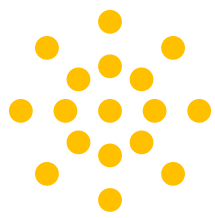


Preparing for School Changes (Transitions)



Ideas to support children previously in care
(adoption / special guardianship & child arrangement orders)



Information, Guidance and Support

We all need a little information, support and advice from time to time.

Here are some helpful starting points for parents, guardians and teachers of children who were previously in care.

This guide is not a manual for all children, it is a starting point to help and assist with some common challenges.

The focus of this guide is principally the transition from Primary to Secondary. However much of the guide will support any stage/age of transition or school change.

Change can be exciting and scary at the same time and a real challenge for many children and adults. Leaving behind everything you know and feel comfortable with, to face the unfamiliar and unknown can be extremely daunting and difficult for some children.

For those children who may have attachment, trauma or SEND needs, transitions can be especially difficult.

Supporting all children with transitions is important, for those who have additional needs they may need much more consideration. The key to successful transitions is the planning, preparation and support that is put in place.

Remember always keep each unique child in mind when planning transitions.

We have tried to give you some ideas and suggestions in this guide. Not all will be relevant, necessary or right for your child. You will know your child best, so take these as a guide and adapt these to suit their needs.

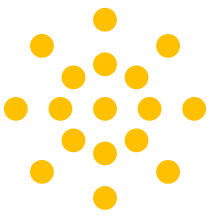
Please remember, if you have any concerns you can seek advice from your child's school, SEND Services, other agencies involved and the Virtual School or local adoption support agency (see contacts page).

Top Tips



- Understand an individual child's needs and always keep these in mind
- Work in partnership with pupil, parents, school staff and other relevant professionals
- Make a transition plan, review and reflect on this throughout the process
- Keep communication up to date and regular throughout the transition process
- Make sure you know a child's concerns and mitigate against these
- Make sure you know a child's interests and use these to engage, excite and connect during transition
- Don't forget the basics of keeping a child feeling safe, settled and secure throughout





Teachers

All schools have existing universal transitions work and plans in place. Make sure you keep to your established routines and include all children.

It is worth considering all of your children and splitting them by levels of need. Starting with those who will need no more than the **Universal** offer of transitional support. Then consider the other children and the level of support they need.

Those children who have a moderate level of vulnerability will need a more **Targeted** level of support. All children in care or with care history (adopted children or SGO) are likely to need a more targeted level of support.

There might be a small number of children with more complex, significant and severe needs, such as those with EHCPs, they may well need **Specialist** support.

The examples opposite given against 3 categories of support are only guides and suggestions. You may well have other successful work and plans in place or you may wish to adapt them to incorporate some of these.

Whatever your approach think of each category as a layer, so someone who needs specialist support should also receive (where appropriate) the other two layers.

Remember the more complex needs a child has, the more layers and elements of transition work will be required.

For those who need it don't forget to use local agreements, protocols and planning tools around transition. (Please see local links and contacts at the end of this document)

Remember a transition is as much about what you are leaving (saying goodbye to) as it is about what you are going to (new people/places) and the time in the middle (usually school holidays).

Remember the greater the needs, the more stepping stones that may be required to support a successful transition.

what can I do

• Universal

- Leavers mementoes
- Leavers Assembly /Celebration
- Saying goodbye to people/place

- Transition Days
- Transition Guide / Pack
- Parents Information
- Meet new teachers / staff

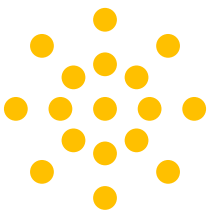
• Targeted

- Transition personalised gift / book
- Significant keepsake/memory book/box
- All about me (pupil) transition sheet for new staff
- Detailed bespoke transition plan
- Additional transition time/events
- Informal summer holiday provision

• Specialist

- Detailed multi-agency specialist transition plan
- Allocate Key Person to build early connections
- Specialist curriculum / timetable review
- Social Stories / Book to prepare
- Transitional Object(s)
- Multiple points of transition / visits and build trusting relationships prior to move





Teachers

what can I do

Here are a few more ideas and suggestions, which you can think about and adapt to the level of needs you are working with.

Think of these as the goodbye part of the transition and the hello to the new. But also don't forget to think about the holiday break in the middle. Especially towards the end of holidays when children may well start to get anxious.

Think of transitions as a journey. For that journey to be successful in reaching the planned destination, you need to be prepared for it, you need to plan for it, you need your maps/guides and you need to feel safe and settled along that journey. If all these things are in place you will arrive ready and prepared for the future.



Goodbye

Celebrate, share, say goodbye create positive ending...

- Celebrations, memories and events
- Leavers Hoodie or mementoes
- Year Book
- Personal card with messages
- Leavers day trips/residential
- Creative and collaborative activities for class/year group
- Create a video or short film for keep sake

Building new relationships

- Bridging materials / activities
- Key staff sharing information / handover

Hello

Prepare, plan, what to expect and when...

- Calendar of events/actions
- Maps and plans of new school
- Pictures of new school labelled
- All about me guide written by pupils and shared with key new staff
- Allow child to ask questions & share concerns
- Updated Pupil Passport
- Key Adult (Person) & relationship established
- Orientation visits
- Peer support
- Social Communications and other group work

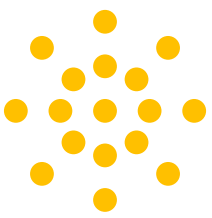
Research by University College London highlighted the tops concerns of year 6 pupils moving to secondary as:

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

Why don't you carry out a year 6 survey early in spring term to support your transition work?

Targeted or Specialist Transitional Need Don't forget about sharing/planning for:

- Triggers (people, smells, events, environment)
- Curriculum topics/themes may cause distress to vulnerable pupils with past trauma – ask parents ?
- Use appropriate Local Authority planning tools (such as Place Plan, EPAC, PLAC PEP)
- Important and key personal information/history
- Longer and more in-depth planning and transitional meetings/events for child
- Investing in building secure relationships prior to new start



Teachers

what can I do

As teachers and leaders when looking at your whole cohort of children transitioning, it is worth considering the risk and protective factors for success.

Risk Factors

- Failure to identify children who require additional support (or late identification) and/or poor understanding of need
- Children's views not being heard or the child not involved in transition planning
- Children not feeling prepared for the change
- Poor information sharing between schools / settings
- Lack of contact and collaborative working with parents / guardians
- Experience of bullying at or negative peer experiences.
- Difficulty with social integration



When planning your approach to transition make sure you have mapped out your timeline.

For those who need more support and input (Targeted or Specialist) during transition the time line will need to be longer and include more work.

Children in care, or with previous care experience are a vulnerable group.

This group of children may need extra consideration and care. You will need to keep them in mind and help to prepare them for, and support them through, any transition.

In your planning and preparation keep your most vulnerable children's needs in mind...this time of change will be a real challenge and present some difficulties...how do you keep them feeling settled, safe and secure?

The role of 'Key person' is crucial for our vulnerable children, they need to know that somebody cares that they are ok, and that they are held in mind by an adult.

For the Key Person to be effective a unique connection with the child needs to be established enabling the child to regulate with the adult. The adult holds all the information and the child can 'download' the adult's resilience and regulation.

Protective Factors

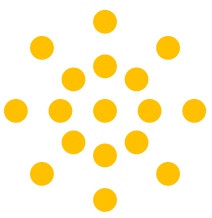
- Early identification of need
- Robust and current knowledge and understanding about children's strengths & needs
- Child centred processes
- Children are well prepared to adjust to the new environment and curriculum expectations
- Children have a positive sense of school belonging and feel supported by friends/peers/key adults.
- Good information sharing between settings - a consistent approach and partnership working between schools/setting.
- New setting to attend summer term PLACE Plan, EPAC or PLAC PEP
- Positive family support and involvement of parents/guardians.
- Curriculum continuity between year 6 and 7

DOs AND DON'Ts OF A TRAUMA-INFORMED COMPASSIONATE CLASSROOM

- 1. CREATE A SAFE SPACE**
Consider not only physical safety but the children's emotional safety as well.
- 2. ESTABLISH PREDICTABILITY**
Write out a schedule and prepare children for transitions. It helps create a sense of security and safety.
- 3. BUILD A SENSE OF TRUST**
Follow through with your promises and in situations where changes are unavoidable be transparent with your explanations.
- 4. OFFER CHOICES**
Empower students and offer "power with" rather than "power over" strategies.
- 5. STAY REGULATED**
Help your students (and yourself!) stay in the "Resiliency Zone" to promote optimum learning. Have regulation tools ready to help students bumped out of the zone into either hyperarousal (angry, nervous, panicky) or hypoarousal (numb, depressed, fatigued).

There's really only one DON'T
Let's not punish kids for behaviors that are trauma symptoms.

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Parents & guardians

what can I do

As a parent/guardian you will know your child best. Make sure you use and share your knowledge, and any concerns you have, as early as possible with both their sending and receiving school. If needed make sure a written transition plan is established and reviewed.

Don't be afraid to ask questions or ask for the support you feel is needed.

Celebrations & goodbye



Be honest and supportive of the whole process. Talk positively, developing strength and resilience. Don't add to anxiety or negativity. Change is both exciting and scary, but everything that is new soon becomes normal.

Make sure your child enjoys the end of year celebrations and creates the mementoes and keepsakes which will allow them to successfully say goodbye.



Perhaps have your own small end of year after school party with a few key friends or family. Think about what you can do at home that will be particularly special for your child.

School Holidays

Make the most of your holiday time to relax and take part in whatever leisure activities are of most interest to your child. Sometimes the first few days/week children just need to rest and enjoy some down time at home, especially after a busy end of term.



If they need extra support with anything practical or with social and emotional support during this time, seek this out or support this yourself. Keeping some form of routine across the holiday will help getting back into school routine in September.

Towards the end of the holiday your child might start to get anxious and this will likely come out in their behaviour. Use this time to reflect on the positive end of term at last school and the re-uniting with key friends or building of new friendships at the new setting. Keep talking positively!



If anything is of particular concern, plan and mitigate against this. For example a new walk or bus ride to school; do this towards the end of holidays to help prepare.

New Term

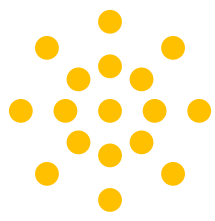


Think ahead and plan around anything that might be an issue – bed times, getting up, getting ready on time, organising school bag, clothes etc. For the first few days/weeks you might need to do much more than usual to support your child to reduce anxiety and stress.

Plan to reduce any anxiety, stress or grumpy behaviour with kindness and love. Get all their favourite food in for before, after and during school. Remember when your child returns from school don't bombard them with questions, let them rest and settle for a while.



Don't plan do to anything too hectic at weekends or after school for the first few weeks, the mental, physical and emotional energy they will use up in the first few weeks will be exhausting.



Parents & guardians

what can I do

As a parent/guardian you will know your child best. Make sure you use and share your knowledge and any concerns you have to plan around and mitigate these issues. Again plan around these issues at home and prepare for those teenage challenges to come. Once a child starts secondary school your contact and involvement with school will change.



Here is a short check list of things to think about and prepare for. Some might be relevant others not, but do take time to think about your child and what you might need to do to support them. You will need to be a little bit of a Personal Assistant to your child for a short while...



Check List



Uniform & School Kit

- Check and make sure you have all the uniform early (try/practice putting on and off)
- Perhaps buy a spare item or two, for those pieces they are likely to lose (tie?)
- Use permanent marker to put their initials on labels, so if lost they can be re-united
- Check what stationary they need from school prospectus.
- Again if needed perhaps put a coloured sticker on each item, to help keep it together.
- If needed create a check list for your child of items they need. Pop on bedroom door as visual reminder
- Most children will need help organising themselves, do this in a supportive and encouraging way to build their confidence and self-organisation
- Practice putting on uniform and check there are no annoying labels that need to be cut out
- Get a copy of timetable and be aware when PE days are on



Communication

- Each school will have a Designated Teacher for children in care or previously in care, make sure you know who this is and how you can get in touch with them – hopefully you might have already made contact during the transition.
- Most schools have pastoral or year leaders, make sure you have their names and contact details.
- Your child will have a form tutor at Secondary school, again make sure you have their name and contact details.
- Keep a list of all of these to hand so you can get in touch easily. In most secondary schools these staff will teach all day, so email is usually best means of communication.
- If there are any issues communicate with school as swiftly as you can.



Supporting Learning & Development

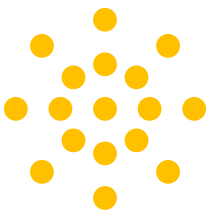
- Most schools will use some online or smart phone apps for setting homework and communicating with parents and pupils. Make sure you know what these are and how they work. Login and check on these regularly. Don't forget to save your login details.
- Your child will most likely need a device and internet access at home to complete homework.
- Make sure you have a quiet space set up for your child to complete homework, perhaps somewhere you can oversee and support when required.



Social and Emotional Needs

- Teenage years are a challenge for all children. Prepare for this challenge and respond in the most therapeutic way you can.
- The social, emotional and physical exertion children use during days at school can sometimes mean when they get home they either collapse in a heap or explode. Food, kindness and rest can usually address both of these.
- **Think about and prepare your therapeutic strategies to support your child's social and emotional needs throughout secondary school.**
- **If you need more specialist advice and support with complex needs seek out your local appropriate agency (see links/contacts page)**





Un-expected Transitions

what can I do

The un-expected ending or additional transitions, for instance Covid 19 or others may bring new or additional challenges for some children. For some it may mean traditional goodbyes or transition work does not take place. This may heighten emotions and feelings, which need additional support and consideration.



Parents/guardians at Home

Unexpected situations are a challenge to children and adults, especially if what was once the normal routine has suddenly stopped. Here are a few suggestions for extra or additional support in this current time:

- Keep up to date with information and advice from school and share what is appropriate with your child
 - Keep some routine and daily learning using the resources and home learning that has come from school
 - Keep in virtual contact with school, school friends and family
 - Talk to school about some keep in touch visits or virtual contact
 - Ask school about what virtual goodbye/ending activities can be done
 - Reassure your child that they will see and be with friends again in the future
 - If they have any anxieties talk these through and seek advice online or through your local health services
 - Think about what you could do with some close friends/family to celebrate the end of the school year virtually
 - Perhaps work with your child on their own school memories scrap book
-
- Don't forget to share your concerns or questions with old or new school and seek out support

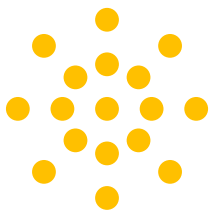


Professionals at School

For those more vulnerable children, the current situation may create additional or stronger worries, anxiety or sadness. Think about how you can support these students across transitions, either back to school or to a new school

- Perhaps offer extra or additional calls/video calls to these children and families, letting them know you still hold them in mind
- Think about welfare calls being much more about the well-being of the child
- Think about how you can carryout traditional end of year celebrations virtually (how about asking all children to send in their goodbye messages for each other, collate these and send back to children)
- Think about how you can create other ways of celebrating, sharing and saying goodbyes
- Keep in touch more regularly with those vulnerable students
- Remember to maintain contact with the key adult in school
- Think about how staff could send out a message to a wide number of children with a short film and share with pupils
- Think about buddying up some students on their return to provide some peer support
- For those more complex students think about who needs to be part of a multi-agency team, to supporting this child back or to a new setting; get the planning and support in place across this team of professionals.
- Don't forget to work with parents/guardians as a key advocate and expert on the child's needs





Useful Links & Resources

Beacon House Transition

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

Find out more about Attachment and Trauma –The Braveheart website for example has a wealth of information <https://www.bravehearteducation.co.uk/>

Anna Freud Centre Managing Unexpected Endings and Transitions

<https://www.annafreud.org/media/11610/managing-unexpected-endings-transitions-may2020.pdf>

Touch Base Resources

Primary - [New Guide for Transition Back to School – Touchbase](#)

Secondary - [Secondary School Guide to Collective Recovery - Touchbase](#)



Links and other useful resources

<https://www.annafreud.org/media/11465/helping-cyp-manage-anxiety-apr2020-v3.pdf>

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/teach/transitioning-to-secondary-school/zkc9pg8>

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/articles/zrynnrd>

<https://www.mentallyhealthyschools.org.uk/risks-and-protective-factors/school-based-risk-factors/transitions/>

<https://beaconhouse.org.uk/resources/>

<https://www.hants.gov.uk/socialcareandhealth/adoptsouth>

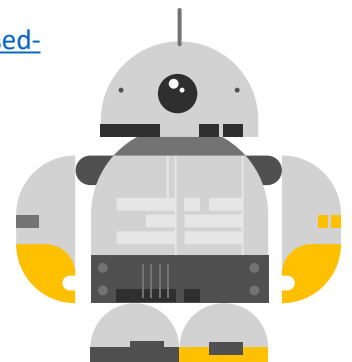
Local SEND Parent Information & Advice

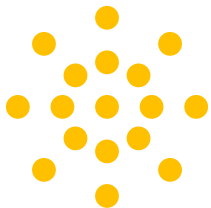
[Southampton](#)

[Portsmouth](#)

[Hampshire](#)

[Isle of Wight](#)





Contact Details

For further support, advice and guidance please contact your local Virtual School.

Southampton Virtual School



Phone: 07979704328

Email: thevirtualschool@southampton.gov.uk

PLACE Plan for children previously in care, for details contact the Virtual School above.

Portsmouth Virtual School



Phone: 02392 688108

Email: PLACVirtualSchool@portsmouthcc.gov.uk

[Portsmouth Virtual School and College - Portsmouth Education Partnership](#)

PLAC PEP for children previously in care, for details contact the Virtual School above.

Hampshire & Isle of Wight Virtual School



Phone: 01962 835227

Email: virtualschool@hants.gov.uk

Phone: 01983 814680

Email: virtual.school@iow.gov.uk



[Previously looked-after children \(PLAC\) | Hampshire County Council \(hants.gov.uk\)](#)

EPAC Education Plan for Adopted Children
Education Plan for SGO/RO/CAO



<https://www.hants.gov.uk/socialcareandhealth/adoptsouth/ihavealreadyadopted>

Post adoption support **0300 3000 001**

