Autism Support Team

Secondary

Transition Guide

This guide is based on the book 'Autism Spectrum Disorder and the Transition into Secondary School' by Marianna Murin, Josselyn Hellriegel and Will Mandy and includes photocopiable resources from the book

Introduction to Transition Support

The transition from primary to secondary school is a major change in a young person's life but can be even more challenging for students with autism (ASD). It involves a large number of changes which may include:

- Dealing with a much larger number of pupils

- Dealing with an increase in the number of classes and subjects

- Different travel arrangement to get to and from school

- More teachers and their different approaches

- A new and often much larger building

- Making new friends

- More transitions throughout the day

- New timetables

- New and different routines

- Coping with subjects they have not encountered before

- A longer working day, taking into account travel time.

A more detailed list of potentials difficulties can be found in (**Appendix 1—Differences in school experience between Year 6 and 7)**

It can be more challenging for students with ASD to successfully transition into secondary school, this may be due to:

- Anxiety – Children may have anxiety about the unknown, change, different rules and processes and more, in addition to excessive social anxiety caused by social difficulties.

- Social competence – Children may struggle to adapt to new social dynamics and relationships, may misinterpret social cues, thus making friendships and social integration harder to achieve.

- Adaptive functions – Children will require support to adapt previously learnt everyday school behaviours to their new environment by creating new routines and developing skills. For example, looking after their possessions, how and where they eat lunch, self-care and self-management skills, who they communicate with and how.

- 70-87% of children with ASD may also have a co-morbid condition, such as ADHD, mental health or behavioural difficulties. These can bring greater challenge around the self-management and emotional regulation that secondary school requires.

(Mandy, Murin, Baykaner, Staunton, Hellriegel, Anderson and Skuse 2015).

Summary of Successful Transition Plan

The keys to a successful transition may be summarised as follows:

1) Planning and preparation – beginning up to 2 years before transition

2) Communication

- All parties must have a good level of awareness of the transition plan and the role they play in it.

- Information must be shared effectively between the receiving school and those people that know the pupil well.

3) Individual programmes – no one size fits all.

Year 4.

 You should try to:

- Identify student's strengths and areas for development (Appendix 2—Skills checklist)
- Begin to set targets around areas for development (Appendix 4 –Target behaviours)
- Solidify, maintain and generalise existing supports in place for the student
- AST available to support with strategies and targets

Year 5

 You should try to:

- Prepare parents for Secondary Placement decisions (Appendix 3—Parent questions)
- Focus on creating opportunities for greater independence
- Continue with developing target behaviours (Appendix 4—Target Behaviours)
- Continue to establish successful routines and supports
- AST available to support with strategies and targets


Year 6

You should try to:

- Continue to use established routines and supports, promoting independence
- Create an individualised transition plan once a school has been allocated (see page 4)
- Conduct a Bridge Meeting (see page 4)
- In the Spring term, start to support child to complete Transition Workbook (here)

Creating an Individualised Transition plan

This should begin in the spring term once the secondary school has been allocated.

4 steps

1. Screening questionnaires

2. Bridge meeting

3. Transition management plan

4. Pupil profile
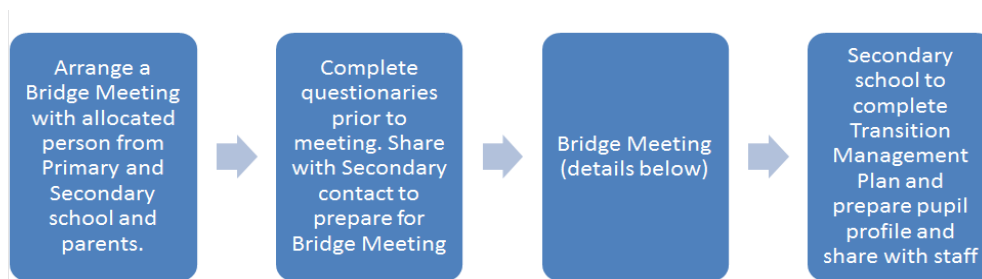
1. Screening Questionnaires

To be completed by parents/carer, primary school teacher and student to help identify areas of strength and need (Appendix 6 Screening Questionnaires)

2. Bridge Meeting

Who should attend?

- Pupil should be invited to attend parts/end of the meeting if appropriate

- Allocated Primary contact

- Allocated Secondary contact

- Parents/carers

What is the purpose?

- Use the screening questionnaires to identify areas of priority need, areas needing specific support and other issues staff need to be aware of

- Agree upon appropriate management and support strategies

3. Transition Management Plan

This is a summary of the support needed as identified in the Bridge Meeting. It is a working document and includes an agreed action plan detailing who will carry out the different management and support strategies. It should be shared with everyone who attended the Bridge Meeting. (Appendix 7—Transition Management Plan)

4. Pupil Profile

A summary of the key information that all Secondary school staff need to know. This is completed and shared by the Secondary school contact. (Appendix 8 -Pupil Profile)

Appendix 1 - Differences in school experience between Year 6 and 7

Typical Year 6 experience	Typical year 7 experience
Small school – average 300+ usually on one site	Larger school – average 650+ often on larger/spilt site
School within walking distance	Longer journey – possibly using public transport
Regular breaks, early lunch, easy access to toilets	Longer mornings, more difficult access to toilets
Regular patterns to the day, core subjects in the morning	Core subjects spread throughout the week, may have extended days or 2 week timetable
Often one class teacher, one class group, one class-room	Contact with 10-15 teachers per week, group may change, different rooms
Topic approach	Subject specific teaching
Flexible timetable, more time to complete tasks	Complex timetable, fixed lesson times – need to complete work in limited amount of time
Most equipment and books available in one room	Students need to plan what they need in advance
Flexible grouping arrangements of students and furniture	More formal classroom organisation
Work drafted and then written up in 'best'	Work mainly in ink, 'best' work often to be produced immediately
Key information written on the board, worksheets that 'chunk' information, variety of teaching styles	Information presented verbally, less repetition of key information. Greater reliance on textbook/website and reading as a means of gathering information
Teacher able to check and monitor individual progress	Less monitoring across the whole curriculum
Little regular homework	Need to be organised to plan for 2+ subjects a night and to plan for its completion and hand in on correct day
No use of school journal	Use of school journey to record key information/ changes to timetable and homework
Parent/carer contact with school more frequent/ personal	Parent/carer contact less frequent/more formal
No after school detentions	Detentions may be given after school
Most senior member of the school, established social group	Most junior member of the school, need to establish new social groups
Informal tests	Testing, written and verbal, more frequent

Appendix 2: Year 4 skills checklist

Classroom skills:	Yes	No
1. When the teacher is talking to the whole class, I know that they are:		
a) Talking to me as well (I am included in the class, as a member)		
b) That this is the start of a lesson		
c) That I need to listen		
d) That I am being given information that I will use later		
e) That there is a reason why I am being told things (L.O.)		
2. During the teacher talk, I know that:		
a) I might not understand something		
b) If I don't understand, I can tell teacher and they will help		
c) To ask for help I put my hand up		
d) If the teacher asks a question of the class, I am included		
3. I know that the teacher talk ends with information that I need to do a task:		
a) I can understand 'task instructions'		
b) Translate into getting materials and equipment needed		
c) Move independently from 'listening' to 'doing'		
4. To get into work (task) I can:		
a) Organise my materials		
b) Begin work independently		
c) Have a sense of the whole task (beginning, middle, end)		
d) Keep going (minimal self-distractions)		
e) Be comfortable with having a difficulty		
f) Be happy to ask for help		
5. As necessary, I know that my peers are a resource I can:		
a) Ask for help / information		
b) Work in 'twos' or a group		
c) Watch and mimic if I am unsure		
6. I know when I have completed what I have to do:		
a) I am happy to check back to see if I have done all I can		
b) I am happy to improve on / redo bits as necessary		
d) If I can't finish on time, I am not anxious		
e) I don't mind resuming where I left off at another time		

The whole school environment:	Yes	No	Supports required
a) I know my way around the school			
b) I know that the school is divided into 'areas' – staff, admin, teaching rooms; dinner hall etc			
c) I can work out short routes to places			
d) I am happy to interact with staff generally, not just those who 'work with me'			
e) I know there is a 'hierarchy' – Head, SENCO etc			
f) I know that adults have different functions and that I need to interact with them differently			
g) I interact with a range of peers – class, year, other years, in different places e.g. class, playground, dinner hall			

Personal development:	Yes	No	Supports required
a) I can look after my belongings			
b) I mimic behaviour as a learning resource			
c) I know the difference between 'good' and 'bad' behaviour when I copy peers			
d) I know how to seek help			
e) I seek help as necessary			
f) I have general self-help skills			
g) I know and follow the class and school routines			
h) I can cope with change and the unexpected			

APPENDIX 4: PARENT QUESTIONS FOR PROSPECTIVE SCHOOLS

The following questions can be used as a guideline when visiting schools.

Visiting Mainstream Schools

Environment:

How many children are in each class?
Are there distraction free work areas?
Are there lunchtime clubs / homework clubs / after-school clubs?

Curriculum:

How long are the lessons and are support materials provided?
What arrangements are made for school exams, tests and GCSE's?
Can the school meet the needs of your child?

Support:

What additional support is offered in class and by whom?
If there is an assistant to help my child? What arrangements will be put in place if the LSA is not in school (sick, on a course, etc)?
How much support does the school get from other professions? *e.g.* speech therapist, educational psychologist, school doctor.
How are activities adapted for those children who may have difficulties with concentration or writing for long periods of time?
What training have the staff had in relation to autism?
Is there a buddy system or peer support where an older child helps a younger child within the school?
What is the bullying policy?

Communication:

Are all staff briefed on potential triggers for outbursts by children with Autism?
Are there quiet areas to go if children become stressed or anxious?
Will there be a key staff member available for the student if there are any problems?
How does the school communicate with parents?

Questions to reflect on after the visit?

How might your child cope with the unstructured aspects of the environment? *e.g. corridors, break, lunch.*

How might your child respond to the size of the school? *e.g. physical environment, number of students.*

How might your child respond to the complexity of the structure? *e.g. number of buildings, ease of movement around school.*

Appendix 5—Target behaviours

Target Behaviour	In place	To be put in place
Plan to bring equipment for a range of different lessons e.g. PE, IT etc.		
Use their own initiative and problem solving strategies		
Follow written instructions		
Recognise when they don't understand something		
Be able to ask for help in an appropriate way		

Target Behaviour	In place	To be put in place
Recording homework tasks accurately		
Getting on with work with less teacher input and monitoring. Being able to initiate and complete work. Independent use of visual supports: timetables, schedules, checklists etc.		
Being responsible for their own books/equipment between lessons		
Exposure to different styles of teaching and teacher expectations of behaviour, interaction etc. Delivery of instruction from more varied teachers and support staff		

Target Behaviour	In place	To be put in place
Present all work to an acceptable standard on their first attempt		
Write dates and titles using margins and underlining with a rulers		
Write neatly and quickly in ink, first time or be able to use a keyboard to record work		

Target behaviours (cont'd)

Target Behaviour	In place	To be put in place
Developing a sense of time and time planning - without adult prompting e.g. knowing how long it takes to get from one place to another and setting off in enough time		
Moving promptly between lessons and from break/lunch to lessons		
Getting changed/equipment ready for sessions quickly – for P.E. etc		
Moving around school on their own – taking messages, working in other classrooms, getting books from the library, etc and in returning		

Target Behaviour	In place	To be put in place
Interpreting a timetable		
Using a school journal or diary – knowing what information should be recorded and where. Understanding the value of the information contained in the book.		
Working on time limited activities		
Getting things handed in on time – with minimal reminders		

Target Behaviour	In place	To be put in place
Whole class teaching, with students taking notes of important points without prompting		
Taking notes from text books/websites		
Developing research and study skills – reading for meaning, summarising, answering questions from a text, interpreting information and putting it into their own words.		
Reading and following instructions on their own		
Using dictionaries, calculators, computers		

Appendix 6 Questionnaires

Adult Screening Questionnaire

This Screening Questionnaire is designed in such a way as to enable school professionals and parents/carers to evaluate the child's difficulties on a scale of significance.

Name of person completing this form:

Relationship to child:

Pupil's name:

Pupil's date of birth:

Pupil's diagnosed conditions:
(please list all diagnoses, such as ASD, dyspraxia, dyslexia, ADHD, etc.)

Is pupil aware of diagnosis: ASD: ☐ Yes   ☐ No
Any other diagnoses: ☐ Yes   ☐ No

Does the pupil and family consent to the diagnosis being shared with:
Staff: ☐ Yes   ☐ No
Peers: ☐ Yes   ☐ No

Does pupil have **an EHCP**   ☐ Yes   ☐ No
If yes, please list below the sessions for which the pupil
receives 1:1 support (e.g. PE, group work):

Critical medical needs:
(conditions requiring medication or special considerations, such as diabetes, allergies, etc.)

Please tick the support needs which apply to the pupil on the scale below, according to relevant level of significance:

1 – indicates that it is an area school professionals need to be aware of

2 – indicates that it is an area which will require specific support strategies

3 – indicates a priority area which will require a proactive and consistent management plan

Please indicate the child's areas of difficulty by ticking the appropriate boxes below.

Question/statements	Level of significance		
Social Interaction Difficulties			
	1	2	3
Has he/she had difficulty making friends in the past?			
Has he/she had difficulty in sustaining friendships?			
Has he/she been worried about making friends?			
Does he/she have difficulty joining conversations?			
Does he/she have difficulty with turn-taking during a game or other activity?			
Does he/she have difficulty cooperating with others in the classroom or during sporting activities?			
Does he/she have difficulty understanding indirect hints or cues in conversation? (e.g. that someone yawning might mean that they are bored)			
Was he/she socially isolated from peers at primary school?			
Does he/she have difficulty making appropriate use of nonverbal communication? (e.g. too little or too much of any the following: gesture, eye contact or facial expression)			
Any other areas of concern:			
Thinking about this area, have any strategies proved successful in the past?			

cont.

1 – indicates that it is an area school professionals need to be aware of
2 – indicates that it is an area which will require specific support strategies
3 – indicates a priority area which will require a proactive and consistent management plan

Language Difficulties

	1	2	3
Does he/she have difficulty following longer directions given by the teacher? (e.g. only following the last step of a three-step sequence)			
Do you notice that he/she misinterprets what has been said or needs things repeated?			
Does he/she make grammatical errors when speaking?			
Do you notice that he/she has difficulty naming items?			
Do you notice that he/she sometimes interprets figures of speech literally? (e.g. 'pull your socks up')			
Any other areas of concern:			
Thinking about this area, have any strategies proved successful in the past?			

Difficulties with Imagination and Flexible Thinking

	1	2	3
Does he/she have difficulty with change? (e.g. changing activities, rooms, or routine)			
Does he/she have difficulties with flexibility? (e.g. difficulty with creative problem solving, shifting between tasks or changing topic)			
Does he/she have intense interests or preoccupations, which affect his/her social interaction?			
Does he/she have any compulsions? (e.g. insistence on completing a task, careful placement of things, checking and becoming anxious if these activities are disrupted)			
Does he/she display insistence on rituals or routines that if not completed would lead to anxiety?			

Any other areas of concern:

Thinking about this area, have any strategies proved successful in the past?

Bullying

	1	2	3
Has he/she experienced bullying in the past?			
Is he/she vulnerable to being bullied?			
Would you describe him/her as being a loner, hence more vulnerable?			
Does he/she misinterpret social cues and hence could be seen as an 'easy target'?			
Is he/she overly keen to please and hence vulnerable to exploitation?			
Does he/she have difficulty distinguishing teasing/bullying from non-deliberate events?			
Is he/she at risk of being perceived as a bully due to being literal or prone to telling people what to do?			
Is he/she prone to responding with challenging behaviour due to difficulty using language?			
Are there specific behaviours which make him/her particularly vulnerable to being bullied? (e.g. talking to him/herself, difficulties with getting dressed after PE, etc.). If yes, please list below:			

cont.

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Any other areas of concern:

Thinking about this area, have any strategies proved successful in the past?

1 – indicates that it is an area school professionals need to be aware of

2 – indicates that it is an area which will require specific support strategies

3 – indicates a priority area which will require a proactive and consistent management plan

Planning and Organisation Problems

Compared to other children in his/her class does the child have significant difficulty with:

	1	2	3
Planning? (e.g. starts projects without having a plan/begins a task and then does not know what to do next/struggles with large assignments)			
Flexibility? (e.g. finds it difficult moving from one activity to another/struggles at transition points during the day/persists with an approach to a task even when it is not working)			
Initiation? (e.g. has trouble coming up with new ideas/always needs prompting to get started with schoolwork/when given a new task 'just sits there')			
Organisation? (e.g. written work is poorly structured/regularly arrives at lessons without necessary materials/looses things all the time)			
Short-term memory? (e.g. has a short attention span/forgets task instructions involving more than two steps/forgets what he/she is supposed to be doing)			

Any other areas of concern:

Thinking about this area, have any strategies proved successful in the past?

Sensory Sensitivities

	1	2	3
Do you notice that he/she has visual sensory issues? (e.g. dislikes bright lights, is fascinated by shiny objects and bright colours, enjoys certain patterns such as brickwork, stripes)			
Do you notice that he/she has sensory issues related to noise and sound? (e.g. finds crowded areas very difficult, covers ears in response to certain sounds, can hear sounds which others do not hear, enjoys certain sounds like banging objects and doors)			
Do you notice that he/she has sensory issues related to smell or taste? (e.g. smelling or licking items/people, or has strong dislike for certain everyday smells)			
Do you notice that he/she has sensory issues related to touch and feel? (e.g. dislikes the feel of certain fabrics and substances, seems unaware of pain and temperature, dislikes crunchy or chewy food)			

Any other areas of concern:

Thinking about this area, have any strategies proved successful in the past?

cont.

1 – indicates that it is an area school professionals need to be aware of
2 – indicates that it is an area which will require specific support strategies
3 – indicates a priority area which will require a proactive and consistent management plan

Anxiety/Worries

	1	2	3
Is he/she very anxious about the transition to secondary school?			
Is he/she generally shy, withdrawn or anxious?			
Is he/she very anxious when meeting new people?			
Is he/she worried about academic work and pressure?			
Is he/she worried when faced with changes in routine?			

Are there other specific worries he/she has in relation to school? (e.g. PE, detention, homework, getting lost, toilets). Please list below:

Any other areas of concern:

Thinking about this area, have any strategies proved successful in the past?

Challenging Behaviour

	1	2	3
Does he/she frequently interrupt class by, for example, asking repetitive questions?			
Does he/she say rude or inappropriate things in class?			
Does he/she defend himself/herself physically by hitting other children?			
Does he/she have difficulty following classroom or school rules?			
Does he/she have difficulty controlling angry or hurt feelings when he/she does not get his/her own way?			

Any other areas of concern:

Thinking about this area, have any strategies proved successful in the past?

Child Screening Questionnaire

This should be completed by the child with help from parents/carers before the Bridge Meeting, the child should use his/her own words

My name is:………………………………………………………………….

My date of birth is:……………………………………………………….…..

What are three things you are **not** looking forward to about moving to secondary school?

1.
2
3

What are three things you **are** looking forward to about moving to secondary school?

1.
2
3

Here are some things about moving to secondary school that children have said they might feel worried about. Please put a circle around the symbol that shows how you feel about each of these things.

	No worries	Worried	Not sure
Big playground / school / getting around	☺	☹	?
Getting into trouble	☺	☹	?
New teachers	☺	☹	?
Clothes/uniform	☺	☹	?
Making friends	☺	☹	?
Schoolwork/homework	☺	☹	?
Sports and activities	☺	☹	?

Here are some things about moving to secondary school that children have said they might feel worried about. Please put a circle around the symbol that shows how you feel about each of these things.

	No worries	**Worried**	**Not sure**
Bullying	🙂	☹️	?
Computers/technology/ equipment/new lessons	🙂	☹️	?
New food	🙂	☹️	?
Going on public transport/ getting to school	🙂	☹️	?
Library/reading	🙂	☹️	?

Appendix 7- Transition Management Plan Word version [here](#)

Transition Management Plan

To be circulated to everyone at the bridge meeting and a copy kept in the child's file

Name of child	Primary School	Secondary School
Date of Birth	Primary Contact	Secondary Contact

General Transition Strategies		
Delete as appropriate	Agreed dates	Other information
Visiting the school		
Maps or layout of school		
Photos of rooms/areas		
Photos of school staff		
Allocated staff member identified		
Copy of school rules		
Copy of school timetable		
Other strategies		

Known motivators/interests
Triggers/dislikes
Calming techniques
Other areas for staff to be aware of

Transition Management Plan (cont'd)

Specific Transition Strategies					
Area of support	Details (reasons)	Strategies/resources	Notes	Person Responsible	When

Appendix 8—Pupil Profile. Available as a Word document here

Pupil Photo	Pupil Name:	DoB:
	Class:	Form tutor/allocated support staff:

Diagnosed conditions:

Is the pupil aware of their diagnosis?

ASD: Yes/No

Other diagnoses: Yes/No

Does the pupil's family consent to the diagnosis being shared with others?

Staff: Yes/No

Peers: Yes/No

Does the pupil have an EHCP? Yes/No
If yes, please list sessions below which the pupil receives support

Critical medical needs:

Known motivators/interests:

Triggers/dislikes:

Calming Techniques:

Any additional concerns that staff need to be aware of:

Areas of strength/positive attributes

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Area of support need 1:

Agreed support strategies 1:

Area of support need 2:

Agreed support strategies 2:

Area of support need 3:

Agreed support strategies 3:

Does the pupil have any specific requirements?

Homework support:	**Class modifications**: