

Moving school

Guidance for parents and carers



Dorset
Council

Supporting successful
transitions for children and
young people with an EHCP



Introduction

We all go through times of transition at different times in our lives, but for children and young people with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP), transitioning to a new school is a big change. Whether that means starting school for the first time, moving from Nursery to Primary School, First to Middle, Primary to Secondary, Middle to Upper, switching schools or leaving school completely, successful transition for children and young people with EHCPs depends on everyone working together.

This short guide contains useful tips to help you support your child through the transition process so that they can experience a positive start in their new school or setting.

Start Early

It's never too early to start talking about transition. Annual review meetings are a good opportunity to have transition discussions, even if your child isn't in a 'transition year.' Think about what is working well for your child and how this might continue when they move. Also, think about any different support that will be needed to allow a successful transition.

Arrange to visit schools in the year before your child is due to transition if you can. This will make choosing a school much easier when the time comes and will help build links with staff in the new school at an early stage.

Think about wellbeing

We all have our own way of coping with change and this is no different for children and young people with EHCPs. The focus of transition planning should be on emotional health and wellbeing and developing feelings of safety and security in their new environment. Take opportunities to normalise feelings of worry about the transition.

Talking about times that you have experienced a big change might help your child to feel more confident.

Encourage your child to identify their own feelings related to transition and help them to

think about strategies they could use to manage these. Your child's school might be able to provide resources to help with this, which your child will be able to understand. They might also be able to signpost you to organisations that can support your child's mental health and wellbeing.

As parents and carers, you will also have your own anxieties about your child's transition, and it is important that you recognise these. Be mindful of your own stress responses and try to keep things as positive as possible for your child.

Make connections

We all need to feel some form of connection to others, so it's important to help your child begin to build positive links with people in their new setting, while also thinking about ways that they can keep in touch with their friends and key staff after they have moved.

Ask staff at the new setting how your child will be able to get to know the key adults who will be working with them. Also, find out whether there will be opportunities for your child to meet their new classmates before they transition.

Remember that relationships will be new and so it might be less easy for your child to share their feelings and to offload in the way that they would have in their previous school. This could mean they show their feelings at home more, while they are still settling in.

Be prepared to share information about your child and your family with the new school. Helping to develop a good shared knowledge of your child so staff can plan how best to support them when they transition. This might be during meetings or when chatting with staff in the new setting. This should include things like:

- Your child's recent history
- things they find helpful/unhelpful
- your family's wider support network
- professionals working with your child (e.g. social care, medical professionals and therapy services).



Ask your child / young person

Children and young people will have their own ideas about what will work best for their transition, so it is important to give them plenty of opportunities to share their thoughts about what they want and need, what they think will help and how they're feeling about it. Your child's school might be able to provide resources or personalised activities to help them do this, e.g. talking mats, 'The Incredible 5 Point Scale' and comic strip conversations. They might even want to attend some meetings.

Provide opportunities for the child to ask questions about their new setting and help them to carry out their own research to find out the answers.

Visit the new setting

Ask the new setting whether they can offer your child any extra visits to get to know the environment and meet key staff.

You might want to make a list of questions for you or your child to ask during these visits. This could also be a good time to encourage your child to think about the different expectations of the new setting, in a personalised way, e.g. uniform, the equipment they will need and how to move around the building.

The setting's website might have useful resources such as virtual tours, maps and photographs, which you can look at with your child to prepare them for their transition. This could be used as an opportunity to ask your child about what they are looking forward to, and what they might be anxious about.



Resources

'Find Your Feet' Parent Webinar from the Young Minds Website:

[Find Your Feet - Parent session - YouTube](#)

A booklet to fill in with your child about the transition to a new school:

[Transition booklet](#)

Guidance for Parents and Carers from the Anna Freud National Centre for Children and Families: [Supporting-children-through-secondary-transition-v2 \(annafreud.org\)](#)

SENDIASS (Dorset Special Educational Needs and Disability Information, Advice and Support Service) [\(Dorset SENDIASS\)](#)