

## Supporting the Transition from Nursery to Primary School for Pupils with ASD

Moving to primary school is an exciting time, but a very big step for all children (and their parents) and even more so for those children with Autism.

It is important to remember that a high number of these children may have only recently received a diagnosis of Autism and their families will be still processing this information. They may have a very good support network around them, but once the child starts school some of these support services will no longer be there for the families and this in itself will produce anxiety.

Nursery is often seen as a home from home for children, providing a safe nurturing, playful environment. Although, the children will continue to follow the EYFS curriculum for their first year in primary school, the change in environment can also come with some challenges, which are particularly difficult for children with an ASD:

- *Larger group sizes*
- *Introduction to more adult led learning*
- *Longer days*
- *New staff to build relationships with*
- *Larger building sizes*
- *New timetable and routines*
- *New rules and expectations*
- *More transitions around the building e.g. PE/Lunch/Assembly*
- *Having to wear a school uniform for the first time*
- *Different sensory challenges – clothing, noises/lighting/seating*

Due to the COVID-19 outbreak, many of these children have already been out of nursery for 12 weeks and some will not be returning to their setting. Others will only have just started at nursery when 'lockdown' was introduced, therefore limited the amount of interaction they have experienced. Some may also have only ever experienced nursery for a small amount of time each week. In light of this, it is important that as teachers and other professionals we look at new ways to support them with this big transition in the best way we can.

<b>Traditional ways for transition</b>	<b>Ways to support during Covid-19</b>
Transition meetings/ Home visits	Virtual meeting with parents and child - include SENCo/Class Teacher/Class Teaching Assistant
Extra transition visits to the school.	Send home: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A social story /transition book ideally to include photos of new staff and key rooms.</li> <li>• A copy of the child's new visual timetable (symbols/pictures).</li> </ul> Virtual tour of the school - videos to be sent to nurseries to be shared with parents, placed on your website.
Liaise with agencies involved with supporting the child.	Virtual meetings.

Staff across the school are aware of ASD Children's needs.	Pen pictures to be created for children with an ASD, this should be done in consultation with parents and the nursery → <u>see template</u> for ' <b>My Transition Passport</b> ' available from the STLS website at <a href="http://doverstls.co.uk/early-years/">http://doverstls.co.uk/early-years/</a> - this should be completed by the nursery and passed on to the receiving school ahead of transition.
Transition plan to be drawn up by lead professional highlighting any sensory issues.	Can still be done through virtual consultations with parents and primary school. Ask parents to complete a 'My Autism' profile with their child if possible.
Social story to be written about transitioning from nursery to school. It is important to highlight the big changes that may cause anxiety such as waking up earlier, eating lunch in a different place, etc.	This can still be completed.
	Consider a virtual buddy system where children and their parents can engage with a peer from their new class.

### Once in school

Ensure that all areas and resources are clearly labelled with pictures/symbols.
Make sure there is a visual timetable up where the children can access it – remove symbols of activities after they have been completed.
Spend extra time explicitly modelling classroom routines for children with an ASD.
Limit displays around the board- this will reduce distractions and help children to focus during adult led learning.
Give a 5-minute warning VISUALLY to prepare ASD children for transitions. Timers and Now/Next boards may also be needed to support transitions.
It may be useful for staff to have a key fob of symbols to support functional communication, e.g. toilet, drink, help, etc. Makaton could be used if preferred.
Prompt cards could be used to support independence in unexpected situations e.g. 'What if..... I lose my jumper/forget my PE kit?' These remind the child what to do in certain situations reducing anxiety. Cards should be reviewed regularly.
Ensure all staff are aware of the children's ASD needs including sensory difficulties.
<b>Break time/lunch time:</b>  Break times and lunchtimes can be a challenging because of the relative lack of structure, the noise, smells (in the dining hall), activity and movement. Some children with an ASD may need to eat their lunch in a quieter environment initially and may benefit from a more structured

lunchtime club. Consider identifying older children to be buddies to support the children during break and lunch times.

Explicitly teach children:

- where to go
- how to get their lunch (if they don't bring their own)
- where to sit
- how and where to ask for help

It is important to remember children with an ASD can misunderstand tasks and instructions. Some may appear to defy staff instructions or requests, but in actual fact may simply not understand what you're asking them to do. Remember:

- 'challenging' behaviour can be due to difficulties with communication or understanding
- 'defiance' can be due to not understanding or slower processing speed: give pupils time
- break down tasks into small chunks
- keep instructions simple and clear, and use the child's name to gain their attention.
- use visual supports wherever possible
- pupils with an ASD may well have difficulty making choices, so it is best to limit choices to two or three
- allow pupils five minutes' chill-out time in difficult moments
- many pupils with an ASD will benefit from a 'refuge', a safe, quiet place in the classroom where they can relax and get support from people who will listen to them

**Please note:**

There are a number of documents that have been created to support the nurseries with transition, you can also find copies of these by following this link <http://doverstls.co.uk/early-years/> and then selecting the link to '**Transitions Within the Early Years Setting**'.