

LA advice and support:

Transition to school for new children with SEND and families during COVID-19

**This document is to be read in conjunction with the main transition document "LA advice and Support: Transition to school for new children and families during COVID-19"*

We have collated some additional and updated advice to support children with SEND who are due to start school. This will help with transition during the COVID-19 crisis. All these suggestions have been considered in relation to the crisis. It is important to note that for most of the children starting school, they will have not attended their previous setting for over a term. This will inevitably have an affect for both the children and the families, and to bear in mind when considering transition and the first term of school. When more information is released about reopening, especially regarding new school starters, please consider having transition visits and a phased transition/start for these children, especially children with additional needs, who may need more of an adjustment period.

Prior to the child starting

- Ensure all relevant information has been gathered from their previous provision. Please be aware that a large proportion of providers have not been offering provision during the lockdown. This can include, but not limited to:
 - Strategies that both works and did not work to support the individual child
 - Likes and dislikes of the child, including areas of provision, books etc
 - Triggers for any upset
 - Any sensory issues that may impact their school life
 - Any mobility or curriculum support required
 - Any comforters or what was used to calm or engage the child
 - We have also been encouraging providers to complete SEND Support plans to support transition for children with SEND, so please ensure a copy of this is received.
- If any visuals were used in the previous setting, consider if the same can be used in your environment to create consistency and familiarity.
- Ensure break, lunch-times and toilet arrangements are carefully considered. As a school, you need to be ensuring you are following the government advice, whilst still maintaining support for those children that need it. This could include a smaller group break time in a break out outdoor space, as opposed to large playgrounds, a smaller lunch time 'club', or staggering lunch times to suit the need of the child and the school or an identified lunch space with a lunchtime buddy. Consider the use of resources to support with this.
- Ensure consideration is made for the start and end of day, whilst still adhering to the government guidance around social distancing. For example, is it possible for the child to arrive and leave staggered to other children to reduce any anxiety around loud noises or substantial amounts of people?
- Discuss any requirements with any other professionals involved
- Talk to parents. This was discussed within the main document; however, it is vital to reiterate the importance of talking to families, especially of those children with SEND
 - What are their worries?
 - How is the child at home?
 - How has the child been for the last term?

- Could parents complete a pupil passport or provide more information in the 'Transition Book'?
- Ensure you are open and honest with parents and sharing information as and when you receive it.
- When we find out more about school reopening, what will the first day look like? What will the first week look like?
- Encourage parents to buy school uniform early so the child can get familiarised with it, incorporating it into play
- Reassuring parents is vital. It is ok to say that we don't have all the answers yet, but be honest and share information when you can
- A parent of child with SEND may have additional worries about their child starting school. Could you set up a Zoom/Skype meeting with parents, so they get a more personable experience, putting a face to a name and you get to meet the child and the family? You may need more than one meeting to do this.
- All children, including those with SEND and additional needs would benefit from finding out what the new environment is like before starting. Could you make a video of the environment and school and include key members of staff, or use photos? This could be sent to parents to share with their child or put on the dedicated page on your school's webpage for parents to be encouraged to share and show their child. This will support the children with SEND to become familiar with key adults and the environment and reduce anxieties when they start school.
- With the help of all the above information, it may be appropriate to identify a calm/de-stress area within the classroom environment. This could be shared with families, so they can start showing and talking about this with their child.
- If the child does have involvement from the Early Years SEND Team, this involvement will continue until the child is settled at school.