

Life at school *Imagineers*

Part Two: The Transition to Secondary School

Children from across the City are Imagining Aberdeen as a place where children are healthy, happy and safe. Our band of 25 Imagineers are aged 9 to 12 and their role is to help adults understand children's experiences and aspirations. Children's human rights are based on the idea of human dignity and relationships based on empathy, kindness and trust.

Our Imagineers talk about life at home, in the community and at school. Some have now moved up to Secondary School. They have reflected on this experience – on first day feelings, on what is going well and what isn't. They have identified things that Primary Schools and Secondary Schools can do to help the transition.

HOW TO HELP WITH THE TRANSITION TO SECONDARY SCHOOL

The Imagineers have identified things that Primary and Secondary School can do to help next year's pupils have a good transition.



DEAR PRIMARY SCHOOL YOU SHOULD

- When they visit, the children should get more of a detailed tour of everything about the school, including the local area.
- Have more visits for children to the Secondary School.
- Primary School teachers should visit the Secondary School more, so they can help their children get ready for learning at the secondary school.
- When they visit, the children should do more advanced work, because they are not ready for Secondary School work.
- Children should be told what the rules will be in the new school.
- Children need help to think about how to make friends.
- At Primary School, children should do more advanced work, because they are not ready for Secondary School work.

FIRST DAY FEELINGS

The Imagineers remind us that the transition to Secondary School is accompanied by many strong feelings. These are present on their first day, but may have been building up for some time ahead of the transition.

- "I was feeling anxious – a lot."
- "There was lots of feelings in your tummy."
- "I felt scared, shivery, worried."
- "I was scared that I'd get made fun of."
- "I was excited at the end of the day because I had new friends. I enjoyed the whole first day, but it was a bit boring and annoying."
- "I was bored. Listening to everything all day."
- "By the end of the first day I felt more confident about myself."
- "Teachers were strict but some were nice to us."

By the end of the first day there were other feelings.

The Imagineers remind us, as adults, to think about the question: **Do I recognise and address the emotions or worries that change may bring about for the child?**



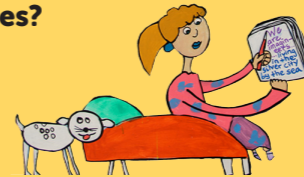
DEAR SECONDARY SCHOOL YOU SHOULD

- Get more staff to help and be present where they can stop fights.
- Make it so we do things in school that are helpful for our future and things based on our interests.
- Let us use our phones.
- Help children that can't afford things like a uniform or shoes.
- Have lunchtime and after school clubs, including sports we can do.
- Stop the fighting.
- Give us less homework.
- Explain to us how to do homework.
- Make sure there is enough help for us, so that we understand the work.

THINGS THAT ARE GOING WELL

Finding your way in a new school environment can be quite a challenge. Our Imagineers are enjoying aspects of school life, the most liked subjects so far are PE, Science, Art and ICT. Making new friends is also a positive. The children also recognise the task of establishing a new relationship with every new teacher they meet. For Imagineers for whom the transition to Secondary School has not been smooth there were also positives that could be recognised.

The Imagineers remind us, as adults, to think about the question: **Do I know what is going well for each child so that we can build on interests and achievements? Do I pay attention to the positives, as much as the difficulties?**



- "I have new friends, a new girlfriend and cool new teachers."
- "I'm learning to cook!"
- "English, because we've been drawing, reading a great book and watching a movie about the book."
- "It can be fun, but it depends on the teacher."
- "I might get in to the school show."

THINGS THAT ARE NOT GOING WELL

We decided to talk about life at school at our Imagineer session because some of the children are struggling with some aspects of school life. They want adults to understand what is difficult, and that to make things better means thinking differently and finding positive ways to respond. The Imagineers identify difficulties in managing the school day, understanding what is expected of them, feeling the pressure of work and homework, managing emotions and worrying about and experiencing violence.

The Imagineers remind us, as adults, to think about the question: **How do I pay attention to what might not be going well for a child? How is my professional practice informed by non-punitive, positive and restorative approaches?**

- "They are not quick enough at stopping fights. There needs to be more staff in the corridors."
- "I'm trying to make friends. I'm trying to keep my bag safe."
- "I take too long to get ready after PE, so I get into trouble."
- "There are so many fights."
- "I'm getting into a lot of trouble and being on a behaviour book and fighting."
- "Teachers need to explain more, they need to make instructions clearer."
- "It's hard to fit in and be the same as everyone and be able to afford the same trainers."
- "I don't enjoy any of my classes. Getting to classes is really hard."
- "I get angry easily."

Have you found the ideas from the Imagineers helpful? You can let the Imagineers know what you think, get in touch via our blog bit.ly/ImaginingAberdeen

Children's Parliament recently reviewed our work with children across Scotland and published 'School Should be a Joyful Place' www.childrensparliament.org.uk/publications/

