



**Supporting
Children**



“In determining our role in supporting children and their key family members through this transition, we must try to keep the children at the heart of our policies and procedures. By using real emotional intelligence throughout the process, we will stand a better chance of engaging the child in a smooth and secure change.”

Helen MR Hann, Early Years Update, November 2005

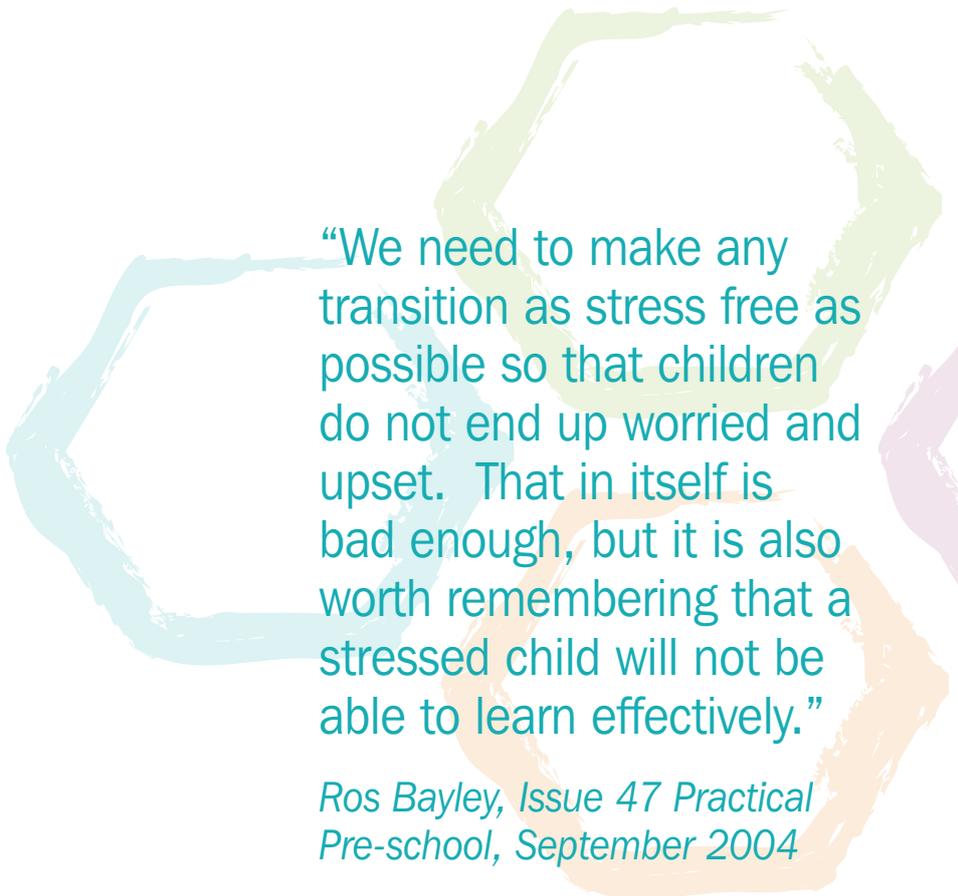
Top Tips

- ✓ Visit children in their familiar environment, observe and get to know them.
- ✓ Communicate with key persons to gather relevant information including any Special Educational Needs, cultural and linguistic requirements.
- ✓ Invite children to visit you and get to know their new setting.
- ✓ Make time to share experiences during the transition period.
- ✓ Create a photo book and talk to children about the changes that will be happening.
- ✓ Use settling-in bags to support the child.
- ✓ Make time for observations and conversations - don't make assumptions!
- ✓ Set up a comfortable environment full of familiar resources. Think about keeping things the same as the child saw it last.
- ✓ Answer key questions the child may have through a welcome book or social book.
- ✓ Take friendship groups into account and spend time introducing children to each other.
- ✓ Successful transition needs time!

This section of the pack will support you with considering the child's needs during times of transition.

Transition can be a stressful time for children and can have a far reaching impact on their emotional well-being and academic achievements. Transition is a big responsibility for practitioners, families and carers and should be made a priority.

Inside you'll find practical ideas and suggestions to help children move from one stage of their learning journey to the next.



“We need to make any transition as stress free as possible so that children do not end up worried and upset. That in itself is bad enough, but it is also worth remembering that a stressed child will not be able to learn effectively.”

Ros Bayley, Issue 47 Practical Pre-school, September 2004

Emotional well being

Considering a child's emotional well-being through a period of change is vital.

In practice

"We ensure that routines provide consistency and familiarity but include a challenge to encourage new learning.

We make sure children have the opportunity to make their own choices about the activities – like who they play alongside, whether they learn indoors or outdoors, the manner in which they approach things and the outcomes they produce.

We feel that it's really important that the curriculum meets the children's needs at the present time and is not for preparing the child for the next class.

As practitioners we need to get to know children by observing them, playing alongside them and engaging and responding with them."

How do children feel?

Have you ever asked children how they feel about moving? Some will feel excited, but some will be concerned. Who's their new teacher? Would they still be with their friends? Would their parents still be able to bring them in? Could they come and share their work with their old practitioner or carer?

Listening to children and **acting** on their concerns will help to support their emotional well-being. Look, listen, note then act.

Key questions children need answers to:

- Where are the toilets?
- Where do I put my coat and bag?
- What should I do?
- Who should I ask to help me?
- What should I do if I'm stuck or have a problem?
- What are people's names?

- When can I have something to eat/drink?
- What time will I go home?
- What happens if I hurt myself?

A welcome book is a perfect way to answer these questions.

Other factors to consider...

Friendships

Talk to each other between settings to find out who the child's friends are, who they like to sit with, who makes them apprehensive, who they tend to be with and plan new class groups accordingly.

Old faces

Invite old faces back so that children can share their new experiences with their trusted and loved practitioners.

Positive relationships

Build a positive relationship – greet everyone with a smile and allocate key persons for parents to share a smile and chat with!

Lunchtimes

Assign a key lunchtime supervisor just for Early Years Foundation Stage – someone with a friendly smile will make dinner times fun.

Make up a photobook of the lunchtime supervisors so that names and faces get known quickly. Include a fun caption with each e.g. Mrs Allen likes chocolate. Children will remember this!

Before the first lunchtime session invite key lunchtime staff to come and meet the children - maybe even read them a story.

Planning

Don't rush into planning your topics! Observe your new children – what do they want to do? Is the environment catering for their needs?



Familiar faces help transition

Home visits

Form a strong relationship between parents, practitioners and children. This will be vital in sharing information.

Activities

Try making a record book to help a child explore the changes in his or her life, or hold a 'show and tell' of objects from familiar environments.

A key person will build relationships easier if they know about the child – how about an 'all about me' book?

Take a look at the **CD-ROM** for a full description of how to co-ordinate these activities.

Environment

Creating a safe, welcoming and familiar environment will help to minimise the impact of change.

Try to create a learning environment that reflects children's lives and cultures as well as their simple routines...

Keep it simple

Keeping to a consistent routine can be really beneficial for children. Think about:

- Self registration
- Same tidy up song
- Stopping to the tambourine
- Familiar rules and routines
- Familiar snack bars

Ring the changes

Children manage change better if they can explore similarities and differences of the old and new in a safe environment. Use these techniques to explore the changes ahead...

Make it visual

Ask the children to take photos of their 'new' classroom. Make two copies of the photos – one to use with them to talk about their new setting, and the other to remember the key features the children saw. Trying to keep the environment familiar when children start will help them to settle.

Book of changes

Make a book with photographs and drawings selected by the child. This will help him/her to take ownership of the change and feel more in control.



Use your outdoor space for familiar activities



Use techniques to make a new room familiar

“I think I will like it”

A child's response when asked about going to school

SEN

For families with children with Special Educational Needs, change can be stressful.

There will be concerns about how their child will settle and whether staff will understand the nature of their child's needs. It's vital that you're able to respond to the concerns and needs of all families.

- Be flexible, and modify the curriculum so that all children can join in and a 'can do' attitude to inclusion prevails.
- See things from the child's point of view. What is their experience of your setting/school?
- Be prepared to provide flexibly for children with SEN, taking into consideration their needs and views.
- Be prepared to try out new approaches and new ways of working that may support all children, including those with SEN.
- Have a range of techniques and approaches to support children with behaviour, emotional and social difficulties including 'managed moves' with the support children need in place before admission.
- Eliminate preconceptions and focus on individual needs.
- Ensure you are meeting all the needs of the child and not just their additional needs.
- Use photographs of the child and their families in welcome displays – but don't forget to get permission.
- Ask older children to prepare materials and information that would be helpful to new children.
- Set up a 'buddy' system or circle time.
- Work with other agencies and services to respond to a child's needs. This will include health professionals, the voluntary sector, specialist teachers and the Early Years SEN Inclusion Team.
- Keep the five outcomes of Every Child Matters at the forefront of your mind.



Meet the needs of all children and families

“Whether transition is a positive or a negative experience is profoundly affected by two aspects of life: a child's earliest experience and the way in which she is supported and prepared to face what is new, unfamiliar and unknown.”

Julie Fisher, Early Education, Autumn 2006

English as an Additional Language

There are many misconceptions surrounding children and families with English as an Additional Language (EAL). Often language or cultural differences can be seen as a barrier, or a special need. In reality, children who speak other languages are able to bring rich cultural experiences to learning environments which everyone can benefit from.

Break down the barriers...

- Try using a disposable camera that can be sent home for children to take photos of their family and environment so that it can be used in their new setting.
- Make the environment welcoming for children as they arrive.
- Make sure resources reflect the child's experiences throughout the environment.
- Use and share familiar objects and photos to use in the next setting to sustain familiarity for the child.
- Make sure you have signs in child's home language displayed around the setting.
- Use travelling bags, in which children put special objects from home that can be treasured and looked at during the session and items from pre-school/school can be sent home to be shared with the family.
- Before a child starts in your setting, ensure that the child is called by the right name and check on the spelling. Remember the spoken name is not always the same as the written name.
- Make sure the child recognises their full name or the name they are called.
- Share cultures so that the child is not singled out and feels different.
- Recognise that every child has their own culture and everybody will do particular things in their own familial way.



Make children and parents welcome

- Write a settling in plan. If parents do not feel confident to speak English, encourage them to invite a friend to translate for them.
- Think carefully about buddy systems. Just because children have the same home language does not mean that they will be effective buddy partners for one another.
- Ensure that this practice continues, becomes embedded and isn't just used as children arrive at school.

“If we truly want children’s learning journeys to be smooth and seamless, we need to talk to them and to the others involved in their nurture – and listen to what they say, however they choose to say it.”

Julie Fisher, Early Education, Autumn 2006



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