



Positive Transitions A Digital Support Pack

Specialist Teaching And Learning Service Swale



A rationale for these resources.

The benchmark of good transition is providing children with certainty and clarity. It is normal for children to feel worried during periods of uncertainty, even when the change or transition they are experiencing is a positive one. In a complex and changeable world, we are able to support pupils by providing them with structured, supported opportunities to process these changes.

With this in mind we have created the following package of digital resources, comprising of printable worksheets and instructional videos, alongside this written guidance, in order to provide parents and schools with support to help pupils manage change.

Who do we involve?

This package has been developed to aid transition between educational settings. However, the materials can be edited and then used to support pupils experiencing any form of transition including: changing classes, changing teachers or returning to school following an extended absence.

Delivery

The following pack is designed to be delivered by either parents or professionals. Each section is comprised of a worksheet and an accompanying video explaining the task, which can be viewed by the child and adult before beginning the task. The worksheets can then be collated at the end of the sessions to create a transition booklet, which can be used by the child as a practical resource and shared with appropriate adults as necessary.

The tasks are best delivered in order, however, tasks can be omitted if felt unnecessary for particular children, or can be referred to multiple times e.g. the “my biggest worry” framework for activity 3 might be useful for more than one issue.

Important considerations before you begin

- Adopt a “being worried is normal” policy. We all have concerns and we can support each other to overcome them.

- Acknowledge that everyone is experiencing uncertainty at times of change. Having questions and concerns is normal.
- Try to create a positive atmosphere where children are encouraged to acknowledge and identify strengths alongside weaknesses and build more realistic expectations of themselves.
- Most transitional issues are related to fear of the unknown; planning and using problem solving approaches is the best way to overcome anxiety of this type.

A word about worry

Anxiety is a feeling of worry or unease about something with an uncertain outcome. In a world with a great deal of uncertainty, anxiety is a common reaction of children and adults to the situation we find ourselves in. Your child is not alone in this and neither are you. Stress occurs when demand outweighs PERCIEVED ability to cope. The best way to overcome transitional anxiety is to create a plan of HOW the child is going to manage each worry. This helps to create perspective, and increase the perceived ability to cope by offering a practical solution.

Endlessly discussing a worry does nothing to reduce it, but creating a concrete plan will. This works for adults as well as children!

Further advice and support for anxiety can be found here:
<https://www.nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters/anxiety>

Even better if..... - making the pack bespoke

The 8 activities within the support package can be supplemented with additional information in order to make the sessions more bespoke.

Pen Pictures

In addition to using the pupil voice document in activity 8 develop a thorough pen picture which reflects the needs of the pupils and the support they receive within their current setting. Share this document with the new setting/relevant staff. A format for creating a pen picture

has been included in the support pack alongside an anonymised example.

Timetables

Pupils transitioning to secondary schools won't usually receive their timetables until the first week in September. Secondary schools use a very different format to the timetables used within primary schools where the day usually follows a distinct routine e.g. each day starting with math's or literacy. The transition sessions represent a good opportunity to develop the skills to read a timetable in the correct format. We recommend staff contact the secondary school to obtain an anonymous timetable for use in the sessions (Some schools have one on their website).

Using the timetable, support pupils to develop their knowledge of the school day, lesson and break timings. It may be helpful for pupils to plan appropriate times to use the toilet (most secondary schools discourage toilet breaks during lessons).

Some secondary schools have a one-week timetable whilst others have a two-week timetable that alternates. Some school's lessons are shorter on certain days, where they finish school earlier than usual. At most secondary schools pupils can purchase a hot snack at breaktime.

Ensure the pupils understand what the symbols or abbreviations used by the school mean and how to decode the timetable. Staff may wish to turn this into a decoding game that helps pupils to familiarise themselves with the new vocabulary e.g:

The pupils (or staff member) can partner up and ask each other questions about the lesson, timing, block and room number or teacher they have during a set time period e.g. Who will teach you period 1 on Monday? Which room will you be in at 11:15 on Thursday? Who will teach you for Maths?

Using Maps

Navigating a new environment can be a real challenge for some pupils.

Where pupils are transitioning to a new school we recommend staff contact the new school to obtain a map of the setting (many schools have a digital version available on their website). Where transitioning between classes within the same setting staff may wish to use photos or create their own map as an activity.

Regularly reference the map within the sessions in order to support pupils to develop their confidence with the new school layout. Pupils who will be attending the same school can ask each other to pinpoint certain lessons using the anonymous timetable. It may be helpful to cross reference the map and timetable by color coding the two documents to help identify where the lesson will be e.g. English lesson highlighted orange on the timetable. English block highlighted orange on the map. If possible provide pupils with a small laminated version of the map to take with them at the end of the sessions and keep in their new school planner.

Some schools provide face to face visits prior to transition. Staff may wish to arrange an in-person visit to the new setting for pupils who have difficulties with navigating or who are especially anxious about finding their way in a new setting. During this visit pupils can be supported to use the map to navigate the school.

Transition Meetings

Consider arranging a transition meeting with the new setting in order to discuss the pupil's needs and enable the transfer of key documents and information. Where possible parents should be included within this meeting. Staff may find it particularly useful to share the completed activities from this pack during the meeting to represent the pupil's voice.

The Virtual Transition Pack

Activity 1 - Same And Different

- Watch Video 1 together.
- Many things at the new school will be the same as they are now. In fact, it is likely that more things will be the same for children than different e.g. you will still have PE lessons, you will still wear a uniform, you will still get a lunchbreak, you will still have homework, you will still have English etc.

Discuss with the child – what things will be the same and what will be different. Topics might include: teachers, classrooms, timetable, uniform, friends, subjects, timings of the day, ways to get help, lunchtime, break time, and travel to and from school.

Activity 2 - My Feelings About Transition.

- Watch video 2 together.
- Give the child a few minutes to think about their new setting. On their sheet they should write a list of things that they are excited about and a list of things that are worrying them. These worries should then form the basis of Activity 3 and any problem solving conversations. The things your child is excited about can be regularly referred back to so that conversations about transition can have a positive focus.

You may find that your child is not worried about the things you might expect, this is normal. Children sometimes focus their concerns around very specific issues. Some children will not voice concerns because they lack the language to share their worries. Others will not share their concerns because they simply do not have any, even if their parents or teachers are anxious on their behalf!

Activity 3 - My Biggest Worry

- Watch video 3 together.
- Ask the child to identify their biggest worry. This will probably be a worry from Activity 2. Rather than looking at all the concerns at once, focus on the worry the child thinks is the biggest or most important. Gently discuss, why are we worried about this thing in particular? Then discuss, what can we do about our worries? Explain that having a plan is one of the most effective ways to overcome a worry – use the worksheet to

discuss the potential solutions to the key worries e.g. worried about not having friends.

What can I do about it now? identify if anyone else at my current school is going to my new school. Set up phone/text/email/written correspondence with these pupils.

What I can do about it when I've started school? Speak to new people, attend clubs, ask a teacher to help me make friends, join in with the induction activities.

Activity 4 - After Hello

- Watch video 4 together.
- Explain that during the first few weeks of school they will meet a lot of new people. Introducing themselves and talking will be the best way to make friends. They will need to use greetings. Most people know how to say hello but not everyone remembers to do it, or to do it once a day to all of their friends. If you feel uncomfortable about speaking its ok to wave or smile at your friend instead, your friend will know you are saying "Hello". Some people say more than just hello. They say things like, "Hello, how are you?" or "How are you doing?" Asking a question usually means they expect a reply. Asking a question is a great way to start a conversation.
- Practice making new friends together. Ask the child to think about the things we say after we have said "Hello". See the resource sheet for some ideas.
- Questions are one of the best ways to keep conversations going and help us to learn things about new people.
- Practice asking questions to keep a conversation going. You might do this in a pair, or phone a friend/relative or use video calling to practice this skill.
- You can record and use your ideas as part of Activity 5.

Activity 5 - How To Make A Friend

- Watch video 5 together.
- Following the discussion in Activity 4 put the ideas you have discussed down onto the "How to make a friend" activity sheet. These can be referenced later in order to support recall and reassure the child.

Activity 6 - What Makes Me A Good Friend

- Watch video 6 together.
- Some pupils may be worried that people at the new school will not want to make friends with them even if they introduce themselves appropriately. This activity can be used with children that are concerned about people wanting to be their friend.
- Write an advertisement describing yourself as a friend. Think about what you might need to include e.g. what you like, what your best qualities are, what makes you a good friend. Pupils may use words, pictures and any format they wish for this advertisement e.g. wanted poster, comic strip, mind map. Friends and family members can be consulted to share positives about the person if they cannot identify positive traits for themselves.

Activity 7 – What If?

- Watch video 7 together.
- Look at the “What if?” chart. Are any of these worries familiar? Together make a plan for each of the issues on the list e.g. If I don’t know where my lesson is I can...ask a teacher, walk with a friend, ask an older student, go to the school office. Cross off any worries the children do not have e.g. forgetting a bus pass, if they are walking to their new school, and add any particular worries not included (a new personalised version of the chart can be made if necessary).
- A second version of this sheet has been included, “What I can do now I have started my new school?” This can be used to support children to discuss transition once they have started in the new setting. A more specific version can then be made that includes names of new teachers, places, routines etc.
e.g. If I don’t know where my lesson is I can...Ask my form teacher Mrs Redfern, look at the map in my planner, ask my friend Robert, go to reception and ask Miss Walker the receptionist for help.

Activity 8 – About Me

- Watch video 8 together.
- Give the child a few minutes to think about the statements on the sheet. On their sheet they should write anything they think teachers should

know about them, or that is important for them to share. This should come from the child's perspective. (More detailed information relating to support or needs can be shared by SENCOs and parents separately if necessary). Then consider whether or not you want to share this document with your new school or teacher. This optional activity is designed to build positive relationships and make first meetings easier, but should only be completed by the child if they feel comfortable to do so and should not include confidential information.

“OK, Now it's your turn!”