



Transitioning from Primary School to Secondary School

Supporting Students with SEND

A guidance document for
school practitioners working
within the London Borough
of Hillingdon



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What is transition?

A transition is a change from one thing to the next, whether it be a major change such as moving schools or a minor change such as a change from the scheduled lesson. To many children with SEND, both transitions can be equally challenging. Transitioning between schools can present as both exciting and daunting for any pupil but for someone with SEND, this can become a challenging and traumatic experience. A key message in transition planning is to make the unfamiliar familiar, thus reducing anxiety and confusion as much as possible. Effective and early transition planning is essential to support students to realise their full potential and achieve individual goals.

Change is difficult for many people on the autism spectrum. This is because of an impairment in flexibility of thought, and anxiety linked to the unknown, common in many autistic people. They may have difficulties in predicting what might happen in a new setting so prefer to stick with what is familiar. Difficulties in social understanding means that an autistic person is likely to take longer to understand the expectations and social rules of a new environment or social situation. And due to difficulty in 'reading' and interpreting social cues, an autistic person may not know how to respond or how to behave in many common social environments.

Types of transitions that young people with an autistic spectrum disorder may find difficult include:

- Moving between the different structures of home and school life
- Preparing for a holiday, an activity day, a school trip, or any change in normal school routine.
- Having to wear a shirt, tie, trousers and shoes every day.
- Having a new teacher.
- Sitting at a different desk
- Moving between classrooms to change subjects e.g. moving between maths and English
- Moving to a new classroom and teacher in September.
- Moving between primary and secondary schools
- Preparing for work experience
- Preparing for the future and life after secondary school
- Preparing to start a college in September.

A change in environment, the geography of the school and volume of people each bring their own challenges; this can sometimes lead to a period of "melt down" as the pupil endeavours to cope. Undoubtedly, the consequences of a poor transition will not only impact upon the pupil's school career but also the perceptions of others towards that pupil. Indeed, later behavioural difficulties caused by a poor transition can include detachment from the new environment. There are many reasons why this transition may prove a challenge to the pupil with SEND. Here are just a few:

- **Geography of the School** - Finding your way around, coping with the environment, dealing with large, noisy crowds.
- **Anonymity** - In primary school settings most children grow up together and understand and make allowances for certain behaviours, this may not necessarily be the case in secondary school.
- **Travelling to school by bus** - allowing time to get to the bus, where to wait, times of the bus, what happens if the bus is late.
- **Following a timetable** - this is one of the most complicated parts of school life to get used to. In Primary School the child is taught by one teacher in the same classroom. They may be dependent on 1:1 support to help them with classroom activities.
- **Added responsibility** - organise their own equipment, books, writing down homework, finding the way to lessons on time.
- **Procedures for break times and lunch times and how to cope** - where to play, what to play, where to meet friends, which way to the next class.
- **Social difficulties** - much larger number of pupils, being the youngest at the new school, opportunities to develop social interaction.

The student's views and the knowledge of family members and other significant people (including advocates) can be invaluable in building a picture of the support needed by an individual to achieve their aspirations. This involves listening to the student and making sure they are always at the centre of planning and delivery; it is also about creating and offering services that meet the individual needs and aspirations of people with SEND - as opposed to matching services based on availability. A person centred approach should be paramount during this process of change.

With these things in mind, transition needs to be considered a PROCESS rather than an EVENT, which certainly needs to begin when a pupil is in Year 5, if not sooner. If we are beginning to talk about a pupil's transition between primary and secondary towards the end of Year 6, then it is already too late. An effective transition is about working in a person-centred way, and in partnership with the pupil, the family, key professionals and both schools involved.

Running a Transfer Group

Why run a transfer group?

- It allows the pupil time to think ahead and to prepare themselves for change.
- It gives pupils a safe arena to talk about their hopes and fears.
- It can reassure parents of vulnerable children.
- It can reduce pupil anxiety in the first few weeks of secondary school.
- It can raise awareness of staff in primary and secondary schools.

How to run a transfer group?

- The project will work best during the second half of the summer term.
- Five or six children per group is a good number to work with. The group comprising of children transferring to the same secondary school.
- Talk to the **Head of Year Seven** and obtain; a current school prospectus, details of uniform, a copy of school rules, personal planner, map of the school, photographs, examples of timetables, etc. Or, if possible, support the children to write to the Head of Year to request this information.
- Use a '**My New School**' booklet to cover topics such as homework, school rules, break times, making friends, etc. over several sessions, dependent on the abilities of your group. Try to create a safe atmosphere where pupils have an opportunity to share.

What should I do on the last session?

- Invite the Head of Year 7 in to speak to the group? Or perhaps some past pupils of the primary school?
- Hand out certificates and make it into a celebration of achievement and things to come.
- Ask the pupils if they know what happens next. Give them anything that they may need to refer to over the summer holiday to take home.
- Evaluate the pupil's experiences of the group using a questionnaire or another means of evaluation.

Guidelines for a Successful Transition Process

[See Autism Education Trust - Transition Toolkit](#)

for a comprehensive overview, effective strategies and supportive tips and information

Transition timeline:

With Government providing the opportunities for more mainstream inclusion for children on the autistic spectrum (DfES, 2001; WAG, 2003) the earlier the process begins the more likely the transition will be a success. To support the transition process a checklist has been outlined for key actions to be carried out during Year 5 through to the autumn term Year 7. These were developed through a working group and based on good working practice and recommendations from the National Autistic Society (2006) and Autism Education Trust. The Transition Schedule is provided in Appendix A.

Preparation Checklist:

Does the student have an Education, Health & Care Plan (EHCP) or Early Support Funding (ESF)? If ESF is in place, a transfer form will need to be completed: [ESF transfer form \(Information for Professionals\)](#) and the My Support Plan (MSP) should be shared with the new school.

Being prepared is crucial to ensuring a smooth transition e.g., preparation of visual resources, sharing of the student's key information with relevant staff. The checklist is provided in Appendix B.

My Support Plans (MSP) & One Page Profiles (1PP)

LBH actively promote the use of the Hillingdon MSP and One Page Profiles for students with additional needs. These ensure personalised, child-centred planning. It is a summary of key information about a child including what we like and admire, what matters to them and how to support them. The aim of the MSP is that any practitioner across any partner agency can quickly gain an understanding of the child including their strengths and needs and what support has been put in place and how well that is working. The 1PP provides more specific information. For a young child it may be as simple as "What makes them happy". But most importantly it informs others about how your child likes to communicate e.g., sign, symbol. Watch this video clip for a clear outline and inspiring overview of how its use can impact on each and every child in the school/ setting: [One Page Profile - Bing video](#) An example of a 1 Page Profile is illustrated in Appendix C. The 1PP, MSP template, guidance can be found here: [Hillingdon My Support Plan & 1PP](#).

Communication Passports:

Communication passports are an additional and useful resource to provide an overview of the pupil's strengths and weaknesses. There are a variety of formats which can be used but each is individual to the pupil. The pupil is encouraged to give a copy of this information to their new form teacher during one of their visits in July. An example of a communication passport is illustrated in Appendix D.

Behaviour Support Plans (BSP):

Not all children with SEN require a Behaviour Support Plan but can be invaluable for students who require a consistent approach. BSPs are not only implemented for children who engage in 'behaviours that challenge' but can be used to ensure a consistent and positive approach to students with a variety of needs e.g., communication, sensory or emotional needs. A good **behaviour support plan** is based on the results of detailed observations and assessment of needs and uses Positive **Behaviour Support** (PBS) approaches. The **plan focuses on proactive (preventative) strategies** which not only focus on the challenging **behaviour(s)** but also include ways to ensure the person has access to things that are important to them. An example of a Behaviour Support Plan is illustrated in Appendix E

Transition Pack for Student:

Transition packs should be supported with visuals e.g., photos of buildings etc. An example of a Transition booklet is shown in Appendix F.

This should include the following basic information and any other relevant information:

- Expectations: lunch/break times, movement between classes, homework
- Environmental information: lockers, maps, bells/buzzers
- Key personnel: form tutor, SENCO, mentors, Head of Year
- New vocabulary: subject specific vocab, 'tutor group', 'head of year'
- Quiet area: where to go for a calm environment
- Support: How/who to ask for help
- Organisational tools: diary, checklists, task management support
 - Ensure there is opportunity to practice using these during Year 6



Ordinarily Available Provision (OAP):

Educational settings make a range of ordinarily available provision for all children and young people, including those with SEND from the totality of resources available to them. The OAP document can support schools / settings in developing their provision for pupils with SEN or disability to be more consistent with that in the majority of schools. Consider what was in place in the primary school and attempt to replicate where possible to ensure a smooth transition. The reasonable adjustments can be reduced over time and only where appropriate. Click here for more information on OAP: [OAP - Information for professionals](#)

Social Stories:

Social Stories (Gray, 2000) are a visual support strategy which can be used to support students to engage in the transition process more effectively. The strategy helps to explain the unfamiliar social situation and tries to give both the perspective of others and their expectations of the individual. Social stories can be written for the individual student and address issues which may affect them personally. An example of a social story is illustrated in Appendix G

Appendix A

Suggested programme from Primary to Secondary school

Year 5

Spring to Summer Term

- Primary SENCO to arrange a TAC meeting with all agencies for a review in the Summer Term
- Are there significant needs and a high level of concern about the student starting a larger, unfamiliar secondary school? Consider whether ESF may be appropriate for Year 6 / Year 7
- EHCP Year 5 Annual Review - Use question prompts to ensure all information is current and relevant

Year 6

Autumn Term

- Parents begin visiting secondary schools - smaller sessions to be offered for CYP with SEND
- SENCO of both schools liaise to arrange a visit for parents of children with EHCP or ESF to visit potential secondary placement
- Admission form completed indicating preference for secondary school – parents/carers should be encouraged to share information about their child's SEND and indicate whether ESF is in place

Spring Term

- Secondary placement allocated
- Primary SENCO to invite all relevant agencies and secondary SENCO or representative to attend year 6 Annual review and ESF TAC meetings for children with significant needs
- Primary SENCO/TA/Class teacher to meet with parents to go over plan to support needs of child - **ensure one page profile and information passport is in place (could be done at parent's consultation evenings).**
- Student to make a list of 3 things they are looking forward to and 3 that they are worried about regarding the transition - begin to populate transition booklet
- Primary Schools to send letter to parents of all children on SEND register (could be given at parent's consultation evenings) suggesting they contact the allocated secondary school to arrange a consultation / visit
- SENCOs of primary and secondary schools begin liaison process and schedule transition meeting/visit date - set up 'transfer group'
- Transition booklets to be completed at secondary visit - See Appendix F

Summer Term

- Continuing liaison between schools and transfer of information
- Secondary school to send letter inviting all parents of children with SEND to meet SEND staff
- Supported visits to secondary school arranged for child (include meeting relevant staff)
- Transition meetings/ training for relevant secondary staff as necessary (supporting individual pupil)
- Secondary school to provide final timetable before start of summer holiday
- Primary and Secondary SENCOs to arrange file transfer arrangements
- Secondary SENCOs share incoming information with relevant staff in preparation for student's arrival

Year 7

Autumn Term

- Transfer to secondary school
- Any training for secondary staff/ peer group delivered
- SENCO to ensure all staff have met the pupil and have copies of relevant information
- Meeting with parents, SENCO, form tutor, learning support assistant to monitor transition and settling in period
- Home-school communication begins via diary/email

Appendix B - Checklist

1. Gather as much information as possible about the child. Is there any funding in place that needs to be transferred e.g., ESF? What Ordinarily Available Provision (OAP) should be available? Use admission forms, MSP, All About me booklets, transition records and one-page profiles.
2. Talk to parents and plan a visit for relevant staff to existing setting.
3. Arrange a transition meeting with parents setting or school staff, parents and any professionals involved before the child starts.
4. Make time for observations and conversations - don't make assumptions!
5. Think about who would be a suitable key person. Support and create opportunities for them and the SENCO to build a relationship with the child and parents.
6. Ensure staff receive any training that may be needed before the child starts at the setting or school.
7. Have in place any specialist equipment the child may need, plan ahead as this may take time to source.
8. Audit toys, books and other resources to ensure they are suitable and accessible for the child.
9. Consider the room layout to ensure mobility, the provision of a quiet area, toilet adaptations, changes to lighting, flooring, or furniture.
10. Where a child has an EHCP or ESF, plan for any additional staff who may need to be recruited, inducted and given the opportunity to get to know the child and parents.
11. Agree an admission and settling in plan with parents.
12. Set up a comfortable environment full of familiar resources. Think about keeping things the same as the child saw it last.
13. Take friendship groups into account and spend time introducing children to each other.
14. Provide plenty of time and opportunity for transition, this could mean several visits over several months in order to desensitize and reduce anxiety.

Appendix C – 1 Page Profile

All About (name)
DOB

photo

Important to (name)

(name's) strengths, talents and interests

(name) likes...

(Name) needs help with...

(include diagnosis/identified needs)

(name) doesn't like.....& what to do

How (name) likes to communicate
and be involved in making
decisions

Please do...

Developed by:.....Date:.....
Updated byDate:.....



Important for (name)...

**You may need to know.....(allergies,
languages spoken, religion etc)**

What we like and admire about (name)...

**(Name's) support network... (people
that are important to (name)and
people working with (name)**

**Parent/Carer's aspirations and hopes for
(name).....**

**Sibling's/family member's hopes for
(name)...**

Developed by:.....Date:.....

Updated byDate:.....

Appendix E – Example Behaviour / Sensory Support Plan

Behaviour Plan

Name: Child X Year 2		Teacher: Mrs Smith Date of Plan: 04/09/2017		Review Date: Dec 2017
Likes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Computer - Music - Toys - Bouncing Chair - Going out on trips 	Dislikes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Dogs (which are big) - Boredom - Too much stimulation 	What's working well: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Responds well to praise - Responds well to motivators - Enjoys physical activities - Understands the function of timers 		
Behaviours that Challenge (list 2-3) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jumping up and down in peers' personal space • Hitting adults/children 		Triggers and Cues		Possible functions of behaviours: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seeking response from adult (intense facial expression) • Sensory stimulation • Emotional regulation
Proactive Strategies (Green Stage)		Amber Stage		Reactive Strategies (Red Stage)
Jumping up and down in peer's personal Space & Hitting adults/children Implement sensory diet 3 times a day and when arousal levels are unregulated <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use bear hug following playtimes / during adult led activities (15 minutes at a time) • Use vibrating cushion and small snake fiddle toy during circle time and assembly • Use ear-defenders during times where auditory filtering may be difficult • Give clear, simple instructions of what is expected • Support instructions with symbols and sign • Use first/next board consistently (symbols) • Ensure good pace for circle time and activities are differentiated effectively • Use motivators for adult led / work activities (likes spinning snowman; jack-in-the-box and shredding bits of string; computer) 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ignore low level disruption and praise other children for good sitting • Distract before behaviour escalates e.g. singing / humour • Give an errand to run • Evaluate need for sensory diet input • Keep negative facial expression to a minimum • Reduce language to verb only e.g. walk • Clear instruction of what is required e.g. 'sit' or 'hands down' (refrain from using negatives e.g. stop running) • Ultimately give 2 choices e.g. good sitting or work outside? Use flow chart with pictures. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only use as last resort if **** is in danger of hurting himself or others • If possible, remove other children from environment • If not possible / behaviour continues remove to safe space, tell *** to 'sit' then show first/next board: first 'good sitting' then 'work' (or specified activity) • Allow processing time for independent transition to safe area, otherwise use 'small person escort' team teach technique • If behaviour continues leave for 1 minute with discreet observation - use visual timer shown through window - do not engage further in verbal or <u>non-verbal</u> communication • If behaviour ceases and he sits, return to class, remove 'good sitting' symbol and repeat what is required next e.g. 'work'
				Plan Shared with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Parents - Staff
				Objectives: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. to engage in a adult led activity for 5 minutes 2. to be part of a small group activity

Appendix F

Behaviour Plan

Name:	Year	Teacher:	Date of Plan:	Review Date:
Likes:	Dislikes:		What's working well:	
Behaviours that Challenge (list 2-3)	Triggers and Cues		Possible functions of behaviours:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • • 	Triggers	Cues		
Proactive Strategies (Green Stage)	Amber Stage		Reactive Strategies (Red Stage)	
		Plan Shared with: <input type="text"/>		
		Objectives:		
		Other Information:		

Appendix G – A Social Story



At At break time I will _____

At lunchtime I will _____



I can ask _____

for help at any time, when I need it.

In Year ____ I will get homework, just like in Year ____ This is OK.

_____ will help me with my homework.

Being in a new school will be lots of fun.

I will learn new things and make new friends.

I will be able to tell _____

all about my new class at the end of the day.



My New Secondary School

A Social Story



My name is _____

I like to be called _____

I go to _____ school.

I am in Key Stage _____