

Planning for transition back to school during the Covid-19 pandemic: supporting children and young peoples' wellbeing

a resource for senior leaders in early years settings and schools



Camden Educational Psychology Service
With thanks to Educational Psychology Services across the UK

Planning for Transition back to school during the Covid-19 pandemic: supporting children and young peoples' wellbeing

Guidance for Head Teachers and Senior Leaders in Schools and Early Years Settings

This guidance sets out principles to be considered by senior leadership teams in schools and Early Years Settings when planning for the return of children and young people as part of the phased return from June onwards.

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Introduction

Children and young people can find the transition between year groups or changing school unsettling and stressful but the experience of lockdown and the Coronavirus pandemic may heighten these feelings as lockdown is relaxed and more children and young people return to school. Many are feeling very anxious and uncertain about returning to school. At the same time, your staff and the parents and carers of children in your setting, will also be anxious about their own and their children's safety when there is not yet a vaccine to protect them from infection, or an effective treatment for the disease.

The purpose of this guidance is to provide advice on how schools and settings can support their children and young people, their families and their staff in making this transition so that they feel psychologically safe as well as physically safe. This will be key for those returning to school first, and over the months as more children and young people return and adapt to a different way of being in school with different systems and approaches. Relationships will be crucial to this because the relationship you have with your staff, your parents, and your children and young people is key for a successful transition process when there is still uncertainty on how the pandemic crisis will be resolved locally, nationally and internationally. The relationships that staff already have with their pupils and with parents and carers, and clear communication about the measures the setting is taking to keep children safe, will start the process of creating a climate for learning in different times. This will help children to re-connect with each other, which in turn, creates greater resilience in our children to adapt and keep learning.

There is an acknowledgement in all of us that whilst we have all shared a common experience, we will have had different versions of this event, different impacts on our lives, different gains and different losses. What is common for all of us working in education is that our role as educators is relationship-based. Therefore, the advice within this document uses our strengths in relationships as the starting point for thinking about welcoming our children back into our schools.

This presentation by Professor Barry Carpenter, on, what he is calling, the Recovery Curriculum is worth viewing. Professor Carpenter has been in education for 40 years as a head teacher, inspector and DfE advisor on complex learning difficulties and disabilities: His presentation can be viewed here (The LearningShared Podcast: Ep 1 A Recovery Curriculum): <https://www.evidenceforlearning.net/recoverycurriculum/>

We hope these materials help leaders in schools and settings plan with your staff, and access the support you need when you need it. Schools and settings are also able to draw on the wide range of support available in Camden as is appropriate to the task – Camden Learning advisors, educational psychologists, advisors in the Health and Wellbeing Team, specialist teachers, Early Help, CAMHS practitioners, Mental Health Support Teams, voluntary agencies.

Planning for successful transition

As always, the transition process begins well before the day that children and young people enter the school or setting for the first time. Most Camden schools have been open to staff working with vulnerable children and children of keyworkers, and provided off-site education and pastoral care working remotely with children and families.

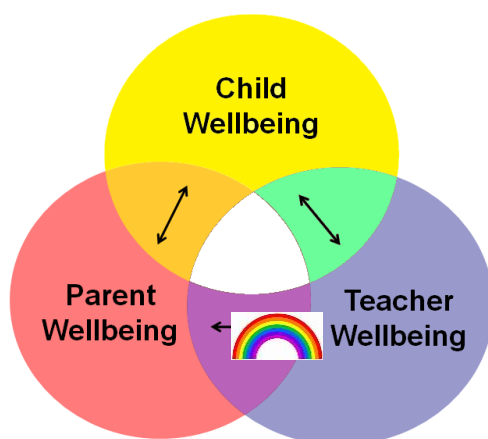
As schools expand their on-site delivery, one might think of three transition processes running alongside each other:

- 1) for staff
- 2) for parents/carers
- 3) for children and young people.

In each case, the same issues will apply. For children and young people to feel safe, first staff and then families need to feel safe. The work that you are doing to provide

emotional comfort and support will be needed by all those returning to school and the re-establishment of relationships.

It is perhaps also helpful to think about the interrelationships between the wellbeing of these individuals, or groups. The overlapping sections of this diagram (where the wellbeing of each individual or group meet) highlights the importance of parents and teachers managing their emotional needs so that they can, in turn, manage the emotional needs of the children and young people. It also highlights the importance of, for example: clear and calm communication; quality of interactions; and community engagement.



Many Headteachers and leaders will already be working through the areas listed below. This guidance is to provide a point of reference so that leaders can consider all these dimensions in making appropriate plans.

Five key principles have been found to support recovery following a significant incident.

- **A sense of safety:** It is important that children families and staff can feel safe in the school environment and on the journey to school, so it will be important to let everyone know what arrangements are in place to keep everyone safe.
- **A sense of calm:** People are likely to experience a range of emotions both pleasant and unpleasant. They may need reassurance that these are normal reactions and support to help them manage their emotions and return to a state of calm.
- **A sense of self- and collective- efficacy:** People need to feel they have some control over what is happening to them and that their actions and those of the groups they belong to (family, school, etc) will lead to positive outcomes.
- **Social connectedness:** It is important that adults, children and young people feel they belong and have a social network that can support them within the educational setting.
- **Promoting hope:** Whilst things may feel difficult now, it is important that adults, children and young people think that things will get better and work out in future. They need to be provided with reassurance that eventually they will feel positive again.

For staff, an outline structure for an INSET event is being prepared to accompany this guidance. This aims to assist the work of schools in reconnecting staff with the school and its values, to reflect on their experiences and what has been learned and most importantly, to manage their emotional needs so that they can, in turn, manage the emotional needs of children and young people in their care.

It is important for adults to look after their own emotional needs

In all of this, the wellbeing of staff is a key factor. During the transition period after lockdown staff will most likely be exposed to stories and information that are distressing to hear. This can result in stress and distress and may trigger emotional responses related to their own experience. Taking time to firstly recognise this and then to adopt strategies that provide psychological resilience and reduce stress is not only important, but professionally responsible. Some staff may need to seek psychological support, but for most the emotional journey is a completely normal if sometimes troubling one.

Helping children to regulate their emotions so they are ready to learn

Children and young people respond to adversity in a range of ways, including changes in their capacity for learning and physical and psychological wellbeing. These behavioural changes may indicate confusion and uncertainty, or underlying, ongoing distress.

Some groups to be especially aware of are:

- Students who have experienced significant loss or bereavement.
- Students who have been shielding during the pandemic as a result of underlying health conditions, and siblings of those who have been shielding, whose experience of lockdown will have been even more restricted.
- Students with existing social, emotional and mental health needs (some might have EHCPs that identify this as an area of special educational need that requires intensive support).
- Students with other known special educational needs or disabilities.
- Residents of the Chalcots Estate and other children and young people who were evacuated following the Grenfell Tower fire.
- Students who are Looked After, Children in Need or subject to a Child Protection Plan.
- Students who came under Refugee and/or Asylum Seeker status who may have previous experiences of trauma.

Creating a sense of safety

Many children, young people, parents, carers and staff will be feeling anxious about the transition back to school after the social distancing regulations are relaxed and will be worried about being near others. A recent survey of primary school children found that found a fifth were afraid to leave their house because of Covid-19. It will therefore be

important to provide containment for children (through relationships that make them feel safe) , young people, parents and staff with these anxieties.

Many schools are preparing virtual tours of the school for the children who will be starting there in September. For more information specific to starting in Reception and Y7, please refer to appendices 2 and 3.

To help create an environment where children, young people and staff feel safe and able to regulate their emotions, before they return it will be important to:

- Give a clear message that your overriding priority is to keep everyone safe
- Provide clear information about the strategies you plan to put in place to keep everyone safe, and follow national guidelines such as frequent handwashing.
- Be clear about when lessons and meetings are going to happen, how classrooms and activities will be organised, how break times, lunch times and access to toilets will be managed, etc.
- Make sure everyone knows who they can go to, be with and talk to in school
- Offer staff and families the opportunity to express their worries so that their concerns can be validated and addressed. Contacting families or having virtual meetings can give an idea about what these are. The sense of co-production will also help them to have a sense of control and increase their confidence in the arrangements.
- For children and young people, offer virtual meetings with class teachers/form tutors or virtual question and answer sessions
- Label and acknowledge feelings you may have yourself. It is important that you feel in control and able to communicate a sense of confidence in your ability to cope for staff to feel safe and secure. Seek support from colleagues, or services such as Educational Psychology.
- Identify who may require extra support at transition (e.g. especially those with special educational needs and disabilities, in the care of the local authority, subject to CIN or CP Plans or children who have previously experienced emotionally based school avoidance) and consider how their specific needs can be met.
- Signpost parents to resources they can use at home with their children.

Promoting a sense of calm

For children and young people returning to the same school/setting, the school that they will return to may be quite different from the one they knew before the lockdown. Some staff may not be there, they may be recovering from the virus, or a colleague may have sadly died. More children and staff will have experienced the death of others near to them, such as parents or grandparents, or partners of staff.. Routines may be different, new rules may be in place, the structure of the school day may be altered. In some ways their experience may be like that of children and young people transferring to a new

school or setting. Most members of the school community, staff, children and parents will experience emotional dysregulation (they are not in control of their emotions, and are easily triggered to 'fight/flight/freeze/flop' responses) in some way and at some times when under stress. It is helpful for staff draw on / learn positive strategies to regulate their own emotions, and be more available to help children regulate theirs, for example through breathing techniques that overcome the body's stress responses. Children and young people may experience:

- A loss of attachment to familiar people, friends, the environment and objects within that environment
- Uncertainty about their role and identity
- Confusion in how to be in an environment that is less predictable
- A perceived loss of control
- A feeling of being de-skilled and less valued
- Uncertainty about the future

It will be helpful to normalise some of these feelings, and to acknowledge that in this context it is okay to not be okay. For staff and parents in particular, it will be helpful to promote resilience through accepting a diversity of reactions, including a diversity of useful things to do and ways to be. For many children, simply being back in school will be therapeutic, with the consistency of school life being containing for young people.

For others, being in school means leaving their place of safety at home, or leaving vulnerable family members without support, and their anxiety may be heightened. Parents and carers who have lived through traumatic experiences are telling us that they are experiencing flash-backs, loss of sleep, and other signs of distress triggered during the pandemic and the outside world may feel to them to be a dangerous place.

Children impacted by trauma are more likely to have their stress responses triggered over the transition. School staff, some of whom have experienced trauma in their lives and/or have had difficult experiences, will also need positive support to overcome their own stress responses.

Whatever their circumstances, it will take time for children to re-establish and re-learn routines and expectations in schools. It will be important to respond to what children have learnt, not what we expect them to have learnt and what they may have forgotten. An attachment (emotional/relational) informed approach will also ensure that provision is appropriate for those children whose attachments may have been 'disrupted', so are not secure.

- Focus on re-establishing relationships between staff and pupils. Give time to welcoming children back, offer kindness and comfort and listen to their thoughts, feelings and ideas, so that they can feel safe and trust staff to meet their needs through planned activities as well as incidental means.
- Establish or re-establish routines to provide predictability and stability.

- Provide emotional containment through acknowledging behaviours as a form of communication and ‘wondering aloud’ to translate behaviours into a language that can be understood and a need that can then be met.
- For younger children especially, permitting the use of transitional objects (a comforter or other object that enables a child to manage separation from a parent or caregiver) can help them to maintain an emotional connection to someone who cares about them and so feel safer.
- Make use of emotion regulation strategies such as Mindfulness, Emotion Coaching and Zones of Regulation (if your school does not use these strategies, speak to specialist teachers / EPs / CAMHS professionals).
- Keep everyone involved and included – give them a voice, ask them what you can do to help.
- Check in regularly with staff and encourage staff to check in regularly with children and young people.
- Provide additional pastoral care for those who require it, either individually or in small groups. This might include opportunities to leave the classroom if they become overwhelmed or having access to an identified adult who they can go to if they want to talk or distraction activities if they are not able to talk.
- Find ways to describe children experiencing difficulties that demonstrate understanding of their needs and positive regard, for example as a ‘child experiencing trauma’ rather than a victim; as ‘having a hard time getting their needs met’ rather than attention seeking or manipulative.
- In addition to having a calm classroom, teaching children and young people strategies to self-calm is useful and conducive to creating a positive learning atmosphere. Sometimes for there to be calmness there needs to be opportunity for movement and the expenditure of energy. Children and young people who seem to be particularly jumpy, anxious, nervous or on edge may find that a game that allows for running around or even being able to get out of their seat and hand out sheets for a class task allows them to resettle.
- Talking about feelings, having posters around the classroom that provide words for feelings and emotions and cueing children and young people into their feelings are all strategies that develop emotional literacy and help children and young people to understand their own and others’ feelings. If they seem particularly upset, distressed or angry, it is important to first let them calm down before helping them to identify their feelings.

Promoting self- and collective- efficacy

During the Covid-19 pandemic, adults, children and young people may feel a lack of control over what has happened to them and may doubt the impact their actions can

have. It is therefore important that their sense of self-efficacy is developed on their return to the educational setting. Some examples of how this can be facilitated are:

- Provide adults, children and young people with responsibilities such as specific jobs or tasks to help manage the school's social distancing strategies.
- Work with children and young people to set targets and goals for themselves.
- Help children and young people learn strategies to regulate their emotions to help them feel they are in control of and can manage overwhelming feelings they may experience. For some children, zoning out with music, creative arts, a game, a jigsaw puzzle can help calm their nervous system. For younger children, a soft toy or lego among other activities can help.
- Help children and young people to recall times when they have coped with change in the past and help them to think about how they can apply those strategies in different situations. Useful resources include 'Steps to my Goal' or 'Exploring Solutions to Difficult Situations'.
- Cognitive Behavioural Approaches can help children and young people challenge unhelpful thoughts which can impact on their feelings and behaviours.
- Create a sense of belonging within the school and the classroom or tutor group through active involvement in planning and implementing strategies to keep everyone safe and the use of communal language such as 'our school' or 'our project'.
- Give feedback on how everyone's thoughts and ideas have shaped decision-making in managing the running of the school in the new environment.

Promoting social connectedness

Facilitating a sense of connectedness and belonging to the school, to colleagues and peers, will be crucial during this period. It will enable staff and pupils feel that they are genuinely cared about, wanted, listened to and supported and will positively impact on their engagement, achievement and emotional wellbeing. Many people are likely to have been in contact via social media, however, most will have experienced a range of losses including close contact with friends, school-based and recreational activities and connections with many other people.

- Peer support programmes offer staff, children and young people opportunities to reach out to each other and facilitate connections e.g. buddy and befriending schemes can help staff support each other and can support children to build friendships and support networks.
- Tutor or circle times adapted to smaller groups can promote a collective understanding of 'how to support each other' and opportunities for small acts of kindness. Talk to older children about how they can support their own sense of well-being by building positive actions into their daily life such as '[Keeping active, connecting with others, taking notice, giving and keeping learning.](#)'

- For some children and young people, it may be beneficial to assign 'key adults' to help support them, to establish trust and rapport and promote a feeling of safety and being supported through this transitional period.
- Staff too, may welcome support, for example, through a mentoring programme.
- Support pupils through peer conflicts. Relational approaches that are supportive rather than punitive would benefit both staff and pupils' understanding of emotions and possible causes for challenging behaviour. This could include the use of 'Restorative Approaches'.
- Model the behaviour that you want to see in others. Well-supported staff members, through having their own attachment needs met, will be able to harness their internal resources to support children to develop and maintain their own attachments. Using collective terms such as 'our school', 'our community' help foster a sense of belonging.
- You may be able to build on the experience of giving thanks on Thursdays at 8 with children and young people working together to help others and make this a less scary time for everyone. How have communities come together? What has changed for the better? How have we shown appreciation of those who helped us – friends and family who are keyworkers, carers and other helping roles. Remember that not all children and young people are in a safe enough space to be able to join in.

Promoting a sense of hope

Recovering from the Covid-19 pandemic is an opportunity like no other to engage the whole school in thinking about our values, what really matters to us now, and how we have changed as a result of our experience: what have we learned? Is it a time to go back to old ways or a time for growth and new possibilities? Some studies have shown that almost 90% of people report at least one aspect of post-traumatic growth after a stressful experience. If we can harness this 'adversarial growth' through careful preparation and planning as outlined above, it will enable adult, children and young people to emerge from this highly challenging life experience with increased emotional strength and resilience, a heightened sense of appreciation and improved personal relationships.

- Reminding children of their strengths, hopes and aspirations and providing opportunities for them to achieve and experience success will help them to take a positive view of their lives. Remember optimism can be taught and that it is contagious.
- **Predictability and routines** are important, especially when children are first settling back in to school.

We would like to thank those Educational Psychology Services across the UK that have generously shared resources and equally those that have endorsed resources produced by Camden educational psychologists.

Useful resources

Information and resources linked to the MindUp programme, developed for families to use at home: <https://mindup.org.uk/families/>

NHS information and guidance for mindfulness, with some useful links for adults: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/mindfulness/>

Free mindfulness app and resources – for adults or young people: <https://www.smilingmind.com.au/>

Calming breathing and stretching exercises for children based on yoga: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cyvuaL_2avY

Understanding anxiety – a child friendly video explaining how the brain works: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=so8QN9an3t8>

Recovery Curriculum: <https://www.evidenceforlearning.net/recoverycurriculum/>

Five ways to help children heal as more children return to school <https://marymered.wordpress.com/2020/04/14/five-ways-to-help-children-heal-when-schools-reopen/>

Materials to help adults and children understand the impact of trauma to support change:

Beacon House. Free resources available at <https://beaconhouse.org.uk/specialist-clinics/child-and-family-trauma-clinic/>

InnerWorld Work – the online parent and carer free support resource centre. Free resources available at <http://www.innerworldwork.co.uk/>

Reading Well for young people recommends expert endorsed books about mental health, providing 13 to 18 year olds with advice and information about issues like anxiety, stress and OCD, and difficult experiences like bullying and exams.

<https://reading-well.org.uk/books/books-on-prescription/young-people-mental-health>

Resources to support bereavement: also see the embedded document ‘Critical incidents-’

THUNKS on DEATH (Winston’s Wish). Thunks are beguilingly simple questions developed by Winston’s Wish with Independent Thinking ‘that make your brain go ouch’. This set was designed to open up group discussion about grief, death and bereavement.

The Educational Psychology Service has previously distributed guidance for schools with further resources around bereavement and for wellbeing resources for parents/carers, young people (below, page 11) and staff wellbeing (in appendix 1 page 12).



Critical incidents-
Covid-19 10.04.20.doc



Looking after
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Looking after
Ourselves - young pe

Appendix 1: What can adults do to help themselves?

Many adults in the school community will also be experiencing a similar range of emotions and reactions as the children, young people and their families. Experiences of bereavement and loss, caring for someone shielding, living with a frontline NHS worker or carer, coping with additional stressors, worry and anxiety will be shared and lived experiences for many.

Managing your own stress

Try to:

- Take time out to get sufficient sleep, rest, relax and eat regularly and healthily
- Exercise is important and promotes positive mental health and resilience
- Talk to people you trust and allow yourself to be comforted. You don't have to tell everyone everything, but not saying anything to anyone is often unhelpful
- Reduce outside demands and avoid taking on additional responsibilities
- Spend time in a place where you feel safe and calm to go over what's happened over the course of the day/week. Don't force yourself to do this if the feelings are too strong or intense at the time
- Try to reduce your access to the constant stream of news from media outlets and social media. Try scheduling 'digital power off' times.
- Use relaxation strategies e.g. slow breathing, progressive muscle relaxation, self-talk
- Build in opportunities for recognising hope and positive strength
- Allow yourself experiences of sadness and grief
- Recognise that the range of emotional responses people experience are all normal responses – and if these persist with intensity or escalate and impact negatively on your life over more than 6 weeks you may want to seek additional support, for example through the Employee Assistance Programme

Try to avoid:

- Bottling up feelings. Consider whether it would be helpful to talk about them with someone you trust
- Feeling embarrassed by your thoughts, feelings or those of others. These are normal reactions to a stressful event and period of time
- Isolating yourself from those you trust and feel safe around



We have previously distributed the attached Camden document to support staff wellbeing.



Looking after
Ourselves - Staff Well

Psychological First Aid – what staff can do to help each other

Psychological first aid refers to the actions that can be taken by people without formal psychological or counselling training to provide emotional support for people following an emergency or critical incident.

The following may be useful for staff when providing psychological first aid for each other:

- Ask simple questions to ascertain what help may be needed.
- Emphasise the support available.
- Initiate contact only after you have observed and appraised the situation. It is important to make sure that contact will not be seen as intrusive or disruptive.
- Review the situation and emphasise the positive actions taken by colleagues in managing the situation.
- Listen with compassion.
- Avoid talking about your own experience – remain curious about theirs and actively listen
- Offer to make them a cup of tea/coffee.
- Reflect the words of the person. Don't judge the statements a person makes.
- Ask non-intrusive and open ended questions (e.g. "Where were you during...?")
- Keep the discussion based on what happened. Avoid "What if...?" or "I should have..." statements. If your colleague takes this line, bring the talk back to real events.
- In some instances staff members may have an intense and lasting response and need professional psychological help. However, your interventions as a line manager or a colleague can do much to reduce or even remove the need for counselling.
- Follow-up should be at a level appropriate to the relationship between the person and helper. In some instances it may be as simple as asking "How are you now?"
- Remember that psychological first aid is about reducing distress, assisting with the current needs of colleagues and making sure that colleagues are offered the support to allow them to function within their professional setting. It is not about revisiting traumatic experiences.

With thanks to Bi-borough Educational Psychology Service for consent to use content in appendix 1.

Appendix 2: Children starting Reception September 2020

Transition to school from nursery setting to school Reception

Children starting Reception in September 2020 could find this more challenging than in other years following lockdown, given that they will have become used to being with their parents and immediate family for an extended period.

We know that transition is a process and not an event. Under current conditions we need to carefully think about and consider the processes we would have implemented for information exchanges with previous settings and parents, visits to the school or home visits to meet the children; for example how much of this can be moved online and how much may need to be moved to September. It will become even more important for children starting at a new setting to have a staggered start, slowly allowing them to become accustomed both to the new setting and the psychological adjustment required.

Some key considerations to assist with that process might be:

- Place an even stronger emphasis on consulting with parents/carers – this will help to reduce their stress which can otherwise transmit to their child. Strong, supportive links help the child with the vital task of holding their important people in mind when they are apart from them. This will also help to play a part in supporting vulnerable attachments in the home or in a care setting.
- Share information: additional questions to consider when completing/discussing your transition documentation might be: sleep and energy patterns; how the child usually shows anxiety or distress; what helps to soothe and comfort them; the child's motivations, schema(s)/favourite themes in play; how the parent would like to approach the separation and what they think would most help the child.
- Help the child to become familiar with your setting which under current circumstances could be by providing virtual photo books and/or video tours of key features of the school/classroom e.g. entrance, toilets, pegs, break out area, playground, a selection of toys/equipment available by providing these on your website.
- Relaxed/staggered starts under the current situation will be evermore important to allow the child and their parent/carer to take their time separating and to choose what the child is ready to engage in. Coming in to an active environment with self-registration and continuous provision (as opposed to carpet based registration routines) provides the child and parent/carer with lots of options for handling the separation in ways that work best for them.
- Adopt an individualised approach to separation; be watchful and flexible to respond to the variable needs of individual children and families. These are likely to be accentuated after the Covid-19 lockdown. Observe attachment behaviours. Young children who are securely attached need to continue to experience an optimum level of support and nurturing care with their key adults. Children who are showing insecure or avoidant attachment behaviours need help building

relationships. Children look to their key people for comfort and reassurance when sad, unhappy, ill or anxious

- Hellos and goodbyes: the time when parents/carers will need to feel most connected with and supported by practitioners, especially at this challenging time will be at the beginning and end of sessions. What parents and children will need at handover transition times is the soothing presence of a sensitive practitioner who understands and empathises with them and doesn't try to dismiss their anxiety or briskly 'fix' the child's distress. As well as being tired and possibly hungry, a child can be unsettled by the transition of leaving the socially and intellectually stimulating environment of the setting/classroom. Seeing their parent/carer again can also remind them of how much they missed them.
- Predictability and routines will be important, especially during the settling in phase without too many interruptions to sustained play or too many breaks for adult-driven tasks, such as snack times, assemblies and whole-class discussions.
- Listen to children, ask gentle questions, and provide opportunities for children to voice concerns. Incorporate ideas and feelings about change and transition into children's play, through story and drama, role play and in their 'small world' play. Classic stories and fairy tales that reflect human experience of change and uncertainty and explore what it feels like to conquer your fears and persevere through adversity can be a helpful springboard in this regard.

10 pointers for settling well

1. Children confidently leave their main carer over time.
2. Children feel secure and safe in their play.
3. Home-provision links support transition and separation, including links made prior to the child starting and settling.
4. A phased in, gentle and child centered settling approach meets the individual child's needs.
5. Parents and main carers feel confident to leave their children and are supported in the separation.
6. Children are supported and understood in their emotions as they express them.
7. Children are comforted and have their needs met if or when they cry.
8. Children are listened to when they express sadness or any emotion.
9. Children are listened to if they want to go home or see their main carer.
10. Children have a named and present key person who supports them and meets their individual needs.

Building a relationship to support attachment

- How can I get to know this child's story in the best way?
- How can I help the child to build a relationship with the key person?

- How can I help the main carer to support the child and help us?
- What do I need to know about the child's story so far?
- How can I equip the setting by providing toys and resources to meet the child's interests?
- How can I put provocations and resources in the setting that the child will recognise or be drawn to because they are comforting or homely?
- How do I help children to love coming into our provision and be happy to separate through the resourced learning environment?
- How does understanding each child's needs help me to inform others and prepare the environment?

Prior to starting, the keyworker might find out the following

- How can I find out about child's likes and dislikes?
- What can the main carer tell me about their child's emotions and how they show and communicate these?
- Is there a favourite toy or transitional object that the child goes to when stressed or distressed? If so, can you bring it and where shall we keep it for the child to go to?
- How does the child like to be comforted?
- Has the child been to other groups before, what is your child used to and what does a normal day look like?
- Has the child left their main carer before?
- Has there been any early trauma or change in their early years? This could include new sibling, toilet training recently, hospital stays, house moves, change in carer, separation or other.
- Have there been any other separations or transitions in their first few years of life?

Supporting emotional literacy

- Does that make you feel....?
- How does that make you feel?
- I can see that you're crying, is that because you are sad?
- What is making you sad?
- Your face looks cross / sad / upset. Is that what you are feeling? Am I right?
- How can I help you?
- What would help you now?
- What do you need?
- Can you show me what you need?

Supporting wellbeing

- Do we know as much about the child as possible to help settle with confidence?

- How has the main carer helped to support the child being positive about separation?
- What language do you use about separating, leaving main carer and what are the key phrases you all use so that the child builds trust and learns positive self-talk? Eg mummy always comes back / mummy's going to have a cup of tea and then come back / I know its sad leaving mum but... / come and play with... and then mummy will come back...
- If the child's wellbeing appears low when separating or the child is crying or anxious, ask the following questions
 - Do I know enough about home?
 - Has the child been given positive reassuring messages from main carer?
 - How have we worked together to help the child separate confidently?
 - What do we agree about crying and upset?
 - How do we listen to the child in their upset and unhappiness?
 - How do we value the separation from the main carer and respect that prime key relationship?
 - How quickly do we expect children to be able to leave their secure prime attachment? Should we reassess our expectations?
 - Is the child ready to leave their main carer?
 - Do we need to support the separation process in a different or slower way?

Useful links:

1. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-on-supporting-children-and-young-peoples-mental-health-and-wellbeing/guidance-for-parents-and-car-ers-on-supporting-children-and-young-peoples-mental-health-and-wellbeing-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak>
2. <https://www.mentallyhealthyschools.org.uk/resources/10-practical-tips-for-school-staff-to-help-children-settle-when-starting-primary-school/>
3. "Understanding Transitions in the Early Years" - (2nd edition:2018). Anne O'Connor
4. Early Education: Guest blog: Returning to and starting school in 2020, by Karen Wickett. www.early-education.org.uk
5. Early Education: Settling Children Well. www.early-education.org.uk

With thanks to the Inclusive Education Team and Northamptonshire EPS for appendix 2

Appendix 3: Primary to secondary transition

Schools have already received guidance from Camden Learning to support arrangements between primary and secondary schools (embedded in this page for easy reference).



Camden Learning
Secondary Transition

Supporting children before they start secondary school

- Secondary schools might organise **virtual tours**, which show both the setting and introduces key teachers.
- Schools could set up a webpage with **photos of the classrooms and key areas** of the secondary school so that the children can see what the school looks like inside.
- Providing **timetables** for the end of Year 6 building in opportunities for **developing independence**. This will be helpful for the children's structure and routine in preparation for Year 7.
- **Plan an end of year celebration**. Saying goodbye to friends who may not be attending the same junior or secondary school as them will be important for pupils, as will saying goodbye to teachers. Consider alternative ways, such as video call, virtual letters or drawings, for children and staff to say goodbye who are unable to attend school in person.

Both Year 6 and Year 7

- Use a **virtual worry box** or build in time for children's concerns to be addressed. Children will no doubt have questions; staff from the infant and junior or primary and secondary school can work together to address these in a virtual format.
- Help children **understand their stress responses**, know that these are normal and they can and will learn strategies to help manage and regulate their emotional state.
- Teach and make time to rehearse strategies to manage stress responses, such as relaxation, mindfulness techniques or creative activities.
- It is important that **clear transition plans** are in place for children who may be considered vulnerable, such as those with SEND or social, emotional and mental health needs. If transition meetings take place remotely, it is important that the views of all stakeholders are taken into account.

Supporting children starting in Year 7

- Consider **building peer relationships**, which may have ordinarily begun during 'move-up days' or events. This might need to be built into the beginning of Year 7 through activities in class, tutor periods or after-school events.
- Consider **repeating aspects of the curriculum between year groups**. Much of the curriculum that Year 6 pupils would normally be accessing at this time of year may only have been accessed on a limited basis or not at all for some children. Infant and junior or primary and secondary schools will need to work together to make sure there is some continuity of the curriculum and to ameliorate gaps in learning, whilst still providing some novelty for pupils in their new year group.

- Some children may require **additional assessment and intervention** to what is ordinarily put in place to ensure that any gap does not widen throughout Year 7.

Resources for primary to secondary transition

Evangelou, M., Taggart, B., Sylva, K., Melhuish, E., Sammons, P. & Siraj-Blatchford, I. (2008). What makes a successful transition from primary to secondary school? Nottingham, United Kingdom: Department for Children Schools and Families.

Useful websites:

BBC Bitesize:

Starting secondary school: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/tags/zh4wy9q/starting-secondary-school/1>

Mindmoose:

Moving on up: Lesson plan for helping year 6 transition to secondary school: <https://www.mindmoose.co.uk/2017/07/05/helping-year-6-transition-secondary-school/>

Young Minds:

Find Your Feet: Transitioning to Secondary School

<https://youngminds.org.uk/resources/school-resources/find-your-feet-transitioning-to-secondary-school/>

Find Your Feet: Transitions Activity for Year 6 Pupils

<https://youngminds.org.uk/resources/school-resources/find-your-feet-transitions-activity-for-year-6-pupils/>

Transition Tips For Pupils With SEND <https://youngminds.org.uk/resources/school-resources/transition-tips-for-pupils-with-send/>

Find Your Feet: Transition Tips for Parents <https://youngminds.org.uk/resources/school-resources/find-your-feet-transition-tips-for-parents/>

With thanks to Camden Learning for guidance embedded in appendix 3.