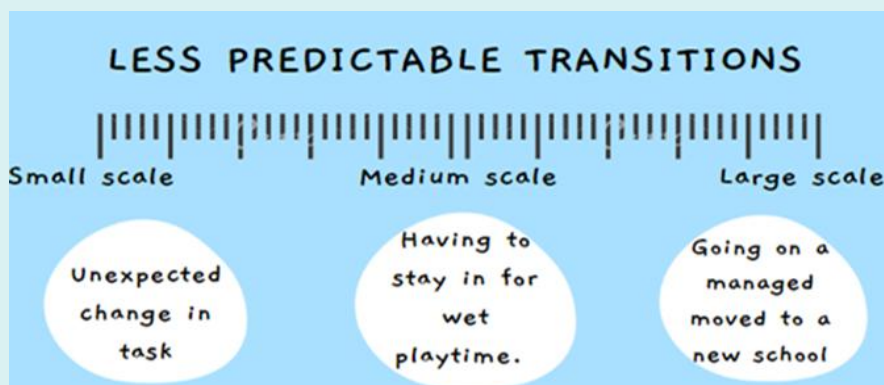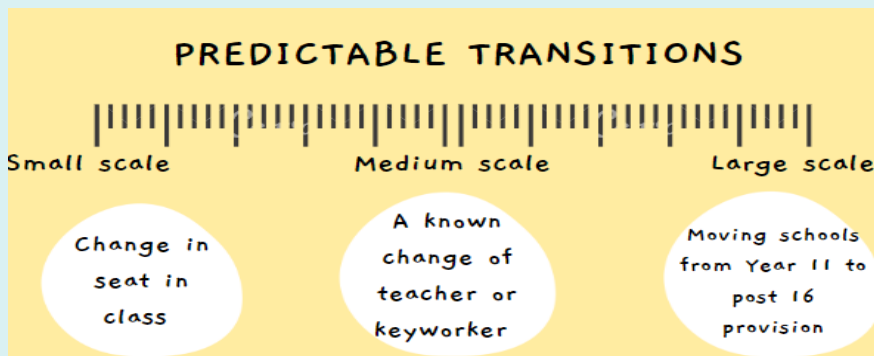# Educational Transitions

Overview

What is an Educational Transition?
Our daily lives are filled with transitions. Bronfenbrenner (1979) said that transitions occur when an individual's position within their environment is altered as the result of a change in role, setting or both. Throughout education, a huge variety of transitions occur, some of these are predictable and others are less predictable. These may be small, medium or large scale.

Predictable vs Less Predictable Transitions
Some transitions are more predictable than others and easier to plan for, for example, most Children and Young People (CYP) will transition from Year 6 to Year 7 meaning they change schools. Whereas, less predictable transitions may be the ones that are not always accounted for or expected meaning that they are more challenging to plan for, for example, staff sickness, a fire alarm, an exclusion resulting in a CYP moving to a Pupil Referral Unit. In this chapter, we will consider strategies that can and should be applied to both predictable and less predictable transitions but for the latter these strategies may need to happen more quickly or reactively.

It is important that CYP have positive experiences of both predictable and less predictable transitions to support them with their development and prepare them for adulthood. Please see some examples below for your reference:

PREDICTABLE TRANSITIONS

Small scale   Medium scale   Large scale

Change in seat in class

A known change of teacher or keyworker

Moving schools from Year 11 to post 16 provision

LESS PREDICTABLE TRANSITIONS

Small scale   Medium scale   Large scale

Unexpected change in task

Having to stay in for wet playtime.

Going on a managed moved to a new school

Transitions are a daily part of our lives, but why are they so difficult?

For many children (and adults) change can be scary. New adults and new environments can equal uncertainty and unpredictability and may increase feelings of insecurity and fear. All children need our help to learn how to make connections with adults and peers. To make sure they get their basic needs met we need to support students to reduce the challenge of new starts, to help them to feel safe to explore and benefit from a new beginning. It is important to consider Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, and to bear in mind that a CYP cannot achieve 'self-actualisation' unless their safety needs are met.

There are some CYP that are likely to need some more support in meeting their safety needs. It may also be that those less predictable transitions are more difficult for them. Please see some examples of some who may find these times to be more challenging, please note that not all CYP in these groups will find them challenging and this is not an exhaustive list, but it provides an outline of some risk factors:

- **Trauma** - CYP who have experienced developmental trauma may have had experience of the world which means they have: developed an understanding that the world is unsafe and unpredictable, a lack of trust in others, difficultly handling negative emotions, levels of confidence about their ability to do things (self-efficacy) may be low and this will impact upon levels of motivation, perceptions of their ability to succeed and their attempts to adapt to new contexts (Gore-Langton, 2014, 2016).

- **Looked After Children (LAC)** - these CYP have experienced more transitions within their life find changes and moves more difficult. The change of routine and the inevitable losses and separations bring back old feelings of abandonment and threat. CYP may also experience transitions outside of their educational setting and for some, these may have negative outcomes, such as being removed from their parent.

- **Adopted/Previously Care Experienced CYP** – these may be CYP that have previously been in care, are adopted or under a special guardianship. As above, they will also to have some experiences of perceived negative outcomes of transitions due to their life experiences. It is important to consider their previous experiences and trigger times in the year such as when they were removed from key attachment figures, birthdays, Mother/Father's Day etc.

- **Neurodivergent CYP** – this may include CYP on the Autism spectrum and those with an ADHD diagnosis where unexpected changes may be distressing – even those not requiring additional SEN support in their current setting.

- **Children with special educational needs** **–** all CYP receiving SEND support will require careful transition planning. See Manchester Schoolshub (and this chapter) for information about how we support this process in Manchester.

- **CYP who have Emotional Barriers to School Attendance (EBSA)** – this is a broad umbrella term used to describe a group of children and young people who have difficulty in attending an educational setting due to emotional factors, often resulting in prolonged absences from school or college. It is important to consider that these CYP are experiencing a transition each time they attend school or college, therefore, strategies that support positive transitions should be continually used. You can find more information on ABSA in the chapter within this toolkit.

How might a CYP react or behave at times of Transition?

Transitions can mean that CYPs experience a lot of mixed emotions such as happiness, anger, sadness, anxiety and worry etc. Often, these emotions will be experienced simultaneously which will add to the overwhelming feelings of the transitions. When CYPs feel these feelings, they can present with behaviours that help us to know how they are feeling but these may also be challenging within any setting.

For CYP who find transitions particularly challenging, this might be because they have additional feelings that are triggered including rejection, blame or shame. Many CYPs who have experienced trauma or adverse life experiences develop "'wise adaptations' to lessons that life has taught them" (Beacon House, 2021): these behaviours are conscious or, most often, unconscious ways to keep themselves safe but might not always be the most helpful or socially acceptable.
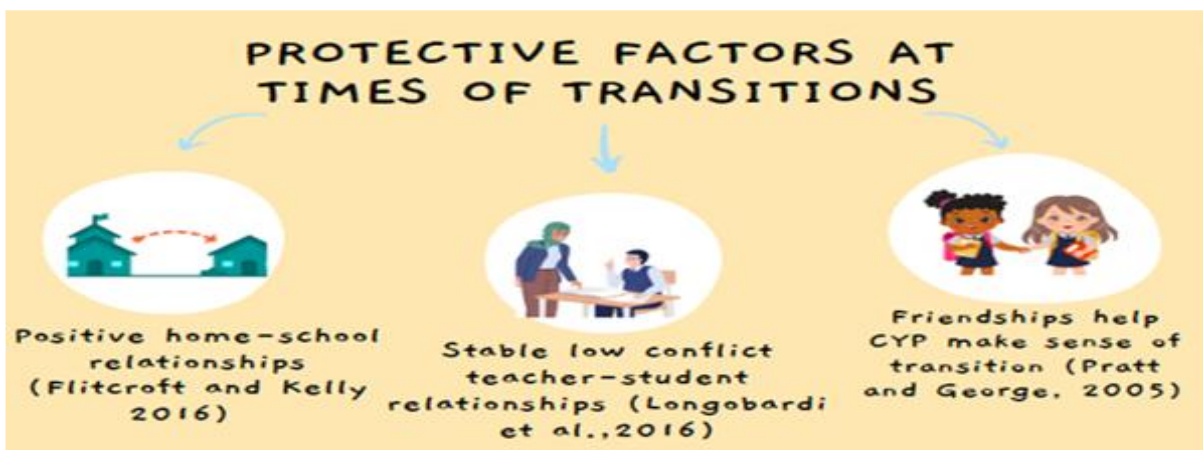
The following are some behaviours you might see during transitions:

BEHAVIOURS AT TIMES OF TRANSITIONS

- Change in energy levels, hyperaroused/tried
- Lack of trust in adults
- Disengagement and lack of motivation with learning tasks
- Regression to previous developmental milestones
- Trying to control situations and others
- Withdrawal from social activity

What can we do to support CYPs through transitions?

Protective Factors

It is always helpful to consider what protective factors are already available in your setting that can be used to support transitions. Below are some examples of protective factors that may already exist: CYP that already have these present are more likely to have a positive experience during times of transition. The rest of this chapter will be looking at ways to create protective factors to support CYP.

PROTECTIVE FACTORS AT TIMES OF TRANSITIONS

- Positive home-school relationships (Flitcroft and Kelly 2016)
- Stable low conflict teacher-student relationships (Longobardi et al., 2016)
- Friendships help CYP make sense of transition (Pratt and George, 2005)

When considering strategies, it is important to remember that different CYP will need different levels of support. Manchester City Council highlight the below categories:
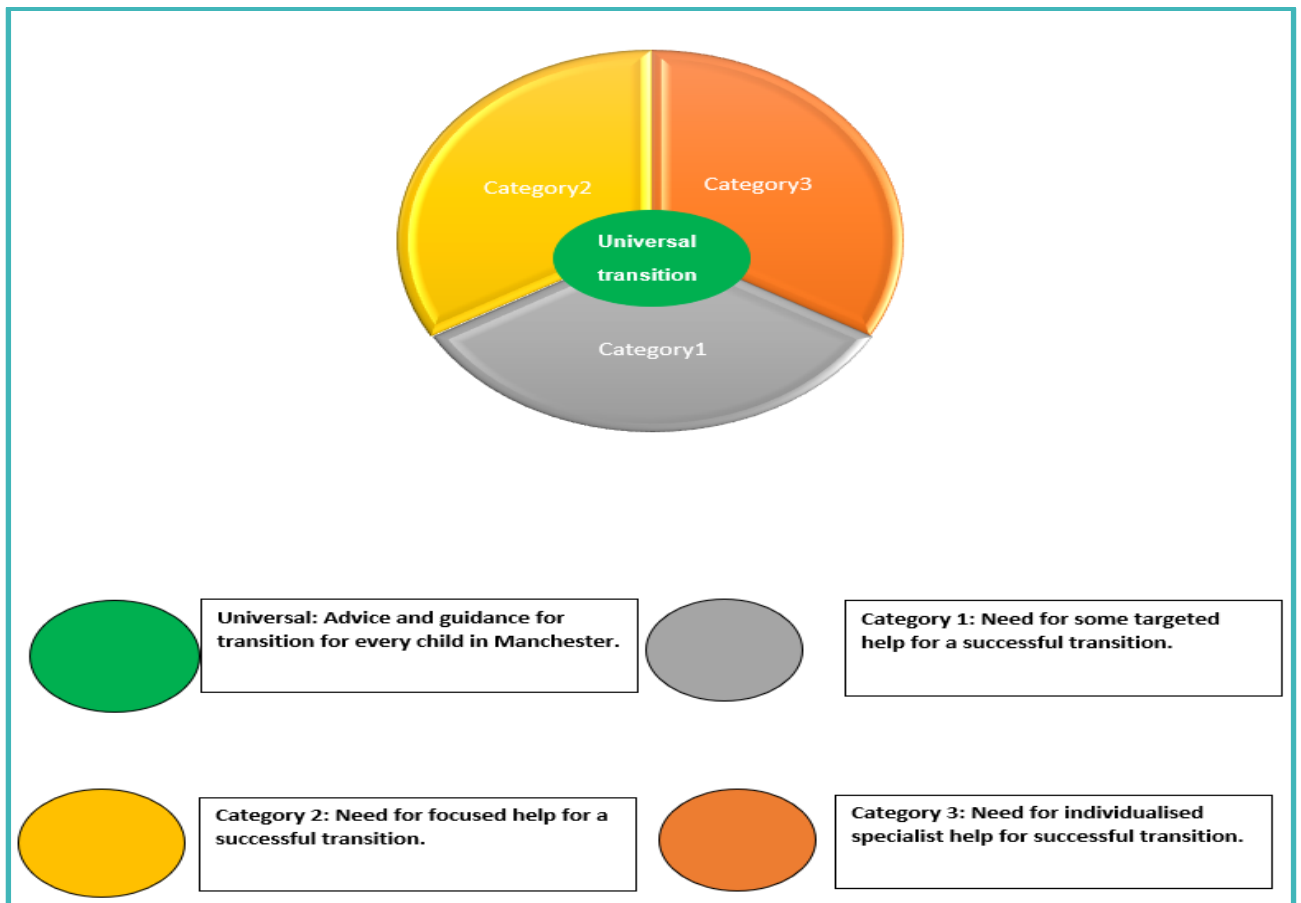
Identifying which level of support students need

It will be important to consider the wider experiences of each student in your setting to help to identify which level of support that they might need. Consider carefully what has happened in students lives previously and currently at home, in the community and in education in order to understand whether they find transitions more challenging.

A key part of this is good information sharing. When information sharing is done well, it helps setting to plan and provide appropriate support for CYPS. One barrier can be the concerns around sharing confidential information particularly when a young person has not yet been offered a place. It is important that the educational setting has a clear policy in place regarding how and what information would be shared in the young person's best interests.

These processes will help you to be proactive in support rather than reactive to behaviours.

Universal Strategies for Transitions

These are some common strategies that should be used universally throughout your setting to support all CYPs to experience positive transitions.

- *Visual timetable* - This helps all CYP to make the day/week more predictable in a time when they may be experiencing lots of change.

- *Experiencing the change* – This includes supporting CYP to consider the potential changes they may experience. For example, finding out about their courses/new lessons and visiting college.

- *Be crystal clear* - Tell them the things they **need** to hear, don't wait for them to ask because they don't yet know that they need to be told! This includes any factual information about the transition/change but may also need to include: how much they are cared for, that you are not going anywhere, that they are in your mind even when they are not with you, that they are safe and protected.

- *Name it to Tame it* - Helps the CYP to name their feelings that they may not have the words for and supports them to make connections between their behaviours and feelings e.g. "when you run away, it makes me wonder if you don't know where to feel safe?". It might be helpful to acknowledge that "the end of x is coming, I'm here to help you through".

- *Help their body* - Children feel fear in their body. Think about ways to help them to regulate their body through breathing, here are some ideas: Doing short bursts of physical activity frequently, do body calming activities and playfully ask them to breathe deeply in the mornings and evenings e.g. blow bubbles, blow away feelings

Coming Soon!

MONTH						
SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY

NOTES

Category 1: Some targeted support

These are some common strategies that should be used for some CYPs who need a little extra support to manage transitions:

- *Now/next timetable* – some CYP may need the visual timetable broken down into smaller steps, so a Now/Next visual timetable may be useful.

_____'s schedule for today

now | next

- *Transition passports or pupil profiles* – These are a great way to capture the CYPs interests and needs while keeping them at the center of planning and support. Where possible, these should be created in collaboration with the CYP. If this has been completed by someone on behalf of the CYP, please make a note of this. There are a variety of examples, and you can shape them to meet the needs of your CYP, below are two examples that are linked in the resources section. When you have completed these, it is sometimes useful to step back and consider *'does this represent this CYP? Will others who do not know them have a full picture of them and their needs?'*. You could ask the student to share their views and adapt it appropriately.
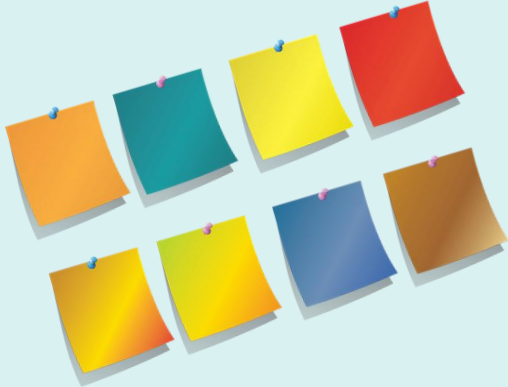
- *Encouraging self-determination* - Self-determination refers to an understanding of one's strengths and limitations together with a belief in oneself as capable and effective (Wehmeyer, 2004). Manning (2016) found that CYP expressed their active involvement supporting positive experiences of transitions. Based on this, goal setting, problem solving any challenges and making informed decisions based on their own interests for their next steps may all be important to promote this.

Category 2/3: Focused help and individualised specialist support

These are some strategies that should be used for CYPs who need targeted and specialised support to have a successful transition:

- *Stay connected* – For some CYP, they may have experienced negative or very upsetting transitions that may have resulted in a breakdown of some relationships. It is important that they know that they are still connected to you even when apart. You may use 'transitional objects', for example: a physical object or transition cards (Beacon House have some great examples, see resources section).

- *Gathering the views of the young person* - If possible, speak to the child about their past experiences – what have they enjoyed? What are they good at? What might they find challenging? What helps them feel ok? Who will they miss? During these conversations, giving them space to ask questions and discuss any worries. For CYP in this category this would need to be specific and personalised to them.

- *Sharing practical plans with the CYP* - In order to build an understanding that their world is safe and predictable, they can trust others, they can adapt to this new environment, they can try to manage experiences positively, their emotions will be contained. This may include things like additional visits to the new setting and opportunities to build new relationships. If possible, a timetable for their first day. It is also useful to consider how emotional regulation activities are going to be provided for the CYP and how their safety needs will be met.

- *Mentoring* – Manning (2016) found that mentoring from keyworkers worked well to work through difficult questions about their transition and support them to develop goals, aspiration and confidence about their future.

- *Positive planning meetings*- A positive planning meeting is a useful structure to identify strengths and additional areas for consideration. The format below was taken from One Education's Adoption Positive Planning Framework and developed from Nottingham's Educational Psychology service.

Positive planning meetings

All attendees should have post it notes and should be invited to contribute at each stage. Please see the stages below:

1. Introduce the purpose of the meeting and everyone attending. The overarching goal for the meeting is to support a positive transition to X.

2. Strengths, Positives, Joy. Explore the positives in the child's life, when do they experience joy, what strengths do they show and what did they show at their last educational setting? Example Questions: When does X experience joy? When do we experience joy with X? What are X's strengths? What are X's interests?

3. Outcomes. Explore what needs to happen for the child to have a positive transition? Example Questions: What do they need? What support needs to be in place? What has worked previously?

4. Complete a possibility rating. Organise the outcomes into high, medium or low rating, based on the likelihood that this outcome will be achieved (i.e. the support or activity will be possible)

5. Consequences: Where outcomes are rated low, what are the consequences when it is not possible to put this in place?

6. Action Planning: Create an action plan for a positive transition. You might focus on all areas or just focus on the low and medium rated outcomes.

Top Tips!

For early years transitions
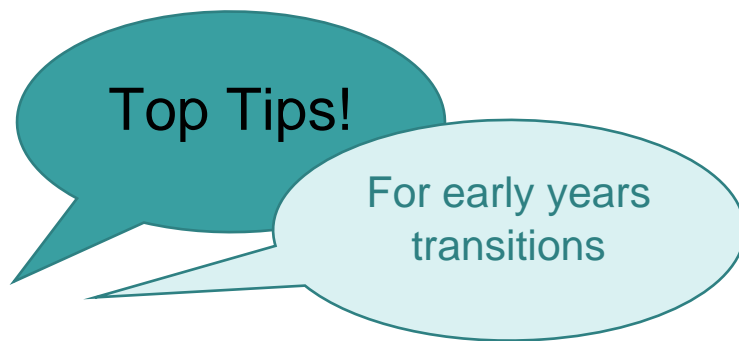
These may be the transition to Nursery, to Reception and to Year 1. Much of the focus surrounds school readiness how this can be promoted.

UNICEF's description of school readiness states that three elements together increases children's likelihood of success, these are: Children's readiness, Early years setting and schools readiness, and families' readiness. More information on how to promote and increase this can be found here: https://www.nurseryresources.org/articles/school-readiness/school-readiness-a-definition-and-how-early-years-key-workers-can-help/

- **The child's voice** - In line with United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), children have the right for their voice to be heard and listened to. It is important to consider this carefully at an Early Years stage as the child has not yet developed a means of verbal communication. Therefore, you may wish to consult with those that know them best or conduct observations to ascertain their likes/dislikes and strengths.

- **Understanding roles** - It is important that both educational professionals and parents/carers understand what is required of them at each stage. This document below may be useful as guidance, you may need to negotiate these roles with families depending on individual need and circumstance. https://www.pacey.org.uk/Pacey/media/Website-files/school%20ready/School-transitions-timeline-(2).pdf

Top Tips!

For Year 6 to 7 Transitions

During this time, pupils have adapt to a more challenging school setting with different academic structures and expectations as well as changes in social interactions with teachers and peers. A research study by School Transition and Adjustment Research Study (STARS) found that a successful transition from year 6 to 7 involved functioning well in two areas: 1) being academically and behaviourally involved in school and 2) feeling a sense of belonging to school.

It is also important to consider:

- **Loss or instability in friendships:** substantial instability in friendships across the transition to secondary school and losing old friendships was a major source of concern for pupils across the course of the study. Students benefit from help to sustain friendships and support to create new friendships.

- **Change in expectations** – there is a leap in expectations regarding personal organisation. For example, bringing own equipment to school, remembering to do homework, remembering to attend clubs/detentions at different times of the day.

- **Environment –** there is a much larger and more complex physical environment, it is important to consider how those with sensory needs may be supported with this change.

- **Key staff –** CYP are likely to transition from having one class teacher that knows them and their needs well to several different teachers throughout the day. For CYP that are Category 1,2 or 3, it is important that they have at least 2 key adults they can speak to throughout the day and will hold regular check ins with them.

Top Tips!

For Year 11 to Post 16 Transitions

The transition that takes place at post 16 may further heighten emotions due to the greater number of possible destinations available. This can be a challenge because there can often be last minute changes to transition due to changes in exam results, meaning that it can be more challenging to plan a transition. A young person is likely to be at risk of becoming NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training) if a transition is not successful.

- At this stage, it should be about supporting CYP to develop the skills they need for successful transitions now and in the future. Therefore, they should be as involved as possible in the process and this may include things like attending planning meetings.

- Due to likely last-minute changes in provision around results day, it is important that the CYP still receives the same induction process as other students and if needed the additional support depending on which category they fall into.

- Young people should be supported to make informed decisions and receive accurate information about the courses and provision they are looking to select.

- The work should be appropriately scaffolded for that CYP, information should be gathered from their previous provision to understand what support what put in place.

- Mallinson (2009) found that lack of work experience opportunities was a predictor of drop out, therefore, it is important that these are provided and are relevant to that young person.

- It is important to consider the Preparation for Adulthood framework that identifies four outcomes, these being: paid employment, good health, independent living and community inclusion. More information can be found here: https://www.ndti.org.uk/resources/preparing-for-adulthood-all-tools-resources.

- In Manchester, The Growth Company provides support for Year 11 students who are at risk of becoming NEET. They provide mentoring and tasters at their skills centers, more information can be found on their website here: Skills Support for Growth - Growth Company Brochure

Top Tips!

For less predictable transitions and managed moves

Top tips for less predictable transitions and managed moves
As mentioned previously in this chapter, CYP may undergo some less predictable transitions. Our suggestion is that the same strategies are used for these CYP but they may need to occur in a shorter space of time. For a resource on managing these transitions, see: https://www.annafreud.org/schools-and-colleges/resources/managing-unexpected-endings-and-transitions/

Managed moves are often implemented when there are peer dynamic difficulties and breakdown of relationships between CYP and staff. It is important to consider that this is a transition that should be carefully considered using the strategies above, particularly if the managed move has a negative outcome and they transition back to their 'home' school. For more information on managed moves see chapter in this toolkit.

Manchester transition documents

Please see below an outline of Manchester City Council's documents surrounding transition. These can all be found on Schools Hub following the chain below or alternatively, you can click the links:

- **Wider curriculum - Early Years KS1-5 - Transition KS2-KS3**
  https://www.manchester.gov.uk/schoolhub/info/93/support_to_schools/9/transition_to_secondary_school
- **Vulnerable Learners (LAC and SEND) - Special Educational Needs and Disability - Support to schools - Transition across the Key Stages**
  https://www.manchester.gov.uk/schoolhub/info/12/wider_curriculum_early_years_ks_1_-_5/555/transition_ks2-ks3

Early Years – Transition Timeline

This document includes information and top tips for the transition to Nursery and Reception.

Manchester Early Years (EY) Transition Timeline

A good transition ensures that children and young people settle well into new placements and have their needs met. Careful preparation is good practice for all children, but for those with additional needs, it can make the difference between a successful move and a distressing experience for all involved. Thank you to Octavia Holland, from the NCB (National Children's Bureau) who supported the Manchester Action Learning Set focusing on EY Transition. Thanks also to the many early years professionals, parents, SENCOs, LA SEND officers and health professionals who worked together draw up this 'best practice' timeline to ensure that all children in Manchester experience successful transitions.

Year 6 Transition Data Spreadsheet

This should be completed by Primary schools for all students and sent to Secondary schools.

Forename	Legal Surname	Gender	Current Primary School	% Attendance	% Punctuality	Number of fixed term exclusions	Total days of fixed term exclusion	Previously permanently excluded	Medical Needs	SEN Status (EHCP/SEN Support/None)	SEN Need *(please list primary SEN need)*	Public Care Status (CLA/No)	Social Services Involv	PEP (Yes/No)	Young Carer (Yes/No)	Asylum Seeker/ Refug	Home language	Learning Progress					Covid-19	Transition Package *(please indicate what package of support might be needed for)*	
																		Reading	Writing	SPAG	Maths	Science	RAG rating			

An approach to managing transition from Year 6 to Year 7 in 2023
This document details:

- How to share information/what needs to be shared
- Categories for transition
- Good practice for transition for year 6 pupils

Helping Hand Transition resources

The Helping Hand tool is a resources used to encourage Independent Skills and good habits. The idea is that this is introduced during the hand of year 6 and reinintroduced in year 7. All of the resources can be found on schools Hub.

High School Transition (mainstream schools)
Guidelines and Resource Pack

A Helping Hand

All about the Helping Hand

The Helping Hand was developed in 2010 by CMFT Speech and Language Therapy Services. It was developed as part of a Health Inequalities Project by Pat Larkin, Speech and Language Therapist.

We wanted to deliver effective key messages to support older children as they make the transition to High School

The five messages were developed in consultation with young people in Year 6.

The Helping Hand is introduced to Year 6 pupils by the Class Teacher and/or the school link Speech and Language Therapist.

It needs to be introduced again at the beginning of Year 7.

In Summer Year 6: Class Teacher introduces Helping Hand to pupils

Young people who have failed or struggled to learn a skill will not have discovered the power of that skill.

We need give them a brief explanation of **why** we want them to use the Helping Hand.

The Helping Hand is a tool to encourage independent learning skills and good habits.

A copy of the Helping Hand is available on the MEWAN website.

In Autumn term Year 7: Run a Helping Hand assembly

Please see assembly pack.

Transition planning Profile

This is a RAG rating document to be completed for an individual child to allow staff members to identify their strengths and needs.

MANCHESTER CITY COUNCIL — Central Manchester University Hospitals NHS

High School Transition (mainstream schools)
Guidelines and Resource Pack

Transition planning profile

Completing the profile:
- Read each statement and consider the child's readiness for transition in this area.
- Against each area, indicate your level of concern by shading:

  Green = Minimal/no concern
  Amber = Moderate concern
  Red = High level of concern

- For areas which are Amber or Red, you can use the **Bank of Strategies and Resources**. For example, if "A7: Understanding Timetables" is an area of concern, then look at the Bank of Strategies and find advice listed "A7: Understanding Timetables"

Part A: Coping with new situations and problem-solving	R	A	G
A1. Having several teachers for different subjects			
A2. Understanding and recognising bullying			
A3. Finding way round school building, getting lost or confused			
A4. Travelling to school			
A5. Breaktimes and lunch times			
A6. Coping with noisier environments			
A7. Understanding timetables			
A8. Organising self			
A9. Homework (planning, organising and carrying out)			
Comments			

Bank of individualised strategies for high school transition

Depending on the are of need identified in the document above, individualised strategies can be used from the sections here. For example, if a child is Red for A4 Travelling to school, strategies can be taken from that section. The document includes ideas that can be used by Primary and Secondary Staff.
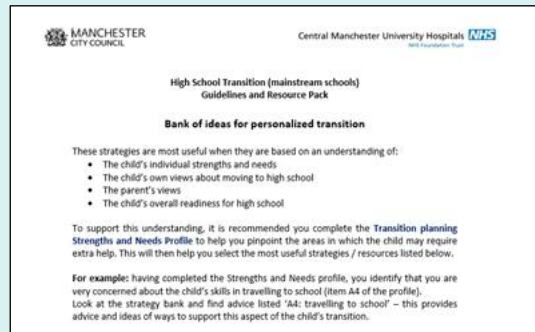
Year 6 lessons plans for high school transitions

This document includes 7 lesson plans that can be used with the whole class/small group.
Please see the lesson topics below:

- Thinking about High School
- Getting to High School
- Reading High School timetables
- Packing a school bag
- Thinking about 'What if…?' scenarios
- Friendships
- Questions and answers
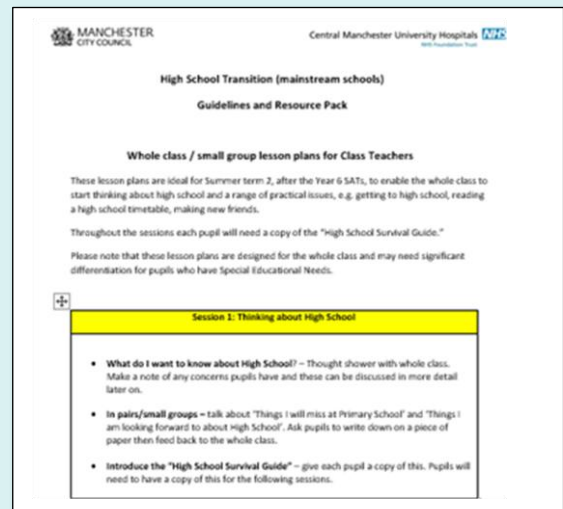
Ideas for good practice during high school transitions

The ideas in this document have been taken from good practice which already exists in local schools. It includes suggestions for both Year 6 and Year 7.
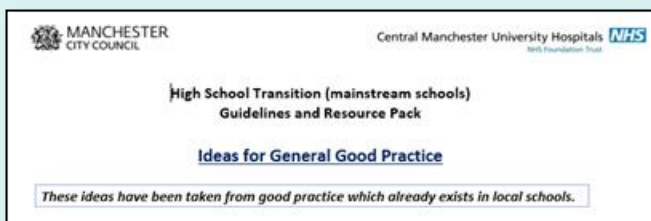
Individual Transition plan

This document is to be started in Autumn of Year 6 and continued into Year 7 and may be suitable for Category 2 and 3 CYP.

MCC High School Survival Guide
A child facing document that includes information and worksheets to support them with their transition.

Example Secondary School Transition Policy

Communication Profile and One Page Profiles
These can be created for children who may need additional support and should be shared with all relevant staff at Secondary school. Ideally these should be created in collaboration with the child and family.

Additional Resources and Further Reading

There is a wealth of resources online, which you can find by searching education transition resources SEND.   Some of these include: Transition resources from Beacon House - https://beaconhouse.org.uk/resources/

- Creative.Clinical.Psychologist (Instagram) - lots of trauma related visuals to share with schools and parents
- Positive Planning meeting – on the website?
- Transition resources on Manchester Schools Hub
- Now and Next timetable https://www.st-marys-colton.staffs.sch.uk/blog/2020-03-25-09-19-33-visual-timetable-for-home-use
- Career Connect, these are careers skills and professional development programmes for CYP aged 15-18- https://careerconnect.org.uk/manchester-career-skills/
- Resources for starting, changing or leaving school or college https://www.mentallyhealthyschools.org.uk/resources/dealing-with-change-and-transitions-toolkit/
- Young Minds have resources for: CYP, families and professionals surrounding transitions https://www.youngminds.org.uk/professional/resources/supporting-school-transitions/ .
- Resources produced as a result of STARS, a research project conducted by UCL https://www.ucl.ac.uk/pals/research/clinical-educational-and-health-psychology/research-groups/school-transition-and-2
- https://www.twinkl.co.uk/resources/specialeducationalneeds-sen-curriculum-support-foundation-subjects/sen-pshe/specialeducationalneeds-sen-handouts-and-information-transition
- https://leedsforlearning.co.uk/Page/10027

References

Bronfenbrenner, U. (1979). The ecology of human development: Experiments by nature and design. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Flitcroft, D & Kelly, C (2016) 'An appreciative exploration of how schools create a sense of belonging to facilitate the successful transition to a new school for pupils involved in a managed move', *Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties.* 21(3), pp. 301-313,

Longobardi, C., Prino, L, E., Davide, M., & Settanni, M. (2016) 'Student-Teacher Relationships as a Protective Factor for School Adjustment during the Transition from Middle to High School', *Frontiers in Psychology,* 7, pp. 1988

Mallinson, A. (2009) 'From school to further education: Student and teacher views of transition, support and drop-out', *Educational and Child Psychology,* 26, pp. 33-40

Manning, Jayne A (2016) ''Entering a new dimension'*:* An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis of the experience of transitioning from school to

Further Education college for three young people who have an Education, Health and Care Plan', DEdCPsy thesis, University of Sheffield.

Maslow, A. (1943) 'A Theory of Human Motivation', *Psychological Review*, 50(4), pp. 370-396

Pratt, S. & George, R. (2005) 'Transferring friendship: girls' and boys' friendships in the transition from primary to secondary school. Children and Society, 19(1), pp.16-26

Rice, F., Frederickson, N., Shelton, K., McManus, C., Riglin, L., & Ng-Knight, T. (…) Identifying factors that predict successful and difficult transitions to secondary school.

Wehmeyer, M. (2004) 'Self-determination and the empowerment of people with disabilities', *American Rehabilitation,* 28, pp. 22