

A One-Minute Guide to Transitions in the Early Years

Transition put simply means a change which may have an impact on a child. This might be a big shift in their life – like going to pre-school for the first time, or maybe a small daily change – like moving from a childminder to a playgroup. These changes might seem small to us but for our children and families these can evoke a mix of feelings and emotions, which can impact upon both wellbeing and development.

The EYFS Framework 2025 identifies that:

Children learn best when they are healthy, safe, secure, when their individual needs are met, and when they have positive relationships with the adults caring for them.

This one-minute guide has been designed to support and guide Early Years Settings, Schools, and Childminders in developing their practise and provision to ensure children continue to learn and develop well through periods of transition.

Points of Transition in Early Years

Within a child's Early Years, they will experience transitions in various ways. These transitions may include:

- **Starting at a New Setting**
- **Moving within a setting;** As they progress from one room to another within the same setting.
- **Changing Settings:** When children transition from one Early Years setting to another.
- **Starting School:** The significant step in which children move from an Early Year's settings to formal schooling.
- **Transitions throughout the day**

All of these transitions are significant moments in a child's life, and they can indeed impact their well-being and development.

Educators play a crucial role in supporting children and families during periods of transition and in ensuring that these transitions are managed carefully and sensitivity, so that children feel safe, engage in play, and learn effectively.

Key Principles of Transition

Whilst periods of transitions will differ for each child and their family and transitional process and arrangements may differ between each Early Years Setting, School and Childminder, there are some key principles for good practise that can help to make transitions as smooth as possible.

Make transition and the wellbeing of children a priority: It is important that transition is viewed as a process not an event. Children need time to adjust to new situations, whether it's starting school, moving to a different class, or experiencing changes at home. Treating transitions as a process allows us to focus on children's emotional well-being and help children to build resilience and cope with change.

Develop clear systems to support transitions and plan ahead: Develop a transition policy or a clear set of procedures that include how home to setting, room to room and setting to school transitions are managed. Ensure everyone involved has a clear understanding of their role in planning, timetabling, and implementing transitional activities which will facilitate a smooth transition for each child.

Establish realistic timescales for transition: Whilst taking a gradual child centred approach to transition, providers need to ensure that transitions at a universal level are not overly lengthy. For some children shorter transitions can reduce anxiety and support positive experiences, for other children, providers may need support transition over longer periods of time. It is therefore imperative that the transition process is tailored to meet the needs of individual children and the families.

Be flexible and reflective: Each child is unique and will need support during times of transition, particularly SEND and EAL children. Ensure that you take a flexible approach to transitions, adapting the process when necessary and consider the implications for future transitions.

Establish effective communication: Open communication, and collaboration among parents, carers, and professionals are essential for easing transitions in early childhood. When everyone works together, children experience smoother adjustments and a sense of continuity.

Collaborate with families: Families should be valued, informed, included, and supported to navigate the transition process. A collaborative approach ensures everyone is on the same page, supporting the child's individual needs.

Share meaningful information: Ensure meaningful information about the child is shared and documented. This may be collated through a transition form, which provides information relating to the child's individual needs, milestones, medical information, and their safeguarding history. These along with any progress reports, learning journeys and other relevant information should be shared in well in good time and always prior to any transitions. This helps to provide continuity between home, key people, and all settings involved in the child's learning journey.

Provide emotional support: All children can be impacted during times of change, and individual children's emotional wellbeing needs to be considered and supported during times of transition.

Consistency and familiarity: Consistency provides a sense of security. Children benefit from familiar faces, routines, and environments. Whether it's a transition from home to a setting or from setting to another, maintaining continuity and having predictable routines within the setting, including daily schedules, mealtimes, and nap time eases the adjustment.

Create a welcoming and enabling environment: Creating a safe, welcoming, and familiar environment, which reflects the children's lives and cultures, and routines, will help to minimise the impact of the transition and support children to feel more.

Establish links through partnership working: Create a shared understanding, liaise with parents' carers and relevant professionals where appropriate regarding any specialist guidance and resources.

Useful links and further guidance

[Warwickshire Guidance Supporting Transitions in the Early Years](#)

[On Our Way to School: A Guide for Parents and Professionals](#)

[DFE Starting Reception](#)

[Video: Supporting your child to manage change Pre School to Reception](#)

[Website: Warwickshire Guidance: Transitions into Reception](#)

[Website: Moving-up Guidance for parents of children moving up to a new school](#)

Remember, positive transitions contribute significantly to a child's overall well-being and readiness for future learning experiences. Every child is unique, and their responses to transitions vary. By involving parents, carers, and other professionals as valuable partners, we can create a supportive network and nurturing environment that helps children to navigate these changes successfully.

