Supporting Transitions: Helping Children and young people thrive through change

Arbour Vale Coffee Morning

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Aims

1. To develop an understanding on how to support a successful transition to a new year/ school/stage.
2. To develop an awareness of strategies to support beginnings and endings in the context of transition.

Agenda

Part 1.

Input on understanding the importance of transitions and strategies to support successful beginnings and endings

Part 2.

Time for questions, open discussion.

Common parental concerns

- How will my child cope with change?
- Will the new setting/class understand them and their needs?
- How will I manage the change effectively?
- What will the impact of change be on their wellbeing and behaviour?

Key principles of transition support

- Start early and plan ahead
- Collaborate with everyone involved
- Keep routines and communication consistent
- Focus on child’s voice and needs
- Build emotional resilience

Supporting yourself as a parent

- Acknowledge your own anxiety
- Keep communication open with schools and professionals
- Trust in the gradual process
- Practice self-care and stress management
- Seek support from parent groups or forums

Supporting your child emotionally

- Normalise feelings of worry
- Role play and rehearse changes
- Use of calming strategies and sensory supports
- Celebrate small successes
- Use visual supports and social stories to explain what is happening next

Preparing for adulthood

- Planning pathways from year 9 onwards
- Person centred planning and involving your child in decisions
- Careers guidance and supported internships
- Building life skills gradually (money, travel, decision making)
- Emotional readiness for change

Psychology that informs our practice

Attachment Theory

Children form an attachment to their school and this acts as an additional secure base through:

- **Providing safety**
- **Providing emotional security**
- **Promotes opportunities for social contribution**

This enables school to be a place where they can feel safe to explore and their learning can thrive.

Starting a new school/stage means the safety and security they felt is gone, and a new relationship must be established. Without this, challenges and anxiety can feel overwhelming and can contaminate learning experiences and excessive anxiety/uncertainty can inhibit thinking and learning.

This is why we want to ensure that we can support our young people as much as possible during this phase of change to help them succeed.

The experience of transition

Transition is process or period of change from one state to another. It is not a single event. Change involves loss:

- Loss of attachment to: familiar people (teachers, friends); the environment and objects within that environment
- Loss of role, status (year 6), and identity
- Loss of control
- Sense of feeling deskilled and less valued

1. You ***must*** remember me

"The vulnerability for these pupils lies in the challenges of separation and the fear of being 'lost from the mind', which triggers and intense response to cling, to possess and to intrude"

Geddes 2006, p.102

"I've got to keep you focussing on me, otherwise I'll be forgotten"

"If I'm forgotten, you won't be there when I need you"

2. I don’t care

I’m not bothered!

I don’t care!
Whatever!

Children may not give you any indication that they feel anything about transition.

Avoidance can be a defence against the pain of it all!
It is really important to support their transition, even if they are telling you they don’t need it!

That way they can see adults can be trusted to help.

‘see, I knew they wouldn’t be bothered about how I felt’

The RAFT model - endings and beginnings

Pollock and Van Reken (2009)

1. **R**econciliation: Encourage thought and discussion about anything the CYP would like to resolve before moving on, together with consideration of changes they may like to make or strengths they would like to utilise to help them to be successful in their new learning environments.

2. **A**ffirmation: Encourage thought and discussion about the people and things that have been valued by and especially important to the CYP, identifying special memories, friends and support, together with how they might show others that they especially mattered to them; i.e. making them a card or a picture, sending them a message, giving them a photo, talking to them face to face, etc.

3. **F**arewell: Encourage thought and discussion about how CYP may like to say their goodbyes individually and as a group, through collaborative planning of celebrations and activities that mark an ending in ways they are happy and invested in.

4. **T**hink destination: Encourage thought and discussion about the aspects of the move CYP are looking forward to, the new opportunities and strengths they will utilise, the goals they would like to achieve, and how they might overcome challenges.

RAFT model

❑ Mark goodbyes. If there is more than one goodbye, these may need to be staggered.

❑ It is important that relationships with current staff are carefully thought about prior to transition.

Activities to support endings

- Create a memory book/box including:
  - Photos of significant people in school
  - Photos of significant places in school
  - Affirming comments written by staff
  - Evidence of successes
  - A list of areas that have been developed during their time at your school
  - A supportive list of things still to work on
  - Names of favourite books / tasks / activities
  - Best memories
  - Time line (include the future on this so that they can start to think about this)

After transition

sensitive ‘after care’ is a key tool to teaching children about permanency and constancy and can teach important messages about how loss can be managed.

- ❑ Remember and acknowledge – Know the name of people who are important, such as previous class teacher/LSA, talk about them. Acknowledge the importance of that relationship. Remind the CYP that their previous Key Adult is still thinking about them.

- ❑ Connect – A previous key adult Could visit the child in their new stage; write a letter; send a post card; phone home – let them know you are thinking about them.
  - ❑ Visit / connect at the end of September
  - ❑ Visit / connect in November

- ❑ Plan for the ‘final’ goodbye. Mark this with something tangible that can be left with the child, such as a card or letter.
  - ❑ Card sent in January to wish them ‘all the best’. In most circumstances, this should be the final contact and models a positive ending.

Attachment aware beginnings

Research, involving over 2,000 children transitioning from primary to secondary school identified that they were most worried about:

- Getting lost
- Being bullied
- Losing old friends
- Homework
- Discipline and Detentions

What will happen if I forget my homework?

How will I find my way around?

Reflection points:

- How does knowing the most common worries supporting you to plan for support prior to, during and after transition?
- How can we make the unexpected, expected? What information is it helpful to share with children in advance?
- How can we support the maintenance of current friendships (and therefore positive attachment relationships)? Does the child have any close friends that are going to the same class/stage? Any adults who will be the same?

Before Transition (Summer Term)

✓Information sharing (Let the child know you have done this as it will alleviate worry)

- ❑ Identification of trusted adult(s):
  - ❑ Introduce new staff in plenty of time, BEFORE the transition occurs.
  - ❑Provide a meeting (All about me teacher summary? Personalised letter?) before the move.
  - ❑Consider that for some CYP, accessing an activity whilst talking may help them to feel more comfortable as to reduce the intensity of the situation.

- ❑Personalised visits
  - ❑School tour / following a map of the new school/class in person or virtually?
  - ❑Meeting Key staff
  - ❑Practising the journey to new school building/classroom

Some ideas for home:

- Read books and social stories about school to get familiar with the changes.
- Let your child express their fears, for example by writing them down in a worry diary or by drawing how they feel.
- Create a visual countdown to the start of school, such as a calendar with the remaining number of days on it.

Before Transition (Summer Term)

❑ Identify transitional object(s)

These can increase CYPs' sense of safety and security within their new environment and can help them to feel connected to someone who cares about them. This might be an object, or a note with positive affirmations from their previous class teacher / key adult.

Transition at Arbour Vale

- ❑ Students who need it will have a transition booklet with key staff and information
- ❑Provided with a holiday calendar to countdown and prepare
- ❑Social stories can be used where needed
- ❑Visits and introductions to key staff and rooms
- ❑Bespoke transition support

Key messages

- Transitions are a process not an event
- Collaboration is key
- Planning and preparation reduces anxiety for us and them
- Communication and parental involvement are so important.

Time for discussion/questions

- What concerns/worries do you have about transitions?
- What has supported your CYP before through transitions?
- What are you going to take away from this session to use and support you and your child through transition?

Thank you for your participation

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Resources

Young Minds - transition activities & resources for CYP:

https://www.youngminds.org.uk/professional/resources/supporting-school-transitions/

BBC starting secondary school - videos and advice for CYP:

https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/groups/c5vpkq1l934t

Rice, F., Frederickson, N., Shelton, K., McManus, C., Riglin, L. & Ng-Knight, T. (2014)

Identifying factors that predict successful and difficult transitions to secondary school. (research article)

Further resources

Primary to Secondary Transition Ready for Secondary - created by the East Midlands Education Support Service

http://em-edsupport.org.uk/Page/10997

School Transition and Adjustment Research Study (UCL) www.ucl.ac.uk/stars

Moving on Up! Board Game - a useful resource for schools and potentially families to play with CYP

https://www.amazon.co.uk/Moving-Surviving-School-Transition-Year-Olds/dp/0863888364

Derby County Guidance
https://schoolsportal.derby.gov.uk/media/schoolsinformationportal/contentassets/documents/Primary%20to%20Secondary%20School%20Transition%20Guidance.pdf

https://growinggreatschoolsworldwide.com/all-change-at-school-signpost-to-a-goodtransition/