



Transition blog

Transitioning from one year group to another can be tricky. I know as a teacher, I always found the transition from FS1 to FS2 was fairly easy for most children as we were lucky enough to have a preschool on site. However, the transition to Year 1 was always more difficult to manage. A different curriculum, a different style to teaching, an unfamiliar room and staff that children weren't so familiar with. When transition is done well, children are happy, feel secure and they settle into their new routine quickly. However, if it's not so smooth then children can take a long time to recover from it. It can affect their mental health and have a huge impact on the way they can access the learning that is being delivered to them. So if this is the case in 'normal' circumstances, imagine how tricky it will be this year in the current climate.

What can we do about it?

There are key elements to making transition effective that we need to consider and maybe reconsider in light of Covid-19 and it's impact on school life.

1. Time
2. A policy or plan
3. Mental health
4. Conversation
5. Characteristics of Effective Learning

Time

Normally, transition would start around about now for most children. In most schools, pre schools and nurseries, staff would start to talk to children about moving up to their new class or setting and the process would begin. However, in these current circumstances, that's now more tricky. If you can no longer take your children for visits to see their new setting or to introduce them to their new teachers/TAs/ key workers, then is there another way to make this happen? In July or September, you might normally put a week aside for home visits to meet your new children. If social distancing is in place then how can you still achieve this personal contact without a home visit? We need to make sure that these vital parts of transition are not forgotten but tackled from a different angle. Children still need the time to adjust to their new surroundings and to become familiar with their new adults, so how can this be achieved? If you need some ideas, then please download the transition toolkit at the end of this blog.

A policy or plan

For any transition, it's so important that every member of your team, whether that's the Early Years team, the SLT or the whole school, are on board and part of the transition process. The easiest way to achieve this is with a policy or a plan that everyone is familiar with. This policy or plan will look very different for this year due to the current circumstances. Start with what you used to do for transition, or what you had planned to do, then pick apart each section and rethink how you can achieve this in a different way, most likely, virtually. If you need help or support with this then you can contact us.

Mental health

As we all know, children's mental health is going to be affected by this current pandemic. Normally in schools, we can refer a child to children's mental health services by the end of Key Stage 1, but what about children in the Early Years? How can we support them through this challenging time? They will be dealing with big emotions that may be unfamiliar to them. They might have experienced things at home that they now don't know how to process. Children being in lockdown and being homeschooled will throw up lots of different challenges that we, as practitioners, will not have come across before. Talking is key. We need to plan in lots of time to talk. Talk to them, talk to their parents/ carers and really listen. What do they need? Transition can be a daunting experience for many children, but add in these new big emotions, and this large amount of time that they've had out of school and this could produce some huge and scary feelings for these little people.

Conversation

If this was a 'normal' school year (does that even exist?!), we would be having conversations around transition, lots of conversations. We would talk to the children about moving on, including questions on how they were feeling and who their friends were that they'd like to stay with (if classes were mixed). We would be having conversations with parents and carers about moving on and maybe there would be a transition day/ evening/ workshop for them to attend to better understand the next stage in their child's learning journey. There would be conversations with the next teacher or key worker to talk through individual children's needs, their academic progress so far, what they're interested in (to name but a few). So, what if we can no longer have these conversations? How can we still achieve all of these things if we are not in school? If you don't have the answer to these questions yet, then download the transition toolkit for some support.

Characteristics of Effective Learning

If there is one sure fire way to support children with their transition, it's using the Characteristics of Effective Learning. The Characteristics of Effective Learning are integrated into the EYFS to ensure that each child is motivated to learn, that they are engaged in that learning and that they are challenged to think critically. Children learn ways to become active problem solvers, to find things out through trial and error and to make links in their own learning. If we use these characteristics when children transition into the next phase of their learning journey then they will continue to develop these skills and grow into independent learners. To do this, we need to make sure that we provide children with the right environment, full of challenge and wonder, whilst at the same time, ensuring that we match the level of challenge to each child. Sounds impossible? It can be done, and, if it's done well, children will flourish.

Hopefully this blog has given you food for thought with regards to effective transition. If it's left you with more questions or needing more support, then please download the transition toolkit or contact us. We are all in this together, let's help these little people by making the next step as smooth as possible.