



EDUCATION
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TOGETHER FOR EXCELLENCE
AND INCLUSION

Transitions Small and Large:

Parent/Carer tea and talk session

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Why the focus on transitions?

- Every transition is a change, even a seemingly small one. All of us can find change challenging, and for children with SEN, transitions can be particularly difficult.
- If transitions are not well managed, anxiety and dysregulation can quickly escalate, leading to further negative outcomes.
- In the case of 'big' transitions, such as between primary and secondary school, a well-planned transition is vital to minimise the risk of emotionally-based school absence, wider mental health needs and reduced attainment.

Transitions children tend to find most difficult in school

- Getting into the playground/building at the start of the day.
- Moving from a self chosen/play-based activity to a more formal, adult-led activity.
- Moving between the indoor and outdoor environments.
- Transitioning to and from lunch.
- Moving between different rooms.
- Moving between classes at the start/end of the academic year.
- Returning after a break (Mondays, first day after half-term).
- Moving from one educational setting to another.

Some quotes from children

“If I get used to something, and then it stops, I feel really sad and angry.”

“I need to know exactly what’s going to happen and when, otherwise I can’t concentrate, and spend the whole day stressing about what might be about to happen.”

“Things you find fun, like Christmas, is just too much change for me – new smells, tastes, the same songs playing all the time, people wearing weird stuff, lessons being cancelled...”

“Let me know about stuff, particularly new stuff, so I don’t kick off.”

“I felt like my life was over when I came to the end of primary school.”

Transitions children tend to find most difficult at home

- Leaving the home to go to school.
- End of 'screen time'.
- Ending the day – bathtime, bedtime.
- Adjusting to changes – from the big (e.g. a new baby, a death) to seemingly small (e.g. a new paint colour, a new shape of pasta or brand of crisps).
- Change of routine at the weekend or in the holidays.
- Any change of boundaries or rules in the home.
- 'Exciting' events – Christmas, birthdays, etc.
- And...?? Feel free to share your own experiences.



Supporting transitions at home

- Importance of a shared, mutually supportive approach between home and school.
- Prepare for changes – small and large – in advance.
- Importance of not ‘over-reassuring’ – “It’s going to be fine”.
- Normalisation of anxiety as a natural (and sometimes helpful) human emotion.
- Consider using a daily visual timetable.
- Use a calendar of events for the family.
- Regular ‘worry time’ every day.
- Shielding children from our own worries.

Supporting transitions at home 2

- Use visuals (e.g. count down the days by crossing off bed symbols each morning).
- Use social stories (see online for examples).
- Involve children in planning wherever possible, e.g. for a holiday.
- Ask children for their ideas about how they can be supported through transitions to make them easier.
- Over time, increase exposure to transitions to enable children to manage them more effectively and prepare them for adulthood – help them to understand that change is normal and that things cannot stay the same forever.

Time to chat...