

**West Sussex**  
**Autism & Social Communication Team**  
**and**  
**Learning & Behaviour Advisory Team**

present...

**Planning**  
**for**  
**Positive Transitions**

A Best Practice Guide  
for  
Schools and Parents

Positive Transitions: Page 1 of 15

# Introduction

This booklet recognises the importance of supporting children and young people to experience successful transitions within school, to new schools and back to school, recognising that transition is a process and not a single event.



Experiences during times of transition can have a powerful and long-lasting effect on academic outcomes, as well as impacting on an individual's self-esteem and emotional wellbeing.

This booklet aims to demonstrate good practice for transitions within and between schools by highlighting appropriate steps and strategies for transition. These are organised in the following way:

- Strategies for quality universal transitions within and between schools for all children and young people
- Targeted transition support for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and/ or other identified additional needs
- Specific transition support, regarding the Covid 19 pandemic.

The key to successful transitions lies largely in robust planning within an appropriate timeframe. Quality transitions:

- Are person centred and supportive;
- Are outcomes based and futures focussed;
- Recognise individual strengths and needs;
- Engage children and their families;
- Are reliant upon effective communication between key adults;
- Promote the development of independence.

# Universal Transition Offer

## Quality universal transition will:

- Be well-planned and proactive;
- Promote effective communication between the school(s), parents, the young people themselves and other people involved with the pupil;
- Promote fact-finding about a pupil's needs, interests, what is currently working well and any specific details that will help them to settle;
- Prompt discussion about changes or adaptations to the environment/routines where needed;
- Ensure that the wellbeing of the pupil is at the heart of the transition process;
- Ensure the pupil and parent/carer views are evidenced.



## Quality universal transition will include some of the following:

- A transition timeline for the pupil, staff and parents including key dates and information;
- When moving to a new school, opportunities for parents/carers and pupils to attend open mornings/afternoons/evenings prior to selecting school preferences. Ensure that key staff are available at these events to answer any questions;
- When moving within a school, opportunities for pupils to build relationships with new staff; for example, through story times, team building activities or sharing work they are proud of;
- Collect/share information from parents and carers, including who the key people are for the pupil e.g. if a grandparent or childminder will be collecting or dropping off and the level of information to be shared with that person, or how a young person will usually be travelling to school;

- Ensure the views and wishes of the pupil are gained and recorded;
- Encourage parents/carers to attend transition events with their children at school e.g. open evenings;
- When moving school, staff from the new school to consider visiting the current school;
- Transition information on the school website. This could include:
  - a virtual classroom tour;
  - photos of/videos from key staff;
  - a map of the school;
  - links to the transition information such as activities, information booklets, copies of letters sent out;
- A pupil passport/transition summary for each child showing their strengths and interests as well as the opportunities they may need and skills they may need to develop.



### Useful Resources:

- BBC transition resources: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/teach/teacher-resources-for-students-transitioning-to-secondary-school/zb68y9q>
- Young Minds transition tips: <https://youngminds.org.uk/media/2880/sen-tips.pdf>
- Family transition guide: <https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/sites/default/files/moving-secondary-school-17042013-d2146.pdf>
- Pupil transition guide: <https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/sites/default/files/moving-on-top-tips-for-pupils.pdf>
- School transition guide: <https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/sites/default/files/moving-on-15042013-d2125.pdf>

# Best Practice Autism and Social Communication Strategies

## Building Familiarity:

- Key staff to observe/visit the pupil in their current class/school;
- The pupil to visit their new classroom/school multiple times, at different times of the day, generally starting when no other pupils are present, and be introduced to adults, the environment and resources;
- Where possible/appropriate, invite the pupil to visit the school on an INSET day in September to see their new classroom (10 mins max) set up for the new term;
- Alongside the pupil, create a visual transition booklet/PowerPoint of information about their new class/school/staff which can be taken home and re-visited during the summer holiday.



## Resources and Environment:

- A visual transition booklet/PowerPoint of information about their new class/school/staff can help to build familiarity of the new environment and new adults which can be taken home and re-visited during the summer holiday;
- Ensure the pupil's favourite activities and familiar resources are available where possible. Ensure the pupil knows when, where and how, they can access these;
- For primary pupils, consider whether the pupil is able to self-select resources and work independently. This is an area that children with ASC/Social Communication differences often find difficult. They may benefit from a choice board or additional visual prompts and reminders;
- For secondary pupils, consider what support the young person needs to support their independence such as visual reminders and prompts, support with money

and making choices in the cafeteria, early arrival and queue passes, designated seats in their classrooms, or a buddy to move from class to class with;

- Consider whether a quiet space/workstation is needed. This could be within the classroom, but for some pupils, may need to be in another area;
- Consider providing opportunities for a daily 'check in' with a familiar adult to share changes to the day or any anxieties the pupil may have about their day.



- Provide visual supports for example:
  - Areas clearly labelled, trays labelled with both pictures and words as appropriate, a map of the school for secondary pupils, consideration given to labelling within the school environment – for example Maths classrooms are in the red corridor;
  - A visual timetable at the pupil's eye level/that the pupil can take with them around the school; that is referred to throughout the day, cards can be removed when activity is completed/lessons can be checked off; an individual timetable may be appropriate or 'now and next' depending on the age and developmental level of the pupil, this could be accessed on a smartphone or tablet;
  - A 'What's different today?' board to support pupils when there are changes in the routine;
  - A visual support to show any staff changes and who will be supporting the pupil;
  - A visual prompt to remind pupils what they can do when things don't go to plan such as forgetting homework or PE kit – this can be made using a credit card wallet which can be easily carried or could be accessed on a smartphone or tablet;
  - Visual lunchtime menu choices, reminders of the order of eating, access to a quieter area to eat lunch;
  - A visual choice board of resources to help a pupil to plan their "downtime".

## Sensory:

- Consider the pupil's sensory needs in relation to the environment; what adaptations and adjustments may be needed, e.g. leaving lessons slightly early to avoid busy corridors, a quieter place for lunch, a safe space to use if they become overwhelmed, adaptations/building familiarity with PE kit and uniform;
- Does the child have a sensory profile that could be shared? If not, current staff and parents could be asked to complete one. An example is available on the West Sussex County Council Local Offer - [https://westsussex-local-offer.s3.amazonaws.com/public/system/attachments/1116/original/NEW\\_Sensory\\_Toolkit.pdf](https://westsussex-local-offer.s3.amazonaws.com/public/system/attachments/1116/original/NEW_Sensory_Toolkit.pdf) which can help to identify such sensory responses;
- Falkirk's booklet 'Making Sense of Sensory Behaviour' <https://www.falkirk.gov.uk/services/social-care/disabilities/docs/young-people/Making%20Sense%20of%20Sensory%20Behaviour.pdf?v=201507131117>



## Social Communication and Play/Free time

- It is likely that the pupil's social understanding and social development will be different to that of their neurotypical peers, and more support may need to be offered;
- Consider how play/free time will be supported;
- Pupils may need to be taught how to play with/use resources;
- Pupils may benefit from time as 'helpers' with younger peers to enable continued access to resources and experiences appropriate to their level of social development;

- Pupils may benefit from access to an alternative area at break and lunch times;
- Pupils may benefit from encouragement to join break time clubs, access indoor spaces or support to initiate groups based on their interests;
- It may be useful to support children’s social understanding through the use of social stories or social articles for older pupils. For example, a story that explains the routine of the day, the environment, why we go to school or expectations of on the environment. More information regarding social stories can be found here: <https://carolgraysocialstories.com/social-stories/>
- “The New Social Story Book” by Carol Gray is also recommended: [https://www.waterstones.com/book/the-new-social-story-book-tm/carol-gray//9781941765166?awaid=3787&utm\\_source=redbrain&utm\\_medium=shopping&utm\\_campaign=css&gclid=EAiaIQobChMIInrGKoLvH6QIVDOztCh18GwLLEAQYAyABEgK\\_xfD\\_BwE&awc=3787\\_1590150359\\_10bd83ba3e7e0ee91e62c9b85163eb66](https://www.waterstones.com/book/the-new-social-story-book-tm/carol-gray//9781941765166?awaid=3787&utm_source=redbrain&utm_medium=shopping&utm_campaign=css&gclid=EAiaIQobChMIInrGKoLvH6QIVDOztCh18GwLLEAQYAyABEgK_xfD_BwE&awc=3787_1590150359_10bd83ba3e7e0ee91e62c9b85163eb66) and staff training on Social Stories is available from the Autism & Social Communication Team – please contact your advisory teacher for details.

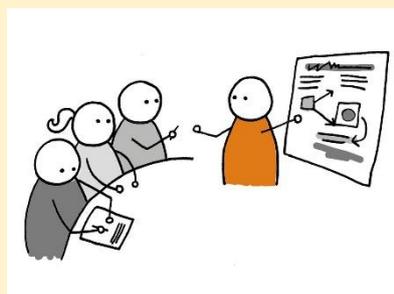


### **Emotional Understanding and Self-Regulation:**

- The use of specific techniques may be helpful to support the pupil to develop their ability to regulate their emotions and school may like to look at the resource: ‘Zones of Regulation’ by Leah M. Kuypers in order to increase the pupil’s emotional understanding and ability to self-regulate;
- Consider introducing calming or mindfulness activities after busy times or to support transitions such as from break time to class time or after school, e.g. quiet time in the book corner, listening to music with headphones or a word search or puzzle to support self-regulation.

## Best Practice – Learning Strategies

- Consider providing transition packs to:
  - introduce key staff, routines and information;
  - share photographs of key staff and areas of the school e.g. the classroom, toilets, hall, cloakroom;
  - share details of timings of the day, e.g. break time and lunch time;
  - It may be useful for parents/ carers to refer back to this with pupils over the summer holiday break.
  
- Provide clear, accessible guidance for new pupils that is appropriate to their developmental level, for example:
  - classroom trays labelled with both pictures and words;
  - a pictorial visual timetable at child's eye level that is referred to throughout the day with cards are removed when activity is completed;
  - a 'What's different today?' board to support pupils when there are differences in the routine;
  - Pictures of the above could be included in the transition pack.



- Offer sessions for parents/ carers of pupils with SEND (either in person or over Skype or similar) to meet and familiarise themselves with key staff. This could extend to opportunities to meet other pupils at a later date.
- Work closely with feeder settings/ schools to provide phased transition opportunities for pupils with significant additional needs. Discuss what works well in the prior setting/ school and consider how this could be replicated in the new school.



- If the child is in a dual placement or has outside agency involvement, consider how best to work with all stakeholders, perhaps organise a meeting or conference call. Best practice will include both parent and pupil voice and SENCOs from both the prior setting/ school and the new school.
- Ensure detailed records are taken regarding the pupil's learning needs and that this information is used to inform a provision map/ learning plan which can be implemented from the outset.

## Best Practice- Trauma and Attachment

- Prior to transition, work collaboratively with parents/carers and setting to establish what works well at home/in the setting and how this can be replicated at school.
- Consider additional visits, in liaison with the parents/carers and how these will best equip the child to settle well e.g. for a child who struggles with large crowds, begin by inviting them after school when the school is relatively empty.
- Identify a small team of key adults within school with whom the child can begin to build safe, attuned relationships. This could include the class teacher, teaching assistant, midday meals supervisor, office or maintenance staff, a member of the SLT.
- Consider how the team of adults might keep in touch with the child during the holidays e.g. send a postcard or photograph to introduce themselves, email a recording of them reading the child's favourite story, send pictures of the classroom or film a virtual tour that the child can look at with a parent/carer.
- Remember to match expectations with the developmental stage of the child, rather than their chronological age, where appropriate.
- Consider providing a transition booklet with key information at an appropriate level for the child's understanding, include photographs e.g. of the school uniform, classroom, outside areas, toilets etc as well as key staff.

### Useful Resources:

- <https://beaconhouse.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Supporting-Transitions-2.pdf>



## Best Practice – Social Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) Needs

- Talk with parents/ carers and practitioners to understand the nature of the SEMH needs of the individual child, their triggers and how to help.
- Consider the need for a risk assessment/ behaviour plan, particularly if the child is at risk of hurting themselves or those around them. What signs will you likely see if the child is struggling? What can you do to deescalate a situation? What should you not do? What equipment might you need to help (e.g. bubbles, something to fiddle with, a weighted object or blanket). The parents/ carers and setting will be able to advise on what works well currently.
- Ensure that all staff are aware of the plan for an individual, what to do, what to say, how to respond– staff do not necessarily need to know the history/ background, just the procedure and process.
- Contact any outside agencies involved with the child to seek support.
- Consider the use of *Antecedent, Behaviour, Consequence, Communication* (ABCC) records or *Setting/ situation, Trigger, Action, Result/ response* (STAR) records to collect information and unpick behaviours resulting from SEMH needs.



### Useful Resources:

- [https://westsussex.local-offer.org/information\\_pages/333-semh-the-early-years-strategies](https://westsussex.local-offer.org/information_pages/333-semh-the-early-years-strategies)
- [https://westsussex.local-offer.org/information\\_pages/505-emotional-resilience](https://westsussex.local-offer.org/information_pages/505-emotional-resilience)
- <https://www.nurturegroups.org/introducing-nurture/boxall-profile-online> - The Boxall Profile is an invaluable resource for the assessment of children and young people's social, emotional and behavioural development
- <https://www.winstonswish.org/> - Winston's Wish provides support for grieving children
- [https://inourplace.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Emotional-and-Development-Milestones\\_FULL.pdf](https://inourplace.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Emotional-and-Development-Milestones_FULL.pdf)

## Suggestions for Specific Transition Support and Strategies in response to COVID-19



Transition back into school this term:

- Share photos of the classroom and school environment showing how it will be different when children first return;
- Consider how you will share with the children that the curriculum and classroom routines will be different to start with, and also that some elements will remain the same, for example using a Social Story;
- Consider how you organise your environment to make it as visually welcoming as possible, maintaining a sense of safety for the children whilst also clarifying social distancing expectations;
- Encourage parents to talk to their children about what they are looking forward to about coming back to school, and share this with school staff;
- Encourage parents to talk to their children about any questions they may have about school re-starting and share these with staff – if possible, aim to answer these in advance of the child returning to school;
- Consider how children will be able to continue to ask questions as they re-start school including a question box to enable anonymity;
- Ensure families are aware of specific differences in your setting relating to social distancing, such as not all children being able to mix with one another, so that children can be prepared for this;



Transition to a new Class or School:

- Where additional visits, or face to face meetings, are not possible due to shielding or lockdown procedures, use phone calls, video calls and email to make initial contact between schools and parents/ carers.
- Consider the use of video calls and available technology to hold meetings with parents/ carers, practitioners and other outside professionals e.g. Occupational Therapist (OT), Speech and Language Therapist (SaLT).

- Plan your time – give start and end times to online meetings and plan additional sessions as needed.
- Ensure that the transitions information on your school website is readily available and clear to navigate. Include links to key information on WSCC website and FAQs about your school.
- Consider the following innovative ways to build relationships, impart knowledge of school and develop understanding of the child, their needs and personality:
  - Provide a virtual tour of classroom/school/communal spaces on the school website;
  - Consider ways to facilitate pupils asking their questions about their new school or class such as posting in an online forum and providing a question box once pupils are returning to school;
  - Record story time/information sessions online with new teacher/LSA/TA;
  - Individual or small group online chats to enable a group of peers to come together with a member of staff to facilitate them re-connecting with their peers;
  - Parents if possible, to complete a pupil profile as parental information may differ to the previous school/teacher;
  - Staff to complete a pupil profile. From both the pupil profiles, could you buy the child a birthday present? Could you plan them a birthday party? If the answer is 'yes' to these questions, then you have begun to gather a clear picture of the child;
- Teachers and new staff to complete their own profile to share with pupils, this will enable the pupil to begin to develop some knowledge of the new adults who will be supporting them;
- Booklet with photos of the school/classroom environment, helpful information about the new class/school and key members of staff;
- Transition meetings held via video phone or similar if possible;
- Activity ideas on the school website that pupils could choose to complete at home;



- Students currently attending secondary school could create a 'welcome video' to be shared with students due to start in September or join online chat groups to answer questions from new pupils;
- Identify any travel/transport difficulties affected by social distancing measures which could have a knock-on effect on timekeeping and arrival at school for individual pupils and families.

#### Suggestions for parents and families:

- Practise your route to school if this has changed, or will be different, due to the pandemic;
- Consider how your child may need to use money at school, could you practise this with them?
- What uniform will your child need to wear, might it help them to practise wearing this during the holiday?



#### Useful Resources relating to COVID-19:

- Beacon House – a therapeutic service provider: <https://beaconhouse.org.uk/covid-19-support-resources/>
- boingboing is an organisation supporting young people: <https://www.boingboing.org.uk/boingboing-coronavirus-resilience/>
- The BBC's Collaboration with Young Minds: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/teach/teacher-resources-for-students-transitioning-to-secondary-school/zb68y9q>

#### General transition resources:

- BBC Bitesize – starting school: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/articles/zrynnrd>
- ELSA transition resources: <https://www.elsa-support.co.uk/?s=transition>
- Twinkl transition resources: <https://www.twinkl.co.uk/search>
- NAS transition advice: <https://www.autism.org.uk/professionals/teachers/transition-tips.aspx>
- AET resources: <https://www.autismeducationtrust.org.uk/resources/>

Contact your ASCT or LBAT Advisory Teacher or email [schoolsABC@westsussex.gov.uk](mailto:schoolsABC@westsussex.gov.uk) for further advice and support.