

**SUPPORTING TRANSITIONS  
FROM PRIMARY TO SECONDARY SCHOOL  
FOR PUPILS ON THE AUTISM SPECTRUM**



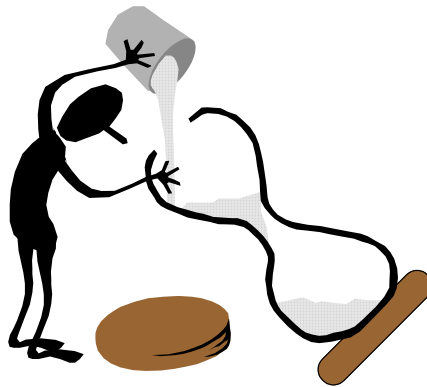
**RESOURCE PACK FOR PARENTS AND CARERS**

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Leicestershire Autism Outreach Service**

## INTRODUCTION

This resource pack has been put together to advise parents/carers, school staff and other professionals supporting pupils on the autism spectrum through transition from mainstream primary to mainstream secondary schools. The intention is that the pack can be used flexibly for each individual pupil. All materials photocopiable and available to be used by schools in their transition planning.

Transitions are not easy for people with autism. Transition tells us that 'it is time to move on' and pre-supposes that one is ready, willing and equipped to do so. Autism however says 'I have to stay here because 'here' is all I know' and assumes that anything outside of 'here' is chaotic, unpredictable and unpleasant. Fortunately however, with the understanding of how difficult change can be for those on the spectrum comes the possibility to create greater order, predictability and clarity within transition situations.

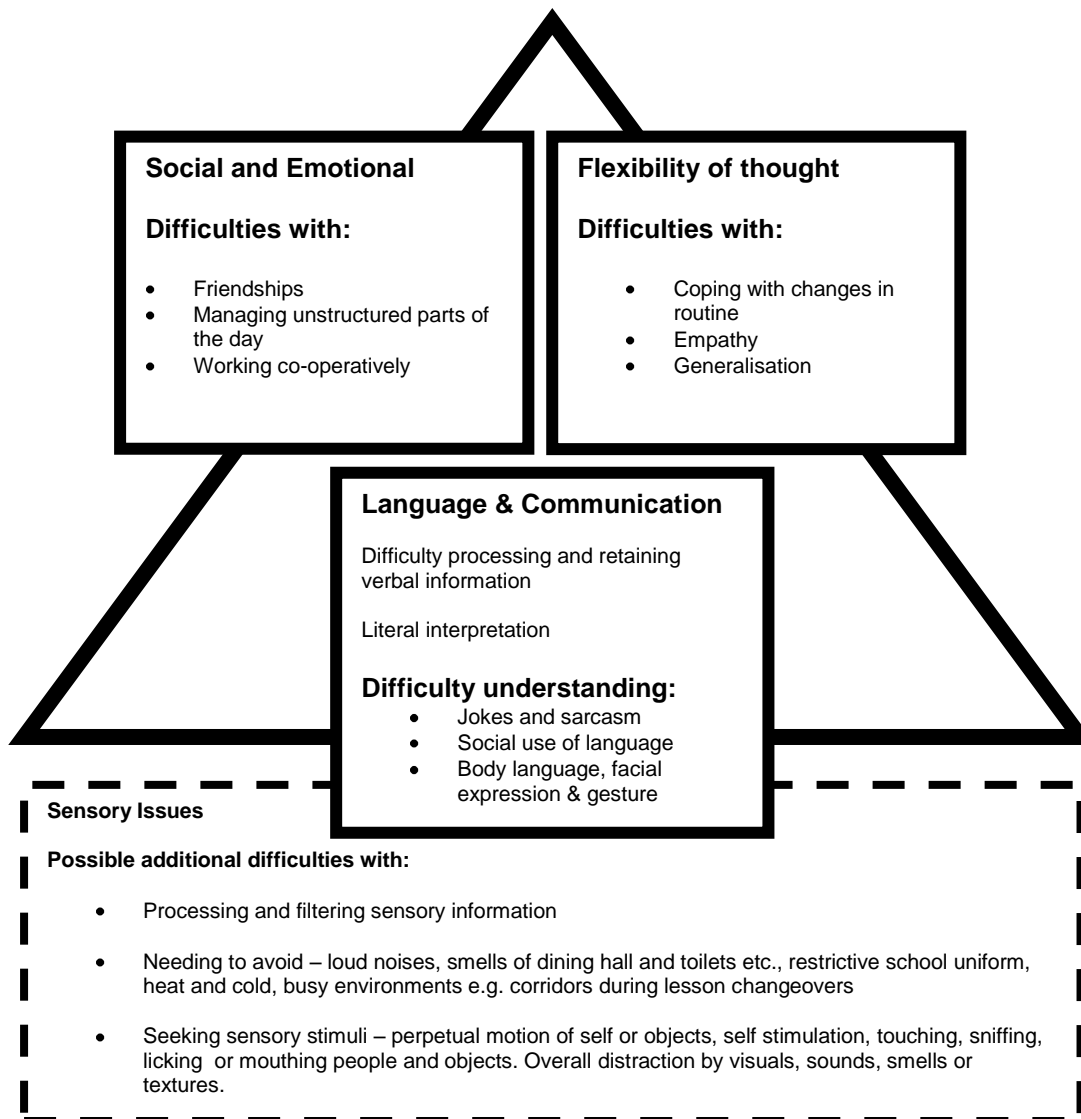


The suggestions made in this booklet aim to:

- Prepare pupils for the differences they may encounter at secondary school
- Raise parents' awareness of the transition process their role in making it successful.
- Familiarise the pupil with the environment, routines, people and expectations at the new school.
- Support the primary school in coordinating the pupil's transition to secondary.
- Familiarise new teaching and support staff with the pupil and their individual strengths and needs.
- Reassure pupils, parents and schools that the pupil can be successful in their chosen secondary setting.

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

In addition to the triad of impairments illustrated below, many pupils with an ASD will also have difficulties with fine and gross motor coordination and organisational skills. They can also be adversely affected by underlying fears and phobias, often (but not always) linked to sensory sensitivities.



Breaking Down Barriers to Learning – Surrey County Council

The table over the page indicates the potential problems arising from the triad of impairments and associated difficulties upon transition. Although many pupils cope well with the types of issues listed above, anticipation of potential stressors can make both pupils and parents very anxious. Possible difficulties pupils may encounter are listed over the page. However we must remember that all children are individuals and will be affected to differing degrees.

# POTENTIAL DIFFICULTIES SURROUNDING TRANSITION TO SECONDARY SCHOOL

## ISSUES STEMMING FROM LACK OF SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL SKILLS

Meeting larger numbers of pupils and staff	Being the youngest in a new school
More teachers for different subjects	Lack of understanding of expectations – apparent defiance
Potential targets for bullying	Possible inappropriate interactions with staff and pupils
Working with different peers throughout the day	Cooperative group and pair working
Perceiving what bullying is	Getting lost or disorientated in a new environment
Understanding and accepting sanctions	Bus and travelling skills
Losing existing support networks	Level of supervision reduced – e.g. break times
Increased demands on social skills are greater	Making new friends
Asking for help	Joining new clubs
Knowing what to do at break and lunch	

## ISSUES STEMMING FROM LACK OF COMMUNICATION SKILLS – EXPRESSIVE/RECEPTIVE VERBAL/NON-VERBAL

Lack of understanding of expectations	Delayed processing time
Possible rudeness or lack of respect for authority	Timetables – 2 week cycle/abbreviations/changes...
Expressing feelings appropriately	Asking for help staff peers and parents
Getting lost – following cues/asking for directions	Homework: understanding and recording
Detention: When, where, why?	Bus and travelling
Loss of support of peers and adults	Increased demand on personal organisation
Having correct equipment right day – cooking/trips	Being late for lessons - fear and actual
Bigger busier environments - confusion	Joining new clubs – when, where, who, how?
Ensuring information is communicated to parents	Expectation that they will attend to more 'teacher talk'
Knowing what to do at break and lunch	

## ISSUES STEMMING FROM LACK OF FLEXIBILITY OF THOUGHT

Larger number of pupils and staff - confusion	Being the youngest in a new school
More teachers for different subjects	New building
New and different routines	Lack of understanding of expectations – apparent defiance
Understanding and accepting timetables	Navigating around the building/s
What to do during breaks and lunch	Asking for help
New curriculum subjects – MFL, CDT	Homework – how and where
Sanctions & rewards - Detention	Greater levels of abstraction in lesson material
Loss of peer and adult support networks	Responding to regular changes of room or staff

Difficulty in generalising and building upon skills/knowledge acquired at primary school

## ISSUES STEMMING FROM SENSORY INTEGRATION DIFFICULTIES

Dinner hall noise and smells	Toilets – smells and fear of germs
Corridors and stair crowds	Homework – conflicts with the need to unwind
Music, science, CDT (noise/smells)	Bus and travelling – close proximity to others
noise/touch/smells	
Bigger busier environments – risk of overload	increased potential for distraction by external stimuli

## ISSUES STEMMING FROM LIMITED EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONING – MOTORSKILLS , ORGANISATION & PLANNING

New building – navigation/organisation	New and different routines – remembering/executing
Lack of understanding of expectations	Understanding timetables
Dinner time system understanding & organising	Getting lost – what to do
PE issues – motor difficulties / rules	Detention – accepting and attending
Homework – planning, organising and execution	Science/CTD practical work
Bus and travelling - organisation	Loss of support networks - previously scaffolding success
Increased demand on personal organisation	Having correct equipment on right day
Getting to lessons on time	Bigger busier environments – sensory overload
Dealing with and reporting incidents	Coping with unforeseen events or problems
Asking for help – means/opportunity	

# SUCCESSFUL TRANSITIONS



The keys to a successful transition can be summarised as follows:

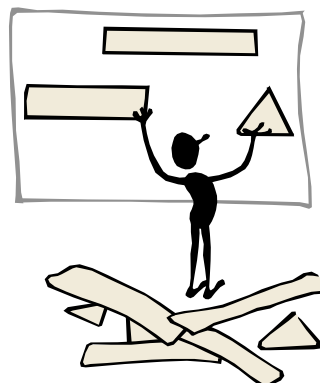
1) Planning and preparation – beginning up to 2 years before transition

2) Communication

- Everyone must have a good level of awareness of the transition plan and the role they play in it
- Information must be shared effectively between the new school and people who know the child well

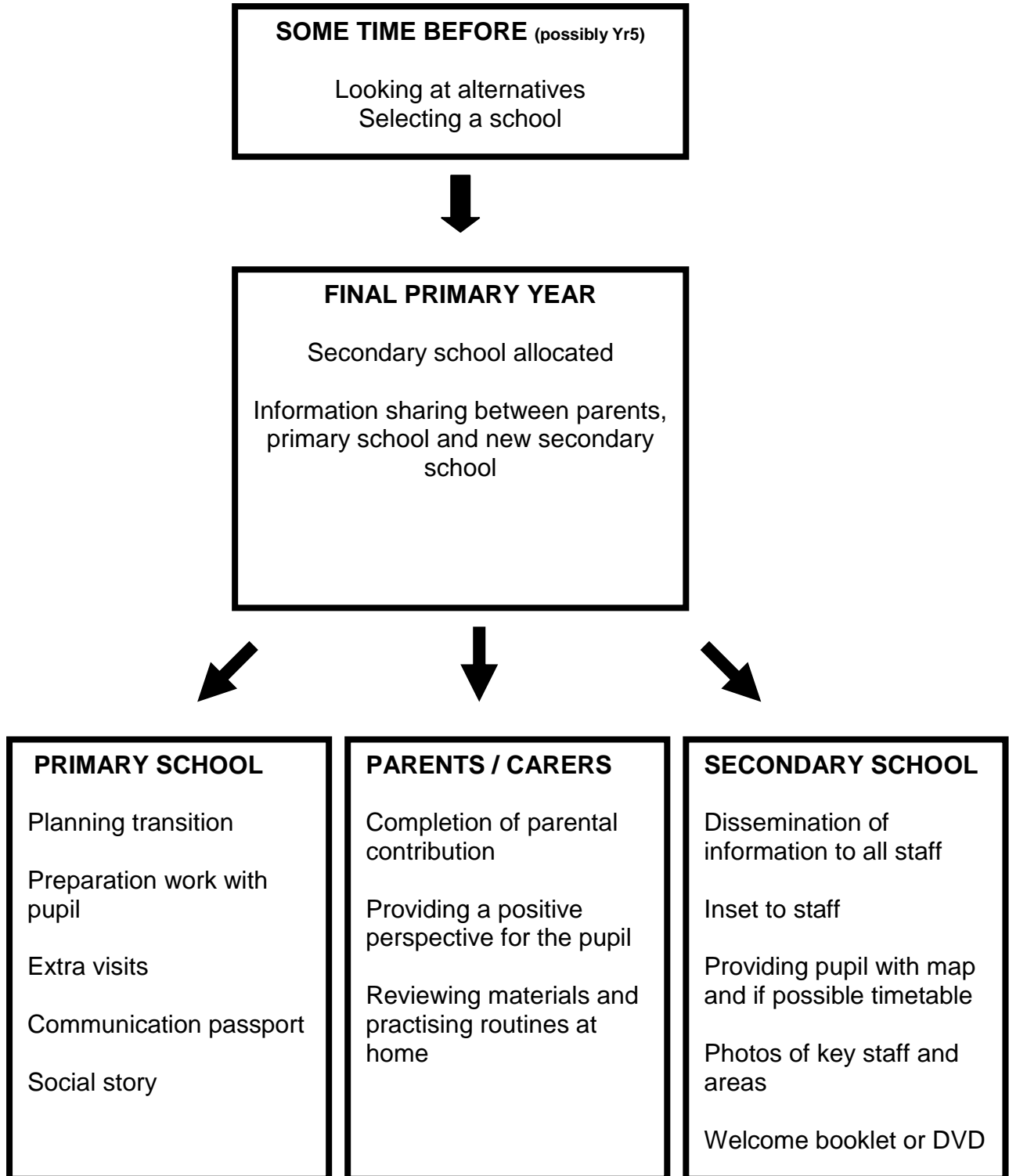
3) Individual programmes – no one size fits all.

- The following checklists and appendices aim to provide a framework within that can be used for individual pupils across the county.
- Guidance may be sought from the Leicestershire AOS regarding how best to use these resources to support individual transitions.
- Information highlighting the broader transition issues should be reviewed and used to identify potential difficulties for individual pupils.
- The following checklists help to identify those elements felt to be important to an individual pupil's transition and can be noted using the grids provided.
- Included in your packs are resources and examples which may support information gathering for staff, parents and pupils. Most resources are photocopyable and can be used directly as part of the transition materials for your pupil. Resources marked COPYRIGHT are copies of resources produced by other authorities and are for reference only.



# PARTNERS IN TRANSITION WORKING TOGETHER FOR SUCCESS

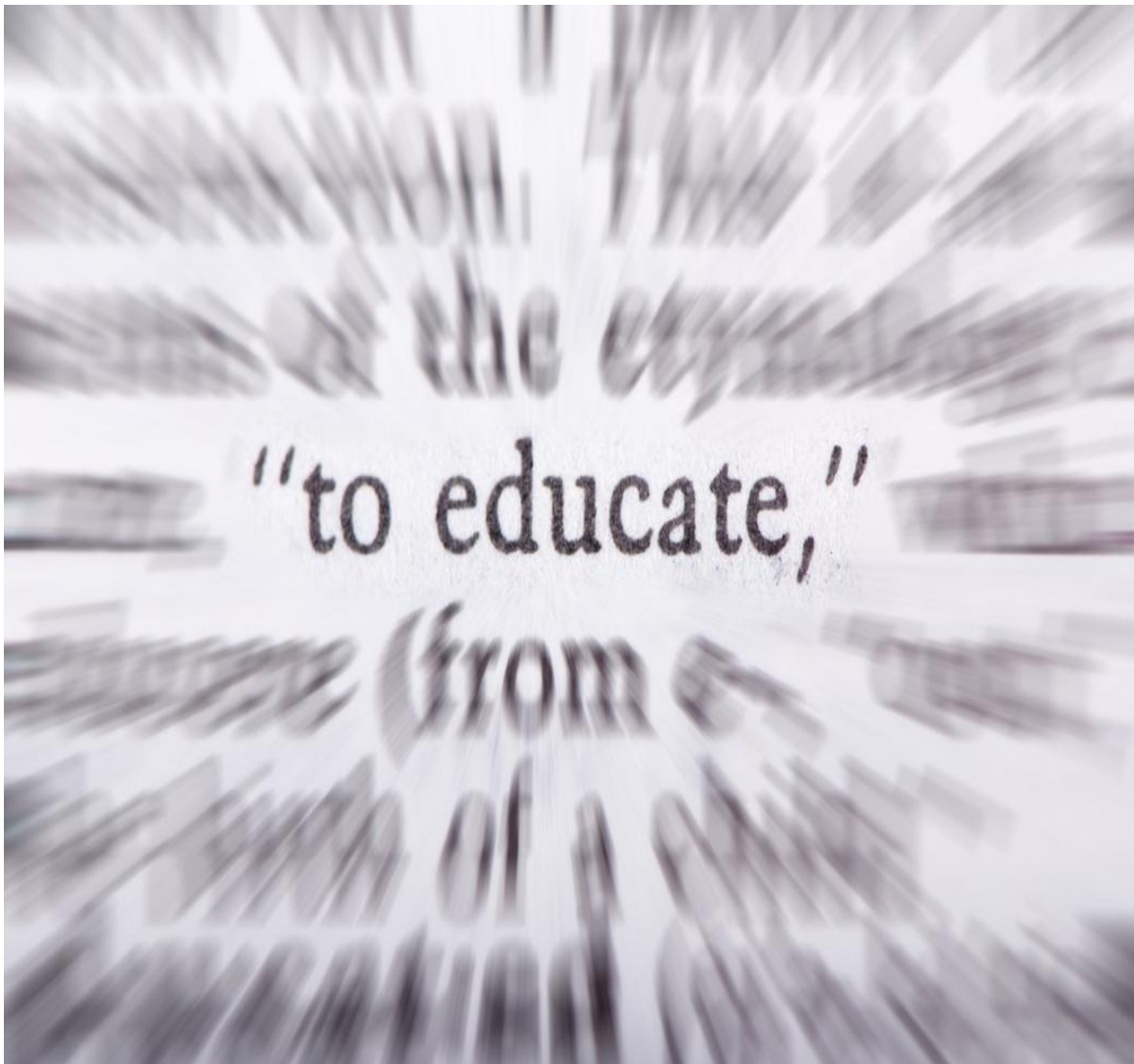
Successful transitions are wholly dependant on everyone involved understanding the particular needs of the pupil and their role in helping them achieve a smooth transition. This involves a series of steps -:



## AUTISM OUTREACH INVOLVED WHERE APPROPRIATE

REMEMBER PUPILS ON THE AUTISM SPECTRUM WITHOUT A STATEMENT HAVE ACCESS TO THE AOS VIA SCHOOL REFERRAL

# EXAMPLE TRANSITION RESOURCES



The following materials are examples of the type of resources which may prove useful in creating *order, understanding and calm*. Pupils shown and names used are fictitious.

## **PARENTS CHECKLIST FOR IDENTIFYING AUTISM FRIENDLY SCHOOLS**

Visiting secondary schools in readiness for your child's transition can be a daunting task. You may be uncertain about what questions to ask and what to look for and yet professionals are expecting you to make a decision about what is best for your child. Well, you know your child better than anyone and it is likely that you can trust your instincts. Nevertheless you may want to use this checklist to help you in the initial information gathering process.

### **SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT**

- How close is the school to your house?
- How big is the site?
- Is the environment warm and inviting?
- Is the building on more than one level?
- Are there satellite buildings, mobile classrooms or teaching areas on a different site?
- Is the building well labelled?
- Does the building feel logical in its organisation?
- What are the noise levels like outside and in the building?
- How many play areas are there?
- How secure is the site?
- Is there a feeling of calmness and orderliness of movement around the school?
- Are there quiet rooms for the pupils to use?
- Are the classrooms self contained or open plan?
- How clean and plentiful are the toilets?

### **NOTES:**



## **STAFFING**

- Does the person who is showing you around have a good understanding of autism?
- Do they demonstrate this understanding?
- Are they keen to get information from you?
- How many staff would your child be involved with?
- What do you observe support staff doing?
- How interested does the receiving teacher or Year Head seem?
- How many staff are on duty at break times in the playgrounds and dinner hall?

## **OTHER CHILDREN**

- Will your child know any existing pupils before they transfer?
- How many pupils will transfer with your child from their primary school?
- Look out for movement around the school at social times e.g. playground, lunch time, toilets and cloakrooms.
- Look at general class size and whether the size of the room accommodates them comfortably
- How are pupils seated in classrooms – individually, groups, large numbers, random?
- Do you see any pupils being withdrawn for 1:1 or small group work?

## **NOTES:**

## **ETHOS**

- How are you made to feel?
- How do you see staff communicating with pupils?
- How do pupils treat each other?
- How are pupils with obvious difficulties (physical/behavioural/sensory) treated by staff and peers?

## **TIMETABLE**

- Can you see staff and pupils referring to their planners
- Do the pupils seem to know what they are doing?
- Are all the facilities being used?

## **CURRICULUM**

- What work do you see going on?
- Are pupil's engaged in different tasks or are they all doing the same thing?
- Are some pupils doing 'easier' work?
- How are staff supporting pupils – nearby or from their desk?
- Are any pupils doing nothing?

## **NOTES:**

## **SOCIAL ACTIVITIES**

- What social activities do you observe?
- Are pupils encouraged to work and play cooperatively?
- What considerations are made for pupils who don't appear to want to join in with majority activities?
- How do you observe pupil behaviour being managed? What recognition, rewards, praise, reprimands and sanctions, if any, are being used?
- How often are pupils being praised?
- Are pupils given responsibilities?

## **PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT**

- What evidence do you see that parents are welcomed into the school?
- What activities are arranged for parents?
- How welcome are you made to feel?
- Do the things that you are told take place actually happen?

## **NOTES:**

## **ORGANISATION OF THE ENVIROMENT**

- How many rooms will your child need to access?
- Where do pupils eat?
- How does the lunchtime system work?
- Where do pupils do PE and where do they change?
- Where will your child keep their possessions?
- If your child needs 1:1 work, where will this take place?
- If your child needs a place to calm down or be alone, is there a place to go?
- Are there clear boundaries in the playground ?
- Are there security measures in place that ensure safety of all pupils i.e. against intruders and to ensure that pupils stay within the school grounds?

## **NOTES:**

## HOW CAN PARENTS BEST SUPPORT THE TRANSITION PROCESS?

Your child's transition from primary to secondary school can be an anxious time for the family. Sometimes as a parent it can be difficult to know what or how much to be involved in the transition process. Below are some ideas of things that you can do to make your child's transition more successful.



- During your child's penultimate year in primary school begin to visit secondary provision. Use the checklist criteria for autism friendly schools to support your visit. You may also request to be accompanied by your child's AOS teacher.
- Despite your concerns, try to remain positive and upbeat about the transition in front of your child. It is important that they do not pick up on any of your worries about the move.
- Throughout the transition agree with school to liaise about any anxieties and successes.
- Work through transition materials during the summer holiday.
- Practise skills such as using the bus, planning the route to school, rehearsing for cafeteria systems and organising bags and equipment. Within each sub area there will be lots for your child to learn. Here is one example:

Bus travel: Where to wait – using a bus pass or having correct money – bus times – allowing enough time to reach bus stop – who to go to with problems – what to do if the bus does not come – where to get off the bus – what to do if the bus is empty or full, what to do if they miss the stop they need help with social issues e.g. noise and bad behaviour

- Organise a friends to travel with them on the first few days
- Support making friends by exploring clubs and activities that they may share with new peers or those that may be held within the school site
- Practise homework skills
- Practise with the uniform – make sure it is comfortable – wear in new shoes, take out labels, wash clothes until soft, practise new skills e.g. tying a tie
- Prepare for plan B scenarios (e.g. losing dinner money) – possibly record the plan visually
- Produce checklists for equipment and uniform to scaffold independence
- Organise an easy to use wallet and/or key ring for dinner money and locker key
- Work through transition materials during the summer holiday.
- Keep a copy of the timetable at home
- Keep both old and new schools informed throughout via diary, phone calls or email
- Help pupil to organise homework and equipment for each day
- Keep 2 sets of stationery – 1 at home and 1 at school – possibly a spare set in school
- Colour code books according to subject as per timetable
- Store materials for different subjects in clear plastic wallets or similar

But remember, sensitivity is needed – all pupils need some space and relaxation between home and school.

# What your new teachers would like to know about you

What words describe you best?

What are you particularly interested in?

How do you learn best?

Think about your favourite teacher – what do you like about how they teach?

What is your favourite part of the school day?

What is your favourite thing to do at school?

Where do you like to sit in class? What do you like to do at break time?

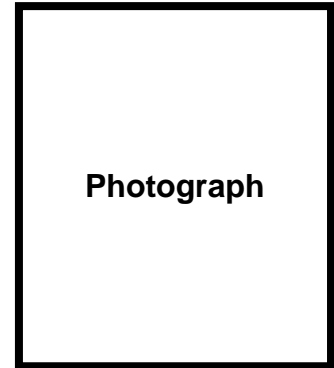
What worries you about secondary school?

What do you want to learn next year?

What would be a perfect school day for you?

What do you like to read?

What else do you want us to know?(Taken from a PowerPoint presentation written and delivered by Wendy Lawson



# GETTING READY FOR SECONDARY SCHOOL



- You will be thinking about your new school
- You may be worried
- Please answer the questions by circling the number that best shows how you feel.
- 1 means you are not worried at all. 4 means you are very, very worried
- .....will help you fill out this form

Getting lost	1	2	3	4
Being bullied	1	2	3	4
Making Friends	1	2	3	4
Getting detentions or consequences	1	2	3	4
Having lots of different teachers	1	2	3	4
Finding class work too difficult	1	2	3	4
Homework	1	2	3	4
Doing PE	1	2	3	4
Changing and showering	1	2	3	4
Being late for school	1	2	3	4
Being late for lessons	1	2	3	4
Having your money stolen	1	2	3	4
Having other property stolen	1	2	3	4
Break time / Lunchtime	1	2	3	4
Doing tests and exams	1	2	3	4
Forgetting books or equipment	1	2	3	4
Getting ill	1	2	3	4

This questionnaire will help us to support you better when you arrive at our secondary school.

# WHAT CAN I DO TO PREPARE FOR MY TRANSITION TO SECONDARY SCHOOL?



<b>NAME:</b>			<b>DOB:</b>			<b>YEAR:</b>		
<b>PRIMARY SCHOOL ATTENDED:</b>								
<b>CHOSEN SECONDARY SCHOOL:</b>								
<b>JOB TO DO</b>			<b>Useful? (Tick if yes)</b>		<b>WHEN WILL I AIM TO DO THIS? WHO WILL HELP ME? HOW WILL I ACHIEVE THIS?</b>			
Make a map showing the relationship between the primary and secondary school								
Obtain a plan of the secondary site. Colour code the plan to show: where different lessons take place, landmarks and important places – form room, library, Learning Support...								
If possible get a copy of next year's timetable – if not practise on an example. Colour code the timetable – use one colour for subject area, room, teacher and LSAs name.								
Personalise timetable with things like subject symbols, full names and clock faces to make the written information more visual and easy to read at a glance.								
Find key landmarks around school that will help you find your way around on the first few days. Consider preparing photo route cards or bulleted directions to get you to your form room and other important locations around school.								
Do some work on understanding and using a secondary timetable.								
Take photographs of the school – buildings/ outside and in / members of staff. These can be made into a reference for you but will also be interesting for you to share with your friends who are also moving up with you.								
Collect information about subjects listed on the 'things to ask' sheet								
Prepare a visual records of the information you have gathered – possibly make a workbook and/or Social Story								
Share the information you have found out with your classmates								
Share the information you have found out with your parents or carers								
Practise using a homework diary and personal checklists								



# WHAT DO I NEED TO KNOW ABOUT SECONDARY SCHOOL?

AREA	WHAT DO WE NEED TO KNOW ABOUT...	WHERE IS INFORMATION RECORDED
	<p><b>BREAKTIMES</b>            What happens at break time?            Where can you go?            What can you do?</p>	
	<p><b>LUNCHTIME</b>            What happens at Lunchtime? Where/when/choice/café system/menu and prices/paying/where to sit and eat/ what to do when you are not eating?</p>	
	<p><b>CLUBS &amp; ACTIVITIES</b>            What clubs are there? Times/days/ how to join?</p>	
	<p><b>SCHOOL RULES</b>            What are the school rules?            Classroom/corridors/assembly/dining room/library/uniform/lockers/break times</p>	
	<p><b>LESSON TIMES</b>            What are the lesson times? How do you know when a lesson or break time is finished? Does the school use a bell system – if so how does it work?</p>	
	<p><b>HOMEWORK</b>            How are homework diaries used?            How much homework do you get?            Is there time to do homework in school?</p>	
	<p><b>STAFF</b>            What are the names of the staff you will meet most?            SENCO/Form Tutor/LSAs/ Head of Year</p>	
	<p><b>SUPPORT FROM PUPILS</b>            Is there a buddying system, friendship group or peer mentoring programme in place at the school? If so how do they work?</p>	
	<p><b>SUPPORT FROM STAFF</b>            How does learning support work in the school?            Where do you go if you have a problem?</p>	
	<p><b>BULLYING</b>            How is bullying dealt with in the school?            How do you report bullying?            Who do you report it to?</p>	
	<p><b>BEING LATE</b>            What do you do if you are late for school?</p>	
	<p><b>LOST</b>            What do you do if you forget your homework?            What do you do if you are lost or if you lose something?</p>	
	<p><b>FEELING ILL OR HURT</b>            What do you do if you feel ill in school?            What do you do if you get hurt at school?</p>	

# SECONDARY TRANSFER SCHEDULE

<b>NAME</b>			
<b>PRIMARY SCHOOL</b>		<b>SECONDARY SCHOOL</b>	

<b>PEOPLE INVOLVED IN THE TRANSFER</b>  And contact phone numbers	

<b>'BUDDIES' IDENTIFIED:</b>	

<b>AREAS TO BE EXPERIENCED</b>	
<b>DATE:</b>	
<b>DATE:</b>	
<b>DATE:</b>	
<b>DATE:</b>	

# SECONDARY TRANSFER SCHEDULE

Please comment on any successes / difficulties the pupil is likely to have in the following areas:

<b>ORGANISATIONAL</b>
<b>INTERPERSONAL</b>
<b>CURRICULUM</b>
<b>OTHER</b>

Signed.....

# PUPIL TRANSFER INFORMATION

Pupil Name:

Questionnaire completed by:

**S/he enjoys**

**S/he is good at**

**What are good motivators for him/her?**

**S/he needs support with**

**What is the pupil's understanding of their diagnosis or differences?**

**How do you and the pupil talk about his/he diagnosis?**

**How does the pupil talk about him/herself?**

# REFERENCES USED IN THIS BOOKLET

Moving on Together For Parents and Professionals -Preparing for Secondary Transfer of Pupils with ASD

Gloucestershire County Council Advisory Teaching Service – Communication and Interaction Team.

Moving on Together – Preparing for Secondary Transfer of Pupils with ASD

Gloucestershire County Council Advisory Teaching Service – Communication and Interaction Team.






My New Class – Materials to support the transition between classes of pupils with ASD

Gloucestershire County Council Advisory Teaching Service – Communication and Interaction Team.









Transitions conference notes by Wendy Lawson

Transitions 8 Parents Information Pack – West Midlands SEN Partnership (Autism West Midlands)

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	<p><b>BREAKTIMES</b></p> <p>What happens at break time? Where can you go? What can you do?</p>	
	<p><b>LUNCHTIME</b></p> <p>What happens at Lunchtime? Where/when/choice/café system/menu and prices/paying/where to sit and eat/ what to do when you are not eating?</p>	
	<p><b>LESSON TIMES</b></p> <p>What are the lesson times? How do you know when a lesson or break time is finished? Does the school use a bell system – if so how does it work?</p>	
	<p><b>BEING LATE</b></p> <p>What do you do if you are late for school?</p>	
	<p><b>HOMEWORK</b></p> <p>How are homework diaries used? How much homework do you get? Is there time to do homework in school?</p>	
	<p><b>OTHER</b></p>	

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	<p><b>FEELING ILL OR HURT</b>            What do you do if you feel ill in school?            What do you do if you get hurt at school?</p>	

# EXAMPLE INFORMATION CARDS



**Hello I am Max Fullman, Year 6, tutor Mrs Mills**

- ❖ I am very shy and find asking for help very difficult.
- ❖ I also find it hard to work in larger groups
- ❖ I don't like noisy environments
- ❖ I work best if I sit at the front so that I get less distracted
- ❖ If I make unusual noises it is because I am feeling worried or upset. I am not misbehaving
- ❖ Thank you for understanding my needs



**Alex Swift Year 7**

- ❖ Please tell me if changes are going to happen as I like to follow my usual timetable
- ❖ Writing is hard for me but I am good on the computer
- ❖ If I put my hands over my ears it is because I don't like the background noise in the room
- ❖ If I get cross and start to shout out I need to sit on my own in a quiet place. Please don't crowd me by asking what the matter is.
- ❖ I don't like getting my hands dirty and may need help to wash them

