

# TRANSITIONS: Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3

Neil Miller, Deputy CEO  
London South East Academies Trust  
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# Who we are

A successful multi-Academy Trust committed to raising attainment, encouraging aspiration and supporting social mobility for every single child and young person.

Comprising 18 mainstream, special and alternative provision schools across three London Boroughs, East Sussex and Surrey; an outreach service and a music hub.

Uniquely set up: Our Trust is sponsored by a high-performing further and higher education college, supporting progression and transition onto further/ higher level qualifications, apprenticeships and great careers.

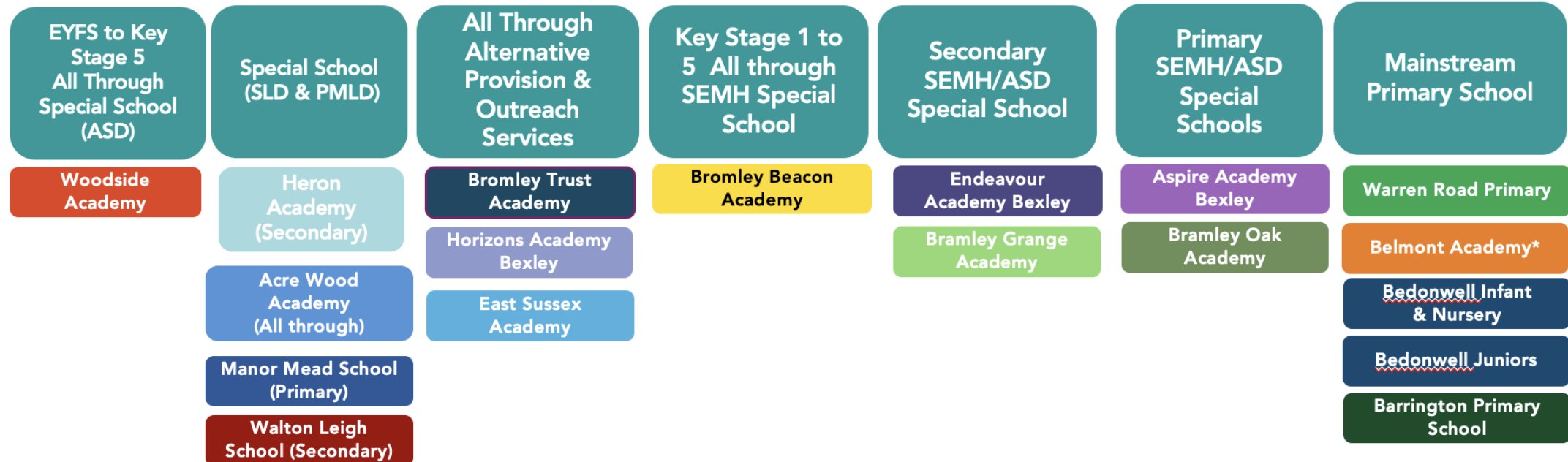
A proven record for school improvement: with a focus on systems-leadership and sharing of best practice across all our schools and beyond.

Extensive and high-quality specialist expertise in estates, HR, payroll, finance, teacher and staff development, IT, health & safety and marketing and communications.



# London South East Academies Trust

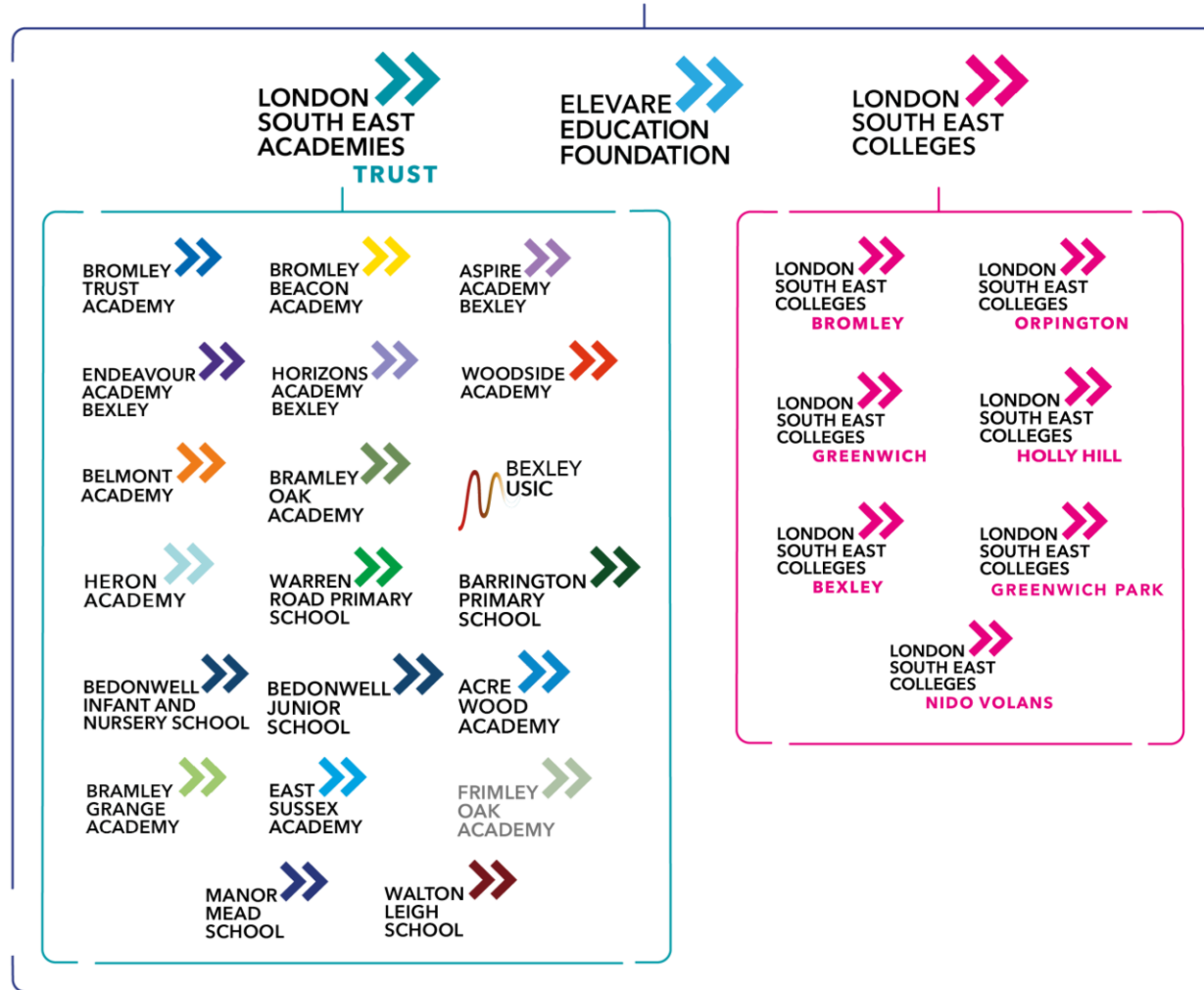
## Academies by Designation Type



Bexley Music Service, includes Arts Council England funded music hub, enabling music curriculum service to children and young people across all Schools and Trusts in Bexley and other local areas.

The unique relationship between LSEAT and London South East Colleges facilitates positive transitions into Further Education, as well as providing our young people with a clear line of sight to successful progression and their next steps.

\*onsite provision for children with visual impairments and complex and physical and medical needs





# Perceptions

Primary



Secondary

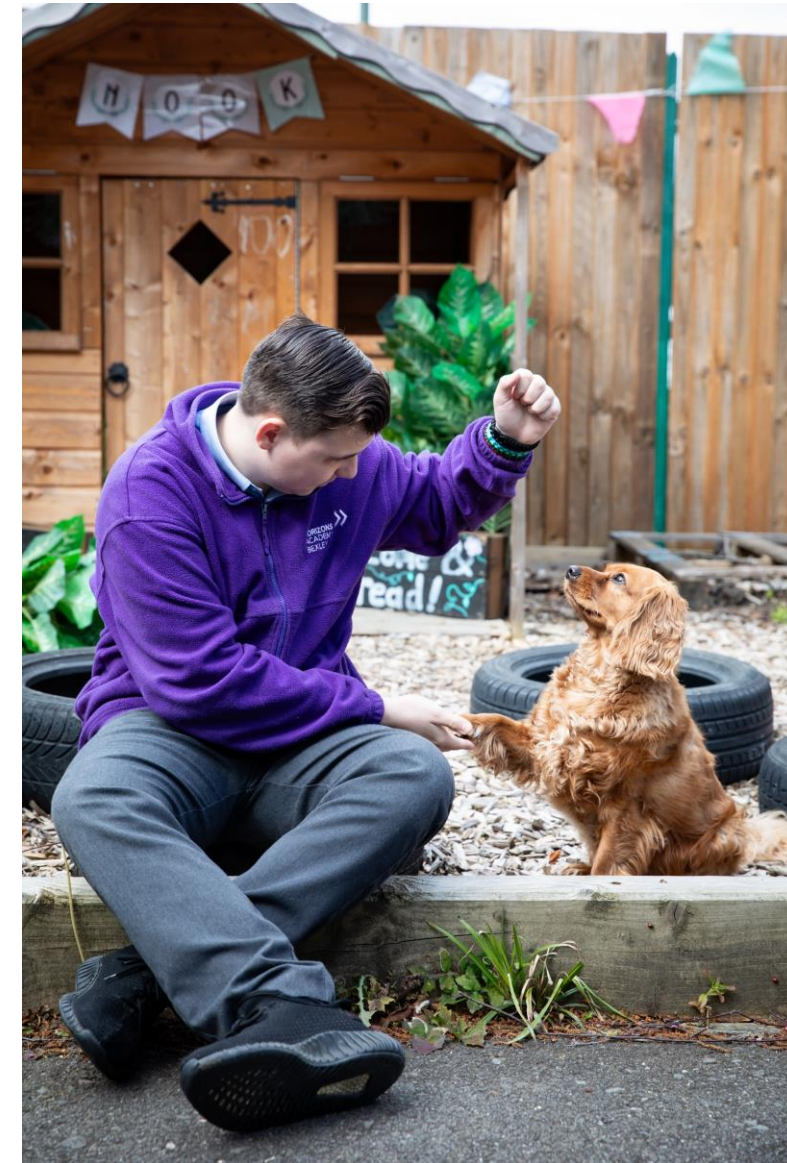


# KS2 – KS3 Transition

## What is happening nationally?

**The national picture shows a consistent dip in wellbeing, engagement and attainment at transition:**

- Engagement and enjoyment fall sharply after Year 6
- Anxiety increases at age 12–13
- Disadvantaged pupils are more likely to struggle
- Curriculum and language demands shift significantly
- One-off transition days are not enough



# Wellbeing and Belonging dip in early KS3

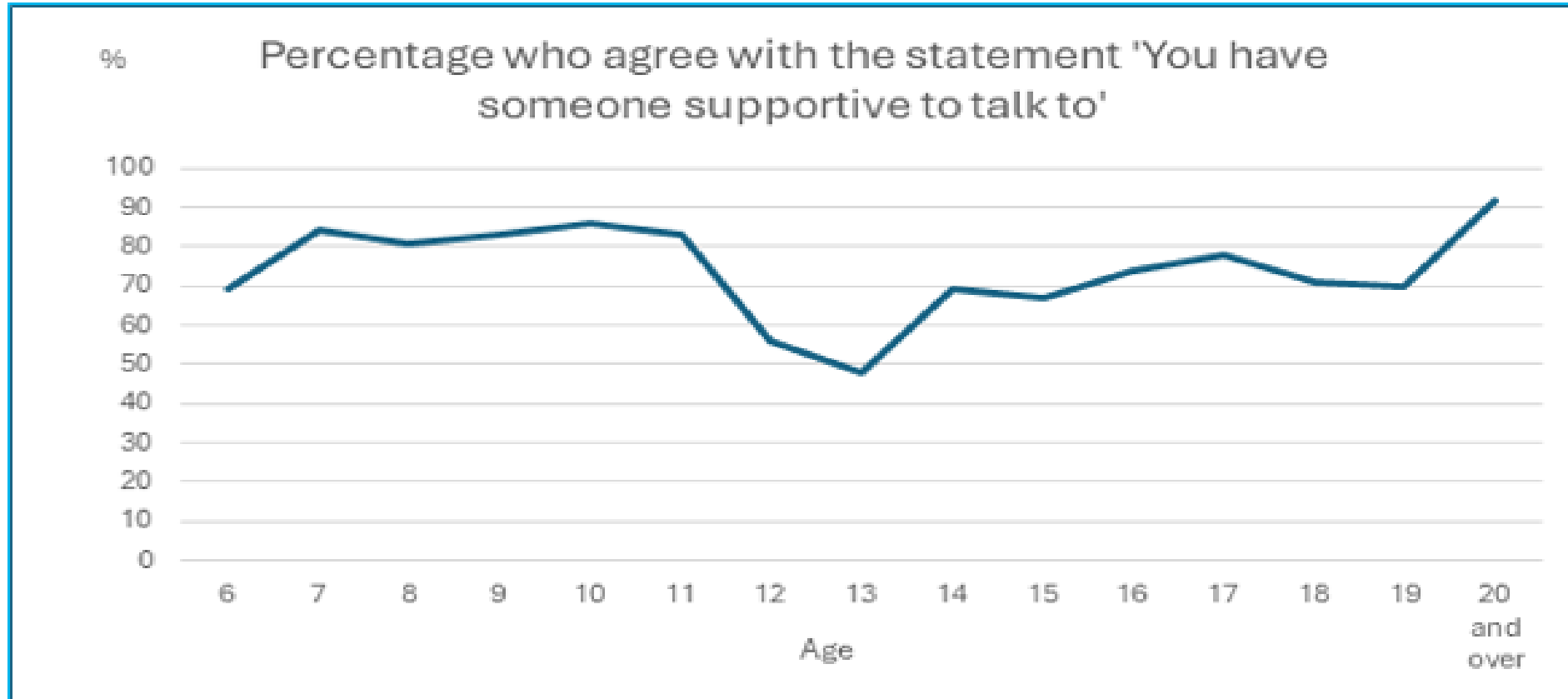
National wellbeing evidence shows a clear drop at transition:

- **ImpactEd Group (2025) – tracking 80,000 pupils**
  - High engagement in Year 6
  - Significant drop after Year 7
  - Average enjoyment score falls by nearly half by Year 8
  - Girls more likely to report feeling safe/unworried
- **Elevare Education Foundation's 3000 Voices (2025)**
  - Reported a **significant drop at age 12–13** in pupils saying they have someone supportive to talk to – related to transition into KS3
  - Increased anxiety about academic expectations and future careers
  - Shift from imaginative aspirations (primary) to more uncertain or pragmatic goals (secondary)

The emotional dip is measurable and national



# Elevare's 3000 Voices research (2025)



# 1 in 6 pupils feel unprepared

Transition is not smooth for a significant minority:

- **Evangelou et al. (2008):**
  - **16% of pupils felt unprepared** for secondary school
  - Disadvantaged pupils more likely to experience negative transition
- **Education Endowment Foundation (2024) identifies key causes:**
  - Lack of curriculum continuity
  - Unfamiliar systems and routines
  - Peer relationship challenges
  - One-off transition days “do not suffice”

**This is a systems issue, not simply a pastoral one**



# Curriculum and language shock at KS3

**The academic shift between KS2 and KS3 is significant**

**Deignan et al.(2022): A 2.5million-word study across 13 schools found:**

- Significant vocabulary expansion at KS3 in subjects like science
- Increased cognitive and linguistic load
- Evidence suggests certain groups (e.g. disadvantaged, EAL) may be disproportionately affected.

**Pupils experience simultaneous social, structural and academic challenges**



# What makes change successful?

**Research consistently identifies five success factors:**

- New friendships formed quickly
- No ongoing parental concerns
- Interest in schoolwork maintained
- Routines understood early
- Curriculum continuity experienced



# What makes transition successful?

## Evidence highlights:

- Van Rens et al. (2018)- **positive relationships between all stakeholders improve outcomes**
- Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (2022) – **stresses collaboration, curriculum continuity, active information sharing**
- Saville et al. (2023) - **Year group “bubbles” support smoother transition and developmentally appropriate environments**

**Relationships, continuity and belonging are protective factors**



# Teaching and staff challenges

- **Loss of Continuity Between Schools**

**Professional challenge:** rebuilding understanding of each child from scratch, very quickly.

- **Data vs. Reality Gap**

**Professional challenge:** accurately assessing ability without over- or under-setting pupils.

- **Managing Emotional Regression**

**Professional challenge:** balancing academic rigour with pastoral care.

- **Scale of Safeguarding & Pastoral Needs**

**Professional challenge:** safeguarding becomes more complex and distributed.

- **Curriculum Alignment Issues**

**Professional challenge:** pitching lessons correctly for very mixed readiness levels.

- **Behaviour and Expectations Reset**

**Professional challenge:** enforcing standards while building trust with anxious 11-year-olds.

- **Sheer Volume of Change at Once**

It is not just a pupil transition — it's an institutional reset



# What Chat GPT says

## Biggest Environmental Change

- Moving from a small primary school to a much larger secondary school
- New buildings, multiple classrooms, complex timetables
- Navigating corridors, lockers, and different subject blocks

## Many New Teachers

- In primary school, pupils usually have **one main teacher**
- In secondary school, they may have **8–12 different teachers**
- Different teaching styles and expectations can feel overwhelming

## Academic Pressure Increases

- Subjects become more specialised
- Homework load increases
- Setting/streaming may begin
- Greater focus on long-term exams (e.g., future GCSE pathway planning)



# What Chat GPT says (cont.)

## Social Re-Organisation

- Friendship groups often split up
- Students mix with children from multiple primary schools
- Increased risk of friendship anxiety or bullying concerns

## Developmental Timing

- Happens at age 11–12
- Coincides with the start of adolescence and puberty
- Emotional sensitivity is often heightened



# What our Trust has identified

- Project Galaxy – focused transition programmes – KS2 to 3 and KS4 to 5
- From March onwards - transition programme to start
- Trusted Adult both at Primary and Secondary
- Continual liaison from Year 7 – two-year journey
- Story Boards for more vulnerable and SEN pupils
- Outreach Year 6 cohort – those who have been suspended and high ACES
- Secondary specialist teachers delivering lessons in primaries
- Year 6 learning sessions on secondary sites (from spring/summer term)
- Summer school or bridging provision for targeted cohorts
- Year 11 pupils undertaking work experience in summer



# What our Trust has identified (Cont.)

- Giving time and space for children to explore their fears/worries about secondary school
- Independent travel , route planning, crossing the road and actions when getting lost
- Parent workshops to support Transition – preparing them for the changes ahead
- Secondary schools offering curriculum master classes for children to attend
- Detailed sharing of safeguarding/SEND info with as many opportunities for leads to discuss high need cases as possible
- **Secondary schools need to trust the assessment at the end of KS2 so that work is pitched appropriately from the start of KS3**
- **A broad understanding of the KS2 curriculum to inform planning at KS3**





**Thank you and  
Questions**