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Transition planning

Some children find change difficult. Adults can help support children manage change by scaffolding the process and supporting the child's emotional well-being. The adults around the child may want to consider using a transition plan to help with the process.

As part of a positive transition, it is important to show the child that we are thinking of them, holding them in mind and giving them permission to make the transition. Some children find transition hard because they do not trust that it is safe to leave what they are doing or safe to undertake their new venture.

Some children also find it difficult to trust that adults will be there for them and find transitions difficult as it can often mean leaving someone they trust. It is important to provide reassurance to the child that no one is cross with them and you do still care for them even when you do not physically see them.



What is a transition?

A transition is a change or moving from one thing to another. In a child's day/school life there are many transitions which can be big or small. These may include:

- Moving from home to school
- In class – moving from one topic to another
- Moving from one class to another
- Moving from unstructured time to learning
- Changing of year group
- Moving schools

The sample transition plan below is written for a child moving from one school to another. You could also consider how you can adapt/change this to suit other transitions the child you are supporting may experience.

Some conversations that might help

"I've had a lovely chat with your new school and they are very excited for you to start. I think you are going to do really well there. They are really looking forward to getting to know you."

"I've let the new school/teacher know about [something child is interested in, could be an object e.g. a favourite toy, or an activity they enjoy e.g. football], they can't wait to hear all about [name/it] and your adventures together."

Strategies that might help

• Postcard

A week prior to starting new school/class, postcards can be sent from the new teacher and any other staff members the child will be working closely with e.g. TA, to say how much they are looking forward to them meeting them.

• Additional transition visits to school

For a child that has suffered developmental trauma, more transition visits may be necessary to support the child in feeling safe going into a new environment, the additional visits may also need to be advanced in very small increments. A visual timetable of pictures or lists of who will be involved in each visit can support this plan.

• Agree on a Safe Space

A safe space allows students to go and relieve stress, calm down and recharge their emotion before going to back to learn. This can provide children and young people with a low stimulation area which they can use to settle in, or have a quiet time in a busy classroom. These can also be specific/dedicated areas in a school – for example if the school has a pastoral room this could provide such a space and support.

When thinking about creating a safe space consider the following:

- Create a quiet corner within the classroom where the classroom activity does not take place. Provide self-care activities for children and young people to do in this space
 - Creating a space/area outside of the classroom to provide space to decompress and reflect – a wellbeing space as an alternative to an isolation room
 - Ensure that signage around school is clear and identifies area where children and young people can go for support
 - Visual timetable: It may be helpful to go through the visual timetable with the child in their safe space on the first day of the transition plan, for other children it may be more helpful to go through the plan in advance – you will need to decide which approach works best for your child. A copy of the timetable can be kept both at home and at school.
 - Example of how a visual transition plan/timetable can be used for these visits
- It should be acknowledged that this is a template and that this should be altered to fit the circumstances of the child in a way that meets their needs best.

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Visit 1	Visit 2	Visit 3	Visit 4
Picture of child	Picture of child	Picture of child	Picture of child
Picture of old school/school classroom	Picture of old school/school classroom	Picture of old school/school classroom	Picture of old school/school classroom
Picture of any current key people/support worker/s	Picture of new school	Picture of new school	Picture of new school
Picture of new teacher/key adult/teaching assistant/support worker/s	Picture or parent/carer	Picture or parent/carer	Picture or parent/carer
	Picture of new teacher/key adult/teaching assistant/support worker/s	Picture of previous teacher/ key people/support worker/s	Picture of previous teacher/ key people/support worker/s
		Picture of new teacher/key adult/teaching assistant/support worker/s	Picture of new teacher/key adult/teaching assistant/support worker/s
			Picture of safe space*
			Picture of cartoon children to represent peers
			Picture of food/lunch hall

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Example plan for beginning with new school

- **First visit:** Classroom teacher/TA/Keyworker (+most appropriate person to attend) from new school to visit [child] at current school and spend some time in a safe space alongside current key worker(s). If a safe space has not been established in current school use an area that [child] feels comfortable in.
- **Second visit:** A short visit to new school after school hours (when quiet) with parent/carer, to meet new teacher/TA/Keyworker and see new classroom.
- **Third visit:** To the new school with parent/carer and key worker from old school, after school hours (when quiet), for [child] to meet new teacher/TA/Keyworker in new school setting and any additional staff [child] will work closely with. As part of this visit, [child] to be given basic maps of the school layout x3. [Child] can draw on/colour each map with the route to a specific place they will be accessing e.g. classroom to safe space, classroom to dinner hall, classroom to toilets/cloakroom. For a young child it may help to frame the activity as a colouring game/activity, not a piece of work. [Child] can choose colours and which map they'd like to do first. Let [child] lead the activity with adult support. If after the first map he/she seems overwhelmed, other maps can be completed over future visits.
For an older child this activity can be framed in a different way if the child isn't receptive to colouring – e.g. drawing/tracing etc. Once the maps have been completed, [child] should have the opportunity to practice the routes they've mapped out, adults should follow the maps with [child], but [child] should lead.
- **Fourth visit:** [Child] to visit during the school day (when busier) with current key worker (and parent/carer if required) for some time in a safe space/quiet area of new classroom.

If they are coping well it might be that he/she could do a structured, short activity with 1-2 carefully chosen positive role model peers. The activity should be completed in the time immediately preceding lunch and 'now and next' language should be clearly used to guide the child through the task and the coming transition to the dinner hall. [Child] can then stay for lunch at the new school with current key worker (and parent/carer – in dinner hall if needed). Following lunch [child] is to go back to the current school.

- **Fifth visit:** If [child] seems to have coped well with fourth day transition visit, keyworker or parent/carer to remain in the reception area whilst [child] does activity in safe space/quiet area of new classroom to promote a more accurate perception of how school will be for them. If [child] has been wobbly then keyworker or parent/carer to remain with them for the activity and lunch (in dinner hall). [Child] should be made aware and reminded that their keyworker or parent/carer is not far away.
As part of this visit the child should take something with them from their old school/classroom that they would like to leave at the new school – preferably something chosen by them from their safe space – possibly something from off the wall. This is to be left at the new school in a clear and obvious place for child to see when they return.

Example plan for ending with old school

• Good goodbye

A Goodbye book can be prepared prior to a child's final day at school but not given until the end of the transition plan. A Goodbye book could include:

- Photos of significant people in school
- Photos of significant places in school
- Names of favourite books/ activities/tasks
- Evidence of successes – pieces of work/photos/written entries
- Comments written in by staff
- Log of best memories
- Time line (include the future on this so that they can start to think about this)
- A list of areas of improvement e.g. keeping going with all your efforts at making new friends

Child could complete some positive ending activities with key people in school. Suggestions of activities provided on goodbyes and transitions sheet.

• Postcard

In first week of new school, the key worker from old school to send a post card to acknowledge they are holding child in mind (e.g. I thought of you at the weekend when I saw the football game and hope you are having fun at [name of new school]). Avoid using language such as 'we are missing you' as this could encourage feelings of guilt/shame.

• Visit

For some children, visiting the old school one final time after starting the new school may be helpful, for others this may confuse them. You will need to plan based around your knowledge of the child.
For every permanently placed child their needs will differ and these changes will be from day to day, and from each other. This template has been written as a guide, to be applied using your knowledge of the child.