project has been expanded to include additional age groups and training moved online in response to COVID-19 restrictions.

#### 3.8.1. What staff say

Several participants spoke about the peer mentoring project. The peer mentoring programme is a 'legacy programme' – it is designed to be sustainable in order to continue in each school after its initiation. A toolkit is provided to help schools develop the programme. Staff spoke of pupils as “*young leaders*” where older children act as “*ambassadors*” and ‘buddy up’ with younger children to support them. However, this was suspended due to the COVID pandemic. Following the initial set of participants schools, further schools joined subsequent project work. Trainers tailored the programme to each school with some consistent core elements, such as legal aspects. It was originally aimed to be delivered face-to-face, but due to COVID restrictions the training was delivered online, with both the children and the teachers in the same session. A number of children were also trained to support the mentors as “*coaches*”.

One school's project got interrupted and delayed by a COVID outbreak. About ten year 8 pupils eventually completed the training online. A second school trained about 40 pupils. One school initially had recruitment challenges as only two pupils came forward at first. Following this, the school approached pupils who staff felt would make good mentors. Another secondary school also invited children to apply to be a mentor because they wanted children who were keen and proactive and received a healthy number of replies. This school had some unexpected applications from very quiet children, so they were pleased they did not select these children out.

The pandemic impacted many of the projects that relied on face-to-face interaction. While most projects, including peer mentoring, attempted to continue in an online form, staff found that school leaders were focused more on the challenge of delivering the curriculum. As pupils were perceived as being exhausted with online communication, extra activities were postponed. Nevertheless, some staff pointed out that it was precisely during the COVID pandemic, that children needed more support to build resilience: “*a huge percentage of young people during COVID lockdown and not going into school relied upon their peers*”. One staff member discussed how the “*bubble*” system, where pupils do not interact outside their form group, impacted on the project. However,

they felt that using virtual face-to-face mentoring seemed to work really well. They believed that the engagement was good despite the communications being online:

*"It was really good though because the pupils that participated were fully engaged. Bearing in mind it was very uncommon at that point for pupils to engage with professionals virtually, and yet it was quite easy for them to engage with their peers and their friends...family. I think they did well participation wise."*

Another challenge of the project was meeting the brief of the NOA in relation to school transitions. When the issue was explored by the project team, it was found that school exclusions were not connected with poor primary to secondary transitions as had reportedly been assumed in the early stages of setting up the opportunity area. A large set of life transitions and challenges which led to school exclusion were faced by pupils across all school age ranges. Consequently, as *"there is no evidence"* from the inquiries of the project team that poor transitions in year seven lead to school exclusion, they decided to offer mentoring across the full secondary age range (not just in year seven), using a cross-age approach.

Staff felt that the project brought confidence in knowing and understanding things like confidentiality, boundaries and knowing when to stop as in *"I actually cannot deal with this"*. They felt that it also gave pupils *"employability skills"*, that they could put into practice later. Staff felt it also gave pupils pride in representing their school and fostered a sense of belonging, *feeling positive about the school"*. One teacher was pleased that it gave pupils the chance to *"take a leadership role"*, particularly for those lower down the school who would not normally have leadership roles. A cross-age peer mentoring report has been produced with some findings.

Some staff felt the programme adapted well by organising online training. While this seems to have worked well for some schools, one teacher reflected:

*"I have to say it is not as successful as we hoped it would be. I think pupils are spending so long sitting in front of their computer talking to people on teams [they balk] at the idea of doing more. They're working on it. Also seems they're not very keen on saying 'I've got an issue with this' because they were quite insular. They were stuck at home."*

One staff member who engaged with the programme felt like *"it is asking quite a lot of pupils' in certain situations"*. Indeed, the project team found that as the project has progressed, they need a larger team of three or four people in order to support the mentor fully, who 'is only a child and may be dealing with quite complex mental health issues on the part of their mentee'. Another challenge, one teacher felt, was keeping the momentum going: 'if there is no need for a mentoring meeting [because the mentor is fine] then the role can fall by the wayside'. Another teacher agreed that during lockdown, when pupils were not going out or being active, they did not really have much to talk about. Indeed, this staff member felt that the mentors *"were struggling to see the value of it"*. They felt it would work much better once they were back in school and could work *"across bubble"* and they could hold group events where mentors could get together face-to-face and feel like a team.

A further challenge was felt to be the continuity of staff involvement. 'When staff leave, there needs to be a successor who has perhaps shadowed the programme'. Staff felt that the project lead does not need to be a full-time senior leader and might usefully be a part-time retired teacher, or a suitable parent.

### 3.8.1.1. Survey

The results of the survey data specifically linked with this project are presented below. The data shown identifies the respondents' views both before the project was implemented (indicating how effective they envisaged the project to be) and after the project had been carried out (to analyse the projects actual effectiveness).

Fig 3.8a: Respondents views of the Peer Mentoring project in principle:

#### Peer mentoring is useful for pupils in Y7

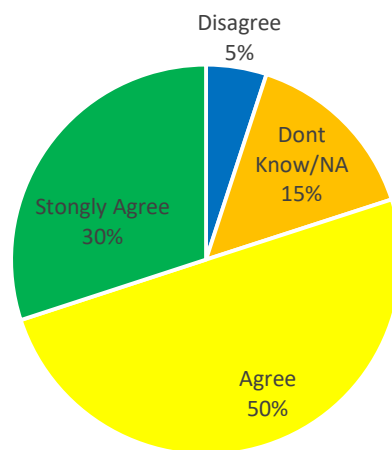
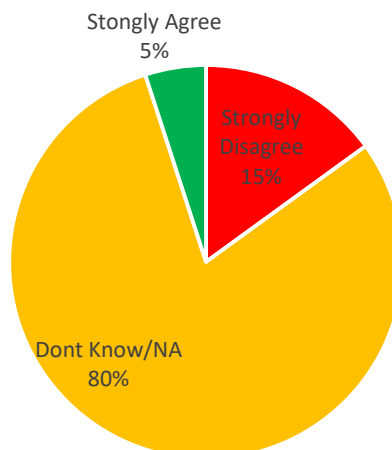


Fig 3.8b: Respondents views of the Peer Mentoring project on implementation:

#### Peer mentoring was useful for pupils in Y7



80 percent of participants initially believed that peer mentoring had the potential to be an effective programme. However, from the results of the evaluation of the project delivery, it can be seen that eighty percent were unsure of its effectiveness, with 15 percent actually disagreeing that it was effective. Combining these statistics with the comments from the survey could suggest that the training was seen to be ineffective and not suited specifically to the school's needs. However, it appears to be the case that this project suffered from COVID related challenges which are likely to have impacted on its effectiveness. Respondents also suggested that the addition of more handouts and worksheets on peer mentoring for year sevens could be provided to support this project.

### *3.8.2. What pupils say*

Pupils who participated in focus groups were not aware of any peer mentoring in their school although they acknowledged that COVID meant that they had to remain within their 'bubble' and not mix across year groups. Pupils were aware that they had missed out on this opportunity and were able to comment on it 'in theory'. In one focus group all the respondents were preparing to be mentors for the new year seven.

"Yeah, I think it would have like, if we had the chance to like, so have other like peer mentors helping us with like the where to go about the school and what to do and like policy and stuff." (FG1)

Another group were aware of the peer mentoring scheme happening in their school. Although none of them had volunteered to be peer mentors, they thought they would have found it helpful:

"I: Do you think it would have been nice to have somebody a year ahead of you that was like your person to ask?

R1: yeah.

R2: Yeah, it would have been." (FG3).

### *3.8.3. Summary evaluation*

The summary below draws on the evaluation themes discussed above (see section 2.4 and Kirkman et al. 2021) and presents a summary evaluation of the Peer Mentoring project, based on the available data. It is important to note that these are an estimation of impact based on the data available and the impact of engagement in the evaluation process and COVID 19 must be taken into account (see section 2.5).

Table 3.8a: Evaluation of Peer Mentoring Project impact

Focus	Impact in this area:
Student resilience and behaviour	Highly likely
Academic and behaviour understanding	Highly likely
Parent/carer engagement in transition processes	Unlikely
Value	Unlikely
Student attainment	Unlikely
continuous professional development and support (CPD) for teachers	Unlikely
system leadership support	Unlikely
fixed term and permanent exclusion	Highly likely
transfer and transition	Highly likely
disadvantaged pupils	Highly likely
Building inclusive shared values and positive relationships	Likely
multi-agency collaborative support	Unlikely
clear shared and enacted policy	Unlikely
local and school level support	Likely
focused support at different levels: whole-school, group, individual	Likely
organisational/administrative support	Unlikely
Psychosocial support	Highly likely
student voice/involvement in decision making	Highly likely

The strength of the evidence of impact in the above areas is: **Moderate**.

**Summary:** Based on the evidence provided by the teachers, school leaders, children and literature, the Peer Mentoring project is highly likely to have positively impacted on areas such as psychosocial support, student voice and student behaviour. There is moderate evidence of its impact on its target areas of supporting those more vulnerable and building resilience.

### 3.9. Project focus – Parent Information Evenings

This Parents evening (admissions) project was delivered in September 2019 in a NOA community centre and was a drop in event which sought to encourage year six parents to look at multiple schools when applying for high schools. 5 of the NOA high schools were present at the event. The aim was to help prevent oversubscriptions to popular schools and to help raise the profile of under subscribed schools. The Council admissions team were present to explain the process involved. A guide was produced to support parents. The open evening was well attended by parents. Some primary schools and secondary schools also run their own information evenings which provide parents with key updates on transfer to year seven. Several use data from the STAR survey (above) to inform these evenings. The intention was for the STAR survey to be sent out prior to the evening so the primary could gauge the groups biggest concerns and then address them in the meeting. The success of their event would then be measured in the survey being sent out again to compare results. Resources the school could use for this event are available on the NOA website.

#### 3.9.1. What staff say

Several staff members commented on parent information evenings, and a representative from a secondary school suggested that they already offered parent evenings to prospective pupils. Respondents had mixed views on the NOA parents evenings. One primary school teacher felt that the NOA parents evening was a good idea, particularly in the light that many parents simply send their child to the school they themselves went to:

"The idea of the [NOA] parents' information evening I think is a really good one. I think to kind of, to open their minds really, open the parents' minds and get them kind of thinking, 'actually, which school will suit my child best?' rather than, 'I'm just going to send them to that one.'".

They also felt that it would be beneficial for primary school teachers to go to these events to learn more about the secondary schools and better advise their parents.

However, a secondary school staff member was keen to point out that they have a very extensive transitions process already in place, outside of the NOA work. They claimed that the NOA parent evening was not particularly impactful because it was held in a different part of the city so parents at primary schools in their catchments area did not, or could not, attend. It is possible that assumptions behind a Norwich-wide parent information evening over-estimated the amount of choice that parents actually have as to which school their children go to. One school reported that they have their own well-attended parents evening held at their own school.

Another teacher spoke about a parents evening held at their school every year. They felt that *"the benefits are that parents actually see it"*; they get a feeling for the building and the facilities. 'Especially if parents had been to that school themselves, it helps them to see it has been updated and improved'.



Staff felt that the challenge parent information evenings is “*getting them through the door*” The suggestion made was that gradually soliciting parents’ involvement through the year – rather than just at the end – is a potential area for improvement. Another respondent asserted a similar sentiment:

“Sometimes the parents that you really need to come to things are not the ones who come. So that parents who, particularly parents who have negative experiences of school themselves and then you know they’re most likely to be the ones that pass that on to their children but they’re not the ones who are kind of comfortable coming along to things like that”.

Staff agreed that a slow and steady, “*drip drip*”, communication process might help to foster parental engagement with the transitions process.

### 3.9.1.1. Survey

The results of the survey data specifically linked with this project are presented below. The data shown identifies the respondents’ views both before the project was implemented (indicating how effective they envisaged the project to be) and after the project had been carried out (to analyse the projects actual effectiveness).

Fig 3.9a: Respondents views of the Parent Information Evenings in principle:

Parent information evenings about pupil’s transition to secondary school is effective in supporting pupils during their transition to Y7

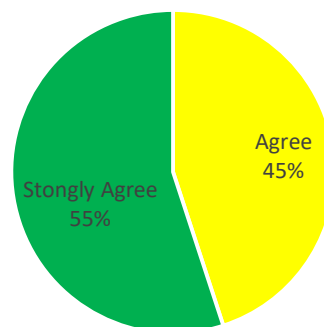
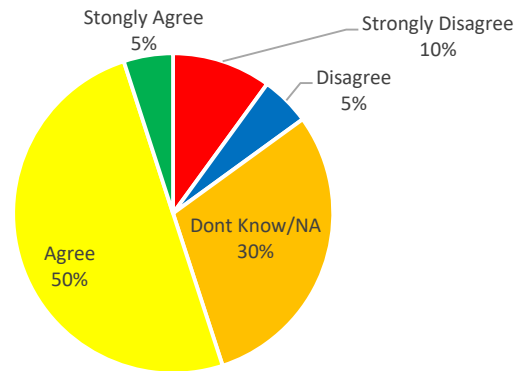


Fig 3.9b: Respondents views of the Parent Information Evenings on implementation:

Parent information evenings about pupil's transition to secondary school were effective in supporting pupils during their transition to Y7



This project was rare in receiving a one-hundred percent positive projections prior to starting. All of the participants believed this to be an effective project. The evaluation of the project remained positive, with the majority still viewing the project as effective (fifty-five percent). However, a large increase staff who were unsure of its effectiveness suggests that as with some of the other projects that involved in-person interactions, COVID impacted on the success of this project.

### 3.9.2. What pupils say

Pupils were confused between 'open days' and 'parent's evenings'. One group of pupils were unaware of a parent's evening and did not think there had been one. Other pupils had visited their new school more than once, firstly for an open day/evening and then to collect uniforms.

"Yeah, I went to the school two times before I actually attended. The first time was like the open meeting which you had where they give you a tour and they kind of tell you what the school is about. There was a second time, I think it was a week before we started, where they give you a tour again and tell you about social distancing." (FG1)

"Yeah, it was pretty decent. They had a meeting at the end of it I think where you asked questions in the main group, and I think Mr XX had like a speech and everything." FG1)

All of these visits had added to young people's confidence because, as with the summer schools, they had met teachers and became more familiar with the layout of the school; several pupils from different schools said that it made them less nervous. The fact that there had been interesting things to do also helped.

"Yeah, me and my sister and my mum and dad went, there was this science thing where you can make like this, you can change the colour of this liquid." (FG3)

"The first assembly was like a waste of time, but then you actually got to explore... like the music room we got to try things, and in the drama room you got to do stuff." (FG3).

These activities appeared to have added to the pupils' confidence and had encouraged them to perceive secondary school as 'interesting'.

### 3.9.1. Summary evaluation

The summary below draws on the evaluation themes discussed above (see section 2.4 and Kirkman et al. 2021) and presents a summary evaluation of the Parent Information Evenings, based on the available data. It is important to note that these are an estimation of impact based on the data available and the impact of engagement in the evaluation process and COVID 19 must be taken into account (see section 2.5).

Table 3.9a: Evaluation of Parent Information Evening Project impact

Focus	Impact in this area:
Student resilience and behaviour	Unlikely
Academic and behaviour understanding	Unlikely
Parent/carer engagement in transition processes	Highly likely
Value	Highly likely
Student attainment	Unlikely
continuous professional development and support (CPD) for teachers	Unlikely
system leadership support	Highly likely
fixed term and permanent exclusion	Highly likely
transfer and transition	Highly likely
disadvantaged pupils	Highly likely
Building inclusive shared values and positive relationships	Highly likely
multi-agency collaborative support	Unlikely
clear shared and enacted policy	Unlikely
local and school level support	Likely
focused support at different levels: whole-school, group, individual	Likely
organisational/administrative support	Unlikely
Psychosocial support	Likely
student voice/involvement in decision making	Unlikely

The strength of the evidence of impact in the above areas is: **Strong**.

**Summary:** Based on the evidence provided by the teachers, school leaders, children and literature, the Parent Information Evenings are highly likely to have impacted positively on areas such as leadership support, engaging parents and building inclusive shared values. There is strong evidence of its impact on its target areas of knowledge exchange between home and school.

### 3.10. Project focus – Emotional Literacy Support

71 ELSAs (emotional literacy support assistants) were trained in November 2020 by educational psychologists from CEPS. They are licensed training providers who run weekly training sessions. Support Assistants with ELSA training practice early intervention with pupils who have social, emotional, and mental health challenges or trauma experiences and who are waiting for assessment by children and adolescent mental health services assessment. There is a dedicated website on ELSA (<https://www.elsa-support.co.uk/>) with educational resources and training courses opportunities. Examples of things covered on the courses are social skills, emotions, bereavement, social stories and therapeutic stories, anger management, self-esteem, counselling skills such as solution focus and friendship.

Linked to this training is the 'thrive' whole school approach providing support 'to help children become more emotionally resilient' (Thrive, 2021). The 'Thrive approach', is popular with schools includes training, assessment and monitoring systems to which schools can subscribe. The Thrive approach is linked to improved classroom behaviour, academic results and fewer exclusions. School staff who have used the approach feel better equipped to support vulnerable children and to manage behaviour. It is a whole-school Nurture approach that aids social and emotional development and has multiple benefits, helping children who encountered difficult life events to 're-engage with life and learning' (DfE, 2018).

#### 3.10.1. What staff say

Staff from both primary and secondary schools spoke about their experience with ELSAs. Learning Support Assistants and Teaching Assistants have been trained in the ELSA approach. They then they identify pupils who they think will benefit from an intervention and organize one to one sessions with those children. The project is perceived as 'targeted provision' for specific pupils in need, and as "*one of many tools in the toolbox*". These sessions are:

"Based on social, emotional, and mental health concerns, so they'll have like an outcome that they need to try and achieve or attempt to achieve within those sessions. So, it might be to do with anger or stress, or you know something going on in the home and then those targets and resilience, for example, and then those targets, then feed into hopefully translating in the classroom".

One staff member said that they had two trained ELSAs and about 50 children in the programme coming from three feeder schools, each of whom had trained ELSAs. The targeted pupils in year seven would receive weekly interventions with the assigned ELSAs for half a term, and then the intervention would rotate to another pupils. This revealed a significant reduction in capacity to support pupils once they moved from primary to secondary school. Another staff member highlighted that ELSA support allows anyone on a safeguarding plan to access extra support that they might not otherwise have.

A teacher from a primary school discussed the whole school approach they adopted. The school has now *nine* trained ELSAs, who are all class-based. They pick up any issues or difficulties in class and then the pupils can receive one to one support that aims to identify mental health needs or safeguarding issues. This is then recorded on CPOMS (see above). The school also held assemblies to introduce the idea of ELSAs and set up an “*ELSA space*” that children can go to, and a “*worry monster*” post box into which children can put their worries.

The aim is that the ELSA work would link primary school and secondary school, providing some continuity of support for these targeted pupils:

“The purpose of training seminar feeder schools was that they would do ELSA in primary and then so that, when they came up, we could then have a link between, ELSA being done in primary and then ELSA being done in secondary”.

The hope is that by employing the same intervention across both primary and secondary schools provides a “*commonality of language*” so pupils with specific needs are “*dealt with*” in a “*similar fashion to the way they would have been in year six*”. The idea is to help the pupils to become more emotionally literate about how they are feeling, in order to reduce school exclusions. One teacher asserted:

“I’ve sort of really pushed that ELSA support ...like primary schools and high schools, it’s just amazing really because we know how good it is and seeing that, I think that’s hopefully going to be one of the big legacies of the opportunity area.”

When asked about children’s engagement, staff reported that it was ‘good’, One secondary staff member stated:

“They do engage, a lot of them in our school. I would say they are incredible at knowing when they need help, even if it’s you know not at the right time...Children love coming out to do the sessions, parents are really reassured that actually there is that quality support in school and staff know as well”.

In one school that had investigated childrens engagement with the ELSA work, their data suggested that 92 percent of children had improved in their emotional literacy. They also believed that the intervention helped to improve their pupils attendance although this data may have been disrupted by the COVID pandemic restrictions. Staff reported that children were positive towards their ELSA sessions with some even being “*excited*” to attend:

“I think they feel quite valued and reassured by it and then for all of the children, knowing that there is that kind of safety net if they need it”.

One secondary school staff member reported that “*it’s amazing. Feedback is positive*”. However, secondary schools staff also admitted that they had no tangible data on the success of the project, partly because of COVID-related delays to the programme. “*I have to hold [my] hands up and say I don’t know how successful it’s been*”. Another teacher reported that the ELSA programme has actually been a “*real lifeline*” for some children during the pandemic, as they have delivered phone support in lockdown.

Some felt that a layer of more qualified trained staff would be helpful, who could support ELSAs who might encounter more serious issues that they are not equipped to deal with. Although this would normally be provided by Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS), significant delays for pupils needing to access this service meant that some pose high risks in the interim. Staff reported a gap between ELSAs and, mental health practitioners at CAMHS, which could usefully be filled by an intermediary. Staff also reported that taking children out of class for the sessions, can lead to a longer-term issue. Building “*therapeutic time*” into pupils’ timetables might help to alleviate this.

### 3.10.1.1. Survey

The results of the survey data specifically linked with this project are presented below. The data shown identifies the respondents’ views both before the project was implemented (indicating how effective they envisaged the project to be) and after the project had been carried out (to analyse the projects actual effectiveness).

Fig 3.10a: Respondents views of Emotional Literacy Support project in principle:

Emotional literacy support assistants is an effective way of supporting pupils who struggle in Y7

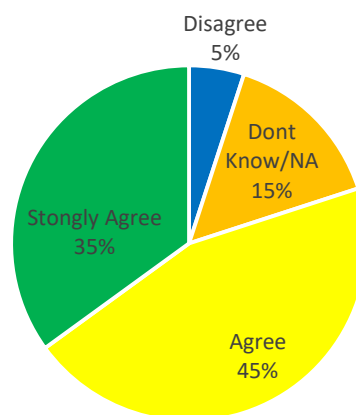
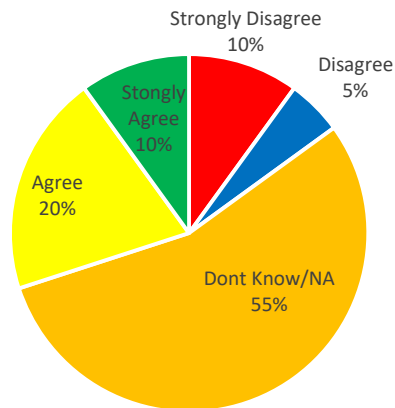


Fig 3.10b: Respondents views of the Emotional Literacy Support project on implementation:

Emotional literacy support assistants were an effective way of supporting pupils who struggle in Y7



The majority of participants believed this project effectively supports pupils who struggle in year seven. However, there is a decrease of confidence in the context of its implementation with the majority reporting to be unsure about its effectiveness. When looking at this against a backdrop of COVID and the challenges this brought to pupils, it could be surmised that emotional-based support would vary in its effectiveness depending on the level of need across each school and the schools' and pupils' access to resources and systems necessary to provide it.

### 3.10.2. *What pupils say*

Pupils who participated in the focus groups did not discuss any factors related to the use of the ELSA assistants. This may have been because they were from schools who did not participate or because the focus group participants had not needed support.

### 3.10.1. *Summary evaluation*

The summary below draws on the evaluation themes discussed above (see section 2.4 and Kirkman et al. 2021) and presents a summary evaluation of the Emotional Literacy Support Assistants project, based on the available data. It is important to note that these are an estimation of impact based on the data available and the impact of engagement in the evaluation process and COVID 19 must be taken into account (see section 2.5).

Table 3.10a: Evaluation of Emotional Literacy Support Project impact

Focus	Impact in this area:
Student resilience and behaviour	Highly likely
Academic and behaviour understanding	Highly likely
Parent/carer engagement in transition processes	Unlikely
Value	Highly likely
Student attainment	Highly likely
continuous professional development and support (CPD) for teachers	Highly likely
system leadership support	Highly likely
fixed term and permanent exclusion	Highly likely
transfer and transition	Highly likely
disadvantaged pupils	Highly likely
Building inclusive shared values and positive relationships	Highly likely
multi-agency collaborative support	Unlikely
clear shared and enacted policy	Likely
local and school level support	Highly likely
focused support at different levels: whole-school, group, individual	Highly likely
organisational/administrative support	Highly likely
Psychosocial support	Highly likely
student voice/involvement in decision making	Likely

The strength of the evidence of impact in the above areas is: **Strong**

**Summary:** Based on the evidence provided by the teachers, school leaders, children and literature, the ELSA training is highly likely to have positively impacted on many areas such as emotional support, support for disadvantaged pupils and student resilience and behaviour. There is strong evidence of its impact on its target areas of pupil wellbeing and psychosocial support.



### 3.11. Project focus – SEND training

Educational Psychologists developed training packages to help support school staff in their understanding of how to support student with special educational needs or disabilities. Resources produced included a booklet and training programme as well as webinars.

#### 3.11.1. What staff say

Aside from one small mention of the training project, none of the interview respondents made any significant comments on this project.

##### 3.11.1.1. Survey

The results of the survey data specifically linked with this project are presented below. The data shown identifies the respondents' views both before the project was implemented (indicating how effective they envisaged the project to be) and after the project had been carried out (to analyse the projects actual effectiveness).

Fig 3.11a: Respondents views of the SEND training in principle:

Training to support SEND students is effective in supporting pupils during their transition to Y7

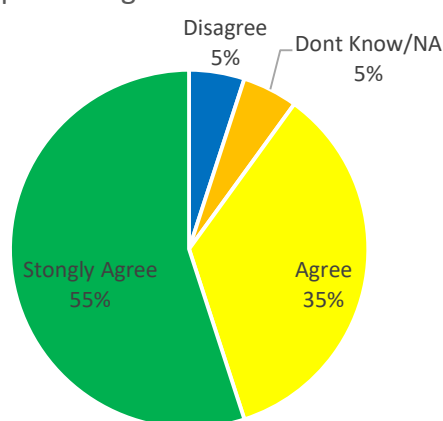
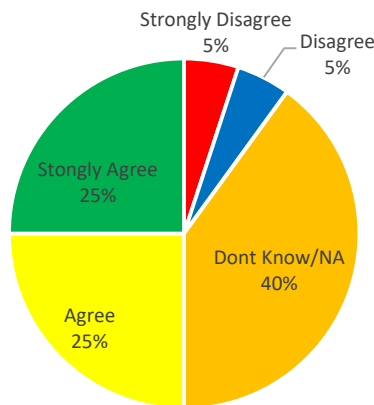


Fig 3.11b: Respondents views of the SEND training on implementation:

Training to support SEND students was effective in supporting pupils during their transition to Y7



Training to support SEND pupils during their transition to year seven was seen to be a positive step for transfer, with ninety percent in agreement. Upon evaluation, this then dropped to half, with a large proportion of participants unsure of its actual effectiveness during COVID.

*3.11.2. What pupils say*

Pupils who participated in the focus groups did not discuss any factors related to SEND training. This may have been because they were from schools who did not participate or because of the focus on staff training.

*3.11.1. Summary evaluation*

Although this project was explored, the lack of data around participation and impact means that the evaluation team were unable to make an evidence-based assessment of its impact. It may be that the staff involved chose not to participate in the data collection and so this project was rendered invisible. It appears from the lack of evidence that this project did not have a widespread impact. However, it may have had an impact with targeted staff or schools.

### 3.12. Project focus – YoungMinds Training

YoungMinds is an organisation focusing on mental health for young people. YoungMinds was introduced to offer support to teachers to better support parents of those less resilient children, as it was thought by supporting those less resilient parents, they could, in turn, better support their children. The course offered by YoungMinds involves understanding resilience and its importance (alongside relevant theories behind resilience) and teaches those taking it how to build resilience in the young people they work with. This includes introducing activities that build resilience and building resilient practice in the school settings. There are also academic resilience practices that can be offered, which would benefit the most disadvantaged pupils. The YoungMinds website ([youngminds.org.uk](http://youngminds.org.uk)) includes a resource called 'Find Your Feet' - a transition activity for year six pupils with downloadable activities, for example managing emotions, and advising parents. There are also academic resilience practices that can be offered, which would benefit the most disadvantaged pupils.

#### 3.12.1. What staff say

The YoungMinds project was postponed a year due to the COVID pandemic. Only a small number of staff members were able to speak about the initiative and much of the available information came from a discussion with a YoungMinds representative.

The first workshop (two hours on Zoom) was about understanding academic resilience, and the second was about good practice in transitions. The following part of the project looks at how to support schools to support parents to support the children during transitions; and there is a final optional session about supporting pupils directly. At the time of the interviews, eight schools had attended the two first sessions. Workshops aim to encourage schools to reflect on what they are already doing, to evaluate their practice with a view to improving it. These sessions are structured to involve mapping, upskilling, auditing, planning, interventions, and sharing.

The YoungMinds representative reflected:

*"A lot of schools just really don't know what transitions is looking like at the moment. So, all those things that they've had in place previously, all the good practice, very much revolve around visits to schools, going on a bus to take a journey. And these things are not happening. So were having to try and think of ways in which they can overcome some of the difficulties."*

Staff struggled to speak about the YoungMinds project because their awareness of it was from "so long ago". They reflected that:

*"I think the biggest issue was the fact that it was done in the middle of lockdown and so by the time we got back to school it was kind of, some of it had been semi-forgotten essentially because I think, you probably know, if you don't apply this training straight away you usually kind of forget to don't you, quite often?"*

A key recommendation, building on this teachers' experience, is that for the workshops to have an impact they need to have monitoring in place. This will help to ensure that the strategies and planning from in the workshops are implemented by schools soon after the training and will enable YoungMinds to support this process.

### 3.12.1.1. Survey

The results of the survey data specifically linked with this project are presented below. The data shown identifies the respondents' views both before the project was implemented (indicating how effective they envisaged the project to be) and after the project had been carried out (to analyse the projects actual effectiveness).

Fig 3.12a: Respondents views of the YoungMinds Training in principle:

YoungMinds training is an effective way of supporting pupils who struggle in Y7

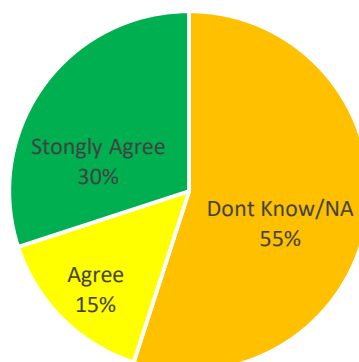
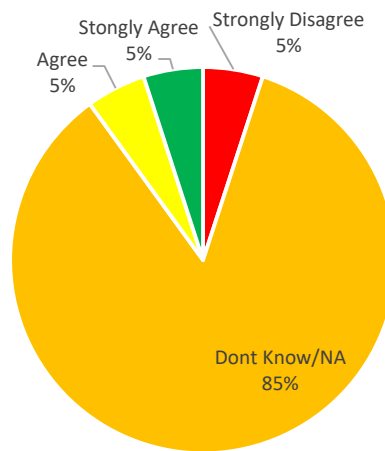


Fig 3.12b: Respondents views of the YoungMinds Training on implementation:

YoungMinds training was an effective way of supporting pupils who struggle in Y7



This project was consistent in the fact that both before and after implementation, the majority of the participants were unsure of the effectiveness of such a program. Prior to implementation there were several people in agreement that they felt it was an effective measure to have in place, however upon reflection, the number of people saying, 'don't know' or 'NA' grew to eighty-five percent. This could be a result of COVID affecting the outcomes for this, or alternatively could potentially show that many staff had not yet become aware of this programme.

### 3.12.2. What pupils say

Although the young people were not aware of any intervention with their teachers to support their mental health, they were able to comment on whether they felt that they were supported and whether their general well-being was being considered. One group felt that there had been nothing specific done to support them compared with their primary school experience:

*"I don't really think they did. I think they could do a little bit better in that. Because so far in this school, I haven't really done anything about well-being." (FG3).*

*"I did most of my well-being in primary school and we haven't really done anything about it here." (FG3).*

The young people commented on what made them feel supported, although their feelings were mixed:

*"R1: They always help you when you put your hand up, they don't ignore you for anything.*

*R2: They listen to you and make sure you are heard.*

*R3: They don't always like understand you, when you say, they can get the wrong idea." FG3)*

In another school, young people were able to add to this:

"They were just kind of like, if you had any questions, they'd feel free to answer it, if you needed any kind of space, they'd let you have it. If you were anxious about moving, they'd talk to you about it. They were just generally kind." (FG1)

They were also aware of facilities that were in place to support them:

*"There were people who were allowed out of the classroom, then you've got upstairs in the top floor, I think they've got ... Yeah, there's like a safe space on the top floor near Mr YY's [xx] office." (FG1)*

### 3.12.1. Summary evaluation

The summary below draws on the evaluation themes discussed above (see section 2.4 and Kirkman et al. 2021) and presents a summary evaluation of the YoungMinds Training project, based on the available data. It is important to note that these are an estimation of impact based on the data available and the impact of engagement in the evaluation process and COVID 19 must be taken into account (see section 2.5).

Table 3.12a: Evaluation of YoungMinds Training Project impact

Focus	Impact in this area:
Student resilience and behaviour	Highly likely
Academic and behaviour understanding	Unlikely
Parent/carer engagement in transition processes	Unlikely
Value	Likely
Student attainment	Unlikely
continuous professional development and support (CPD) for teachers	Highly likely
system leadership support	Highly likely
fixed term and permanent exclusion	Unlikely
transfer and transition	Unlikely
disadvantaged pupils	Highly likely
Building inclusive shared values and positive relationships	Likely
multi-agency collaborative support	Unlikely
clear shared and enacted policy	Unlikely
local and school level support	Likely
focused support at different levels: whole-school, group, individual	Highly likely
organisational/administrative support	Unlikely
Psychosocial support	Likely
student voice/involvement in decision making	Unlikely

The strength of the evidence of impact in the above areas is: **Moderate**.

**Summary:** Based on the evidence provided by the teachers, school leaders, children and literature, the YoungMinds Training is highly likely to have impacted positively on areas such CPD for teachers, support at a whole school and local level with particular support for disadvantaged pupils. There is moderate evidence of its impact on its target areas of building student resilience and supporting staff development.

### 3.13. Project focus – Transition week

An agreement between the schools across the Norwich Opportunity Area to streamline transition visits for year six pupils led to most visits being held being within the same two weeks. This included one week specifically for vulnerable pupils. In addition to easing planning for transitions this minimises disruption to learning for year six pupils and enables primary schools to maintain stability across their end of year programmes. Despite the original intention, not all schools were able or willing to commit to the same days and timeframe.

#### 3.13.1. What staff say

Several teachers discussed the “*transitions week*” initiative and there was widespread support for this project. One interviewee described transitions week as ‘a week of visits to secondary school at the end of year six, with the aim that all schools do it on the same week’. Some staff noted that ‘children might go all or some of the days’ and one suggested that ‘the week culminated in a dinner party’.

Staff reported that streamlining this arrangement across schools, so everyone was doing the same, was a welcome improvement, because having different children visiting different schools on different days is “*a bit of a pain in the neck really*” for primary schools and makes it difficult to teach anything in those few weeks. It was also felt to be important because a transitions day or afternoon, which had operated previously, was ‘not really enough’, and ‘a week was much better’. One teacher explained at length:

*“Having, you know, more than one visit is really beneficial. Because they need to be able to see, don't they, the places that they're going to be going to, understand, how they're going to find their way around, see some faces and start to make those connections because, otherwise, it's a long time that wait between you know finishing in July and starting in September. So, if children haven't been, which, because last year it was all obviously online because the schools were all locked down, so I think there was lots of uncertainty and children starting places that they didn't know at all and hadn't seen. So yeah, I think that the transition visits are really important” (EM MC).*

Staff also reported that transitions week involved additional smaller group visits for children that need more support such as pupils with SEND. This was felt to be a positive addition although several staff felt that this would be more helpful *before* the full pupil visits.

One recommendation was that transitions week should not fall on the primary schools last week of term as this damages pupil's end of school celebrations and milestones that are key features of the transition. Staff felt that visits in the last week prevented them from being able to ‘round up the year’ properly. Another primary school staff member also reported that the timetabling of the transition's week did not work well for them, as it fell on the last week of term, where “*we want out children to be doing the last week of primary school*”.

Due to schools operating different calendars and term dates, organizing a common week that suits every school seems to be very challenging. Not only is this 'administratively a problem', but 'it doesn't suit the children either':

*"[...] actually, children don't want to go to a new school if they feel as though they're going to be missing out on something. It's the last time that they will see those group of friends and the last time they'll be in primary school, I think because our children love being in our school, like most of them and they are like really sad to leave, so they want to hold on to that as much as possible. So, I think for us, it just would be good if it was like a different week, I know there are lots of constraints."*

One staff member suggested that the week had a positive impact on pupils:

*"I think the children get a lot from it, because they get to know the place and it's not like they got lost on the first day and they're all like, I didn't know what I was doing, and then they worry about it till September. Doing it for a week I think that they kind of find their feet a bit and they can get over any first day nerves and that sort of thing. And I think that by the time it gets to then, I think our year sixes are a bit kind of done with primary school sometimes, and so actually to spend a whole week being a big high school kid, they come back with a swagger and stuff, and it's really sweet. But I think that they kind of need it by then. So, it's a nice thing."*

It appears that the transitions week has a similar function to the summer school, and it could be useful to compare these two programmes with a view to further targeting or streamlining. The main difference being that during the transition's week children are still primary school pupils, and thus are supported by two sets of staff – one from their existing primary school, and one from their new secondary school. Following the week, pupils return to their existing primary school and share their experience of the visit, whilst still being "hand-held" by the primary school. At the same time, it is acknowledged that summer schools can help to sustain contact and momentum and provide more of a supported 'independent step', as pupils have finished primary school by that time.

#### 3.13.1.1. Survey

The results of the survey data specifically linked with this project are presented below. The data shown identifies the respondents' views both before the project was implemented (indicating how effective they envisaged the project to be) and after the project had been carried out (to analyse the projects actual effectiveness).



Fig 3.13a: Respondents views of the Transitions Week in principle:

Transitions Week is an effective way of supporting pupils during their transition period

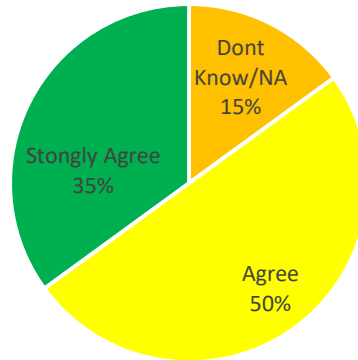
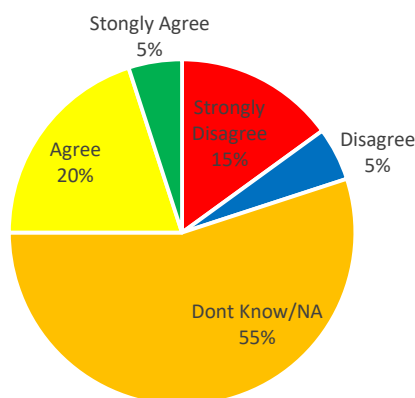


Fig 3.13b: Respondents views of the Transitions Week on implementation:

Transitions Week was an effective way of supporting pupils during their transition period



Upon initial assessment, a large number of participants agreed that this initiative would be an effective way of supporting pupils in transition (eighty-five percent). However, on reflection, the outlook on this changed and over half (fifty-five percent) selected 'don't know' when asked about its actual effectiveness in implementation. Not all schools took part in this project and COVID impacted schools' ability to carry out transition visits as intended.

### 3.13.2. What pupils say

In one school, pupils had expected a transitions week, but it had not happened due to Covid; pupils agreed:

*"It is like, you know the transition weeks, like most of us missed out because of COVID. If we all had a full week of transition and told us where things are and maybe actually experiencing those lessons, I think it may have been a bit like easier." (FG1).*

They thought that transitions week would have relieved some of their worries and anxieties such as getting lost in the new school, not having friends, or being bullied.

*"I was worried people weren't going to like me, but to be honest with you, like everyone's kind of in their own little bubbles, and I think everyone's got someone else which they can rely on." (FG1).*

### 3.13.1. Summary evaluation

The summary below draws on the evaluation themes discussed above (see section 2.4 and Kirkman et al. 2021) and presents a summary evaluation of the Transitions Week project, based on the available data. It is important to note that these are an estimation of impact based on the data available and the impact of engagement in the evaluation process and COVID 19 must be taken into account (see section 2.5).

Table 3.13a: Evaluation of Transitions Week Project impact

Focus	Impact in this area:
Student resilience and behaviour	Highly likely
Academic and behaviour understanding	Highly likely
Parent/carer engagement in transition processes	Unlikely
Value	Highly likely
Student attainment	Unlikely
continuous professional development and support (CPD) for teachers	Unlikely
system leadership support	Unlikely
fixed term and permanent exclusion	Unlikely
transfer and transition	Highly likely
disadvantaged pupils	Highly likely
Building inclusive shared values and positive relationships	Likely
multi-agency collaborative support	Unlikely
clear shared and enacted policy	Unlikely
local and school level support	Unlikely
focused support at different levels: whole-school, group, individual	Likely
organisational/administrative support	Unlikely
Psychosocial support	Highly likely
student voice/involvement in decision making	Unlikely

The strength of the evidence of impact in the above areas is: **Weak**.

**Summary:** Based on the evidence provided by the teachers, school leaders, children and literature, the Transitions Week is highly likely to have impacted positively on areas such as transfer, value and support for disadvantaged pupils. There is weak evidence of its impact on its target areas of school transfer and building communication between schools. This lack of evidence is largely due to many schools not proceeding with Transitions Week as planned due to COVID restrictions.

### 3.14. Project focus – Transition Working Group

The Transitions Working Group was set up to bring together some stakeholders (teachers, school leaders, local agency representatives) to develop and implement strategy around transitions project work. We included the transitions working group in our list of 'project definitions' as this emerged in phase one as a significant resource for the staff involved, and one which the early data suggested would meet some of the evaluation criteria (see Kirkman, et al. 2021).. In early 2019, together with primary and secondary schools in the city cluster, the Transitions Working group began work on a programme of activities aimed to improve exclusions rates for pupils moving from year six to year seven

The projects adopted a range of approaches to influence key areas recognised anecdotally as causing poor transition by the schools and organisations represented on the Transitions group: Avenue Junior, Bignold Primary, City Academy, City of Norwich School, Education Participation, Educator Solutions, Heart Trust, Infrastructure and Partnership Service, Jane Austen College, Lakenham Primary, Norfolk County Council, Mile Cross Primary School, Open Academy, The Hewett, Academy, and Wensum Primary and Nelson Infant.

Key themes emerging from the Transitions Working Group's review of "*absolute fundamentals for a vulnerable child that's at risk of exclusion when going through a transition*" were:

- "1) Honest and full information sharing in relation to:
  - a) transfer (standardised and comprehensive) including pupil's needs, safeguarding Information, information about special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), pupil's positive attributes, knowledge of past attendance,
  - b) understanding of what works and what does not in relation to support for pupils
- 2) Pastoral care and relationship building
- 3) Resilience and skills training
- 4) Mentoring (student and adult) – before and after transition.
- 5) Joint planning for transitions (primary and secondary) including:
  - a) Secondaries to share behaviour expectations with primaries to support prior to transition.
  - b) Family engagement - parenting, financial needs, attendance,
  - c) Gradual transition – identify links they already have (positive and negative) especially for in-year moves."

### 3.14.1. *What staff say*

A handful of staff members noted the work of the Transitions Working Group. They saw it as bringing together a group of varied stakeholders including Norfolk County Council, Safer Schools Officers, UEA Outreach as well as representatives from schools, including specialist staff who work with pupils with SEND. Discussion of the working group was mainly positive. One teacher generally felt it was a useful group:

"I think it has opened conversations between different phases...There's often a gulf in understanding between secondary and primary colleagues...It's really useful to hear from a primary school colleague what they expect their children to have at secondary school, what they're preparing their kids for and what we're actually needing them to prepare... It's a real useful dialogue."

One staff member described how through discussions at the working group, they realized that primary schools and secondary schools had different 'expectations in terms of behaviour in the classroom'. This demonstrated that the Transitions Working group was instrumental in helping to start the process of working towards a shared understanding and discourse around student, parent and school needs and capacity. Recommendations for the ongoing development of this work included:

- there needs to be more schools represented
- schools need to commit to the common interest of the region rather than seeking competitive advantage at the expense of some parents and pupils
- greater coordination across different academies and trusts
- greater collaboration with primary feeder schools
- greater/some involvement/representation from/by pupils and parents

One teacher reflected:

*"It's quite difficult to bring people together, everybody has got their own agenda."*

### 3.14.1.1. Survey

The results of the survey data specifically linked with this project are presented below. The data shown identify the respondents' views both before the project was implemented (indicating how effective they envisaged the project to be) and after the project had been carried out (to analyse the projects actual effectiveness).

Fig 3.14a: Respondents' views of the Transitions Working Group in principle

The transition working group is an effective way of supporting students' transfer to secondary school

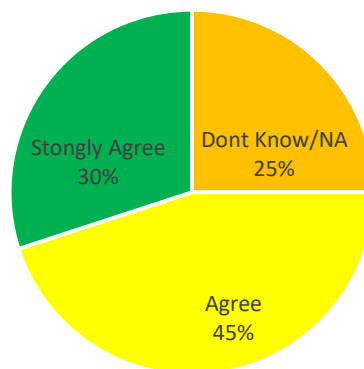
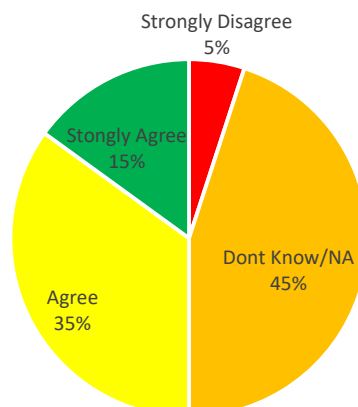


Fig 3.14b: Respondents views of the Transitions Working Group on implementation:

The transition working group were effective in working to support students' transfer to secondary school



Over three-quarters of the participants (eighty percent) agreed that the transition working group is, in principle, an effective way to support pupils in transferring to secondary school. Upon evaluation of the implementation of the activities, there

was still a significant number of staff in agreement (fifty percent) of the group's effectiveness. However, the 'don't know' group increased to forty-five percent. This may reflect a general sense of lack of understanding around impact due to the chaos caused by the COVID pandemic and related disruption to all of the projects.

### 3.14.2. *What pupils say*

Pupils who participated in the focus groups were not aware of the Transitions Working group. Pupils were not represented on the Transitions Working group and the review team were unable to find any evidence of any consultation with pupils or parents about any planned activities.

### 3.14.1. *Summary evaluation*

The summary below draws on the evaluation themes discussed above (see section 2.4 and Kirkman et al. 2021) and presents a summary evaluation of the Transitions Working Group, based on the available data. It is important to note that these are an estimation of impact based on the data available and the impact of engagement in the evaluation process and COVID 19 must be taken into account (see section 2.5).

Table 3.14a: Evaluation of Transitions Working Group impact

<b>Focus</b>	<b>Impact in this area:</b>
Student resilience and behaviour	Likely
Academic and behaviour understanding	Unlikely
Parent/carer engagement in transition processes	Unlikely
Value	Highly likely
Student attainment	Unlikely
continuous professional development and support (CPD) for teachers	Highly likely
system leadership support	Highly likely
fixed term and permanent exclusion	Highly likely
transfer and transition	Highly likely
disadvantaged pupils	Highly likely
Building inclusive shared values and positive relationships	Highly likely
multi-agency collaborative support	Likely
clear shared and enacted policy	Unlikely
local and school level support	Highly likely
focused support at different levels: whole-school, group, individual	Highly likely
organisational/administrative support	Highly likely
Psychosocial support	Unlikely
Student voice/involvement in decision making	Unlikely

The strength of the evidence of impact in the above areas is: **Strong**.

**Summary:** Based on the evidence provided by the teachers, school leaders, children and literature, the Transitions Working Group is highly likely to have positively impacted on areas such as leadership support, building shared values and local and school level support. There is strong evidence of its impact on its target areas bringing together stakeholders and opening up lines of communication.



## 4. Conclusion

The current report is the second in a series of three reports that present an evaluation of the Norwich Opportunity Area transitions project work 2019 – 2022. The objectives of the evaluation were i) to collate the projects undertaken by each school and how many students they directly affected, ii) establish the success of the range of approaches and interventions delivered by the transition projects.

The projects have been identified and described above under the following headings:

- Bridging Project
- CPOMS Project
- Common Transfer Document
- Interschool Visits
- School Information Booklets
- Summer Schools
- Star Survey
- Peer Mentoring
- Parent Information Evenings
- Emotional Literacy Support
- SEND Training
- YoungMinds Training
- Transition Week
- Transition Working Group

Based on the available evidence, it is possible to conclude that areas of impact in relation to the areas of priority identified across the NOA transitions projects were broadly as shown in table 4<sup>3</sup>:

Particular strengths of the suite of projects evaluated include the support provided for disadvantaged pupils and the focus on activities that targeted year 6 to year 7 transfer in particular. Aside from Parent/carer engagement in the transition processes, the evidence suggests that three other identified priorities of the Transitions Working Group ('Student resilience and behaviour', 'Academic and behaviour understanding' and 'Value') were all secure in their impact, at least in principle (the impact of COVID on transitions project plans must be acknowledged alongside this).

Limitations included the degree to which parents were meaningfully engaged in transitions activities and processes and the lack of coordination and coherent policy from school senior leadership teams across the Opportunity Area. There was a notable advantage to projects and pupils where school leadership engaged meaningfully and in a sustained way with transitions activities. However, a noticeable lack of sustained engagement and consistency was also evident across

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<sup>3</sup> It should be noted that impact will vary according to specifics of delivery across pupils, staff and location.

the wider group of NOA schools. This created a 'lottery' of experience for pupils. Nevertheless, it is also clear that this situation has improved over the course of the Opportunity Area Transitions work, in no small part due to the coordinating efforts of the Transitions Working Group and some key individuals who help to galvanize support for pupils and projects.

Table 4: Impact coverage of the NOA transitions projects

<b>Focus</b>	<b>Impact in this area:</b>
Student resilience and behaviour	Stable
Academic and behaviour understanding	Stable
Parent/carer engagement in transition processes	Very Limited
Value	Stable
Student attainment	Very Limited
Continuous professional development and support	Limited
System leadership support	Limited
Fixed term and permanent exclusion	Limited
Transfer and transition	Secure
Disadvantaged pupils	Secure
Building inclusive shared values and positive relationships	Limited
Multi-agency collaborative support	Very Limited
Clear shared and enacted policy	Very Limited
Local and school level support	Limited
Focused support at different levels	Stable
Organisational/administrative support	Limited
Psychosocial support	Stable
Student voice/involvement in decision making	Very Limited

Other key areas noted for development at this stage include projects supporting student attainment across transitions, and the coordination of multi-agency collaborative support to facilitate good or best practice more consistently and in a sustained way.

A final significant area for the development of transitions activity coverage is the involvement of pupils in decision making about their transitions processes and projects. Opportunities for consultation were missed in the early stages of the projects and a general lack of awareness of what support was or had been available was felt across the pupil and parent data that was accessed. This can also be extended to involving parents who were most often just 'recipients of information'. Using consultation groups, open forums, and parental representatives on working groups and/or committees, parents can be helpful resources of intelligence, providing insight into their childrens' experiences.

Further areas for consideration are the use of a clear research-base for project work and planning. The example of the STAR survey serves to demonstrate that when projects have their basis in robust evidence, they are more likely to have a sustained and significant impact on practice. While evidence was only rated 'moderate' for impact on focus areas, this reflected the limited feedback from secondary schools about this project (perhaps highlighting the coordination issue

noted above). However, it was clear from the use of the STAR survey in some primary schools that this was a powerful tool for early intervention with parents.

The identification of success criteria in the planning stage can help to concentrate efforts towards intended outcomes. This process also promotes clarity of focus across collaborative projects and in different contexts. Project documents that describe the project, aims, objectives, resources and target audience can be useful in fostering understanding and in refining project plans before the delivery and evaluation stage.

As noted earlier, both this and the previous report will feed into the final NOA transitions report following the completion of phase 2 of the evaluation process.

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## 6. Appendices

### 6.1. Appendix 1: Notes on the Evaluation Methodology.

#### *6.1.1. Evaluating COVID impact*

COVID impact was conceptualised as the aggregate difference between teacher expectations of project effectiveness (“Activities that supported students’ transition to the secondary school: How much do you agree with the following statements? In principle – do you think these will work?”) and teacher reports of impact of delivery in the light of COVID (“In practice (with COVID): In the light of COVID how did this actually work last year?”). For example, for The Bridging Project staff the former question received the returns: Strongly disagree (1), Disagree (1), Don’t know (1), Not applicable (6), Agree (8), Strongly Agree (4); while the latter received the returns: Disagree (2), Don’t know/ Not applicable (10), Agree (6), Strongly Agree (2). Aggregated this is 12/20 or 60% positive responses for the former question and 8/20 or 40% positive responses for the latter question. The difference between the question responses is 20%. Therefore, the COVID effect for The Bridging Project is estimated to be 20%.

#### *6.1.2. Evaluating project outcomes*

##### *6.1.2.1. Impact in focus areas/characteristics of successful interventions*

The focus areas likely to reveal project impact were drawn from the literature and reported in Interim Report 1 (Kirkman et al., 2021). These areas and related questions were mapped against the qualitative evidence emerging for each of the project activities. Each project was mapped against each question and given a yes/no answer. (For example, in the Bridging Project: ‘To what extent does this project create external support for resilience?’ = No; ‘To what extent does this project foster positive teacher-student interactions?’ = Yes). These yes/no responses were aggregated for each possible impact area and graded as follows: No yes responses = Unlikely; 1-2 yes responses = Likely; 3+ yes responses = Highly Likely. These are the grades reported in the evaluation tables above.

##### *6.1.2.2. Strength of evidence of impact*

A subsequent qualitative analysis of teacher and student responses for each of the areas graded as ‘likely’ and ‘highly likely’ was employed to ascertain the degree to which the evidence supported these conclusions. Responses were graded as follows: Strength of evidence = Weak (1-2 noted examples of evidence of perceived impact in the focus areas), Strength of evidence = Moderate (2-4 noted examples of evidence of perceived impact in the focus areas), Strength of evidence = Strong for (4+ noted examples of evidence of perceived impact in the focus areas). These are reported for each project below each table of project impact.

### *6.1.3. Aggregating NOA transitions impact*

Finally, where the project was considered 'Highly Likely' to have an impact, the project was given a score of 2 for that question. Where the project was considered 'Likely' to have an impact, the project was given a score of 1 for that question. Where the project was considered 'Unlikely' to have an impact, the project was given no score for that question. Aggregating these scores across all projects provided a total out of a possible 79 characteristics for potential impact. These aggregated scores are then converted as follows: 1-5 = Very limited; 6-14 = limited impact; 15-20 = Stable Impact; 21+ = Secure Impact. These final scores are reported in Table 4 (p90).