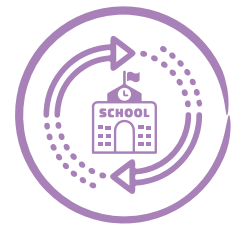




## How to: Support Your Child or Young Person With School Transitions

*This is part two of a three-part resource for parents on **How to: Support Your Child or Young Person With School Transitions**. This guide suggests strategies and tips for helping your school aged child with transitions as a second step to providing effective support.*



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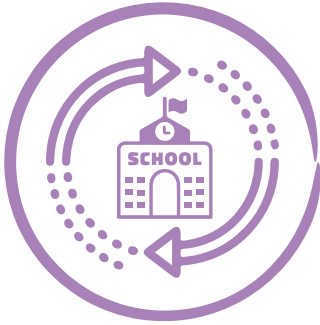


Autism Education Trust  
2022/23 Award Winner  
Autism Programme of the Year



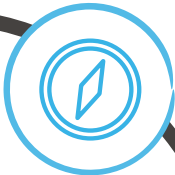
In the **How to Series**, we provide you with our suggested strategies and top tips, to help you to effectively support your child.

In this guide:



## How to: Support Your Child or Young Person With School Transitions

This guide is **part two of three** resources on **supporting your child or young person with school transitions**. The **first** resource in the series looks at the potential impact of autism on managing transitions and the **third** provides some helpful tools to make supporting your child even easier.



**What is:** The Impact of Autism on Managing School Transitions?



**How to:** Support Your Child or Young Person With School Transitions.



**Transitions Toolkit** of Resources.



Parent Resources

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## Parent Resources



# Section 1:

## An Introduction to Supporting Schools Transitions.

As you may have read in **part one** of this three-part set of resources, managing transitions can be a tricky process for many parents and their children or young people.

For an autistic child or young person, there may also be extra factors to take into consideration, which may make transitions more challenging. This may cause some anxiety for your child or young person and also for you, as their parent or carer.

Fortunately, however, there are many strategies that can be put in place to support them and you – read on to find out more and then, afterwards, why not check out **part three** of this series of resources, our **Transitions Toolkit**, for some useful tools to help make supporting your child even easier?



### What are Transitions?

To briefly recap from our **What Is Guide**, ‘transition’ means change. Transitions include: going on holiday; moving house; bereavement – these are just a few examples. However, the focus of this set of resources is ‘school transitions.’

‘School transitions’ refers to the various changes a child or young person experiences as they move from one educational setting to another. These transitions can include moving from Early Years to Primary school, from Primary school to Secondary school and from Secondary to Post-16.

‘School transitions’ also refers to changes within a setting: changes due to moving between phases, year groups or classes (which happens repeatedly during a single day in Secondary school).

‘Schools Transitions’ can also include what we might think of as smaller transitions, such as moving from one activity to another or moving from working individually to working collaboratively with other members of the class.

**Autistic children and young people are likely to need more support around transitions – both small transitions and large transitions. This is mainly because transition is about change – and many autistic people have a preference for routine, structure and ‘sameness.’**

As mentioned in our **What is?** guide, autism may result in differences in communication, social interaction, flexibility, information and sensory processing. These differences may then have an impact on a child or young person’s ability to navigate transitions.

This **How to Series** guide will help you to take the next step and consider some of the ways that you can effectively support your child or young person with transitions.



### Parent Resources

## Section 2:



### How to Help: Understanding School Transitions:

To support your child or young person effectively, it is useful to know about some of the major transitions that they will go through during their time in school:

#### Mainstream Settings:

#### Transitions Between Settings and Phases:

Transition	Key Changes
Early Years (Nursery/ Reception) to Key Stage 1	Transitioning from play-based learning to more structured education.  Introduction to basic literacy and numeracy skills in a supportive environment.
Key Stage 1 to Key Stage 2	Progressing from always having a single class teacher to some subject-specific teachers.  Developing more advanced academic skills and increased independence.
Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3 (Secondary School)	Moving to a larger school environment.  Adapting to a more complex curriculum and navigating various subject teachers.
Key Stage 3 to Key Stage 4 (GCSEs)	Beginning the GCSE phase with a focus on exam preparation.  Making subject choices that will shape future educational paths.
Sixth Form or College	Choosing between continuing education within the school's Sixth Form or attending an external college.  Specialising in A-levels or vocational courses.
University or Apprenticeship	Deciding between higher education or entering the workforce through apprenticeships.  Navigating increased independence and personal responsibility.



#### Parent Resources



## Section 2:



### How to Help: Understanding School Transitions:

#### Alternative Education and Education Other Than at School:

Transition	Key Changes
Special Education Units/ Classes	Some mainstream schools offer special education units or classes that aim to support autistic children and young people within the mainstream school environment.
Special Education Schools	Schools specifically designed for children with additional support needs, providing targeted programmes and resources.
Autism-specific Schools	Enrolling in schools specifically designed for autistic children, providing more specialised programmes and trained staff.
Online Learning	Accessing virtual platforms and courses to be taught remotely, providing flexibility in terms of pace and location.
Tutoring	Hiring a tutor for one-to-one teaching, tailoring the learning experience to the child's needs and pace.
Homeschooling	Parents take responsibility for their child's education, designing a personalised curriculum and timetable.
Community Classes	Enrolling in extracurricular classes, workshops, or community college courses to supplement learning.
Forest School	Forest School emphasises learning in natural environments and other green spaces. Forest school enables exploration and the opportunity for sensory integration.



#### Parent Resources



## Section 2:



### How to Help: Understanding School Transitions:

#### Choosing a Setting:

When choosing a setting, it is important to make sure that you are happy that the leadership, staff, policies, teaching and learning and environment are going to work for your autistic child or young person. It is always a good idea to attend school open evenings or to ask to visit settings – it is always best to do this during school time when teaching is going on and there are pupils in the building. Both of these options will usually give you the opportunity to hear from or speak to the Head Teacher or another Senior Leader, meet some staff, some pupils and generally get some sense of what the environment and culture is like. ‘Shop around’ and look into a range of options to find the setting that best suits you and your child or young person.



You can find out a lot by asking the right questions.

Check our **Questions to Ask When Choosing a School Tool**, which you can find in our Transitions Toolkit, for support with this.

When looking at your options, it is essential to think about your autistic child or young person’s strengths and support needs.



**Carefully consider whether or not you feel – having investigated thoroughly – that a setting is the right one for your child.**



#### Parent Resources



Autism  
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## Section 2:

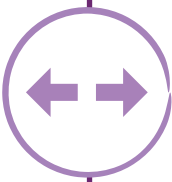


### How to Help: Understanding School Transitions:

#### Understanding the Expectation on Schools to Support Autistic Children and Young People During Transitions:

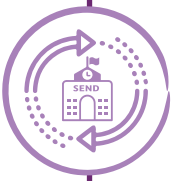
When it comes to making the big transitions, if your child or young person is transitioning into a mainstream setting, there are usually at least two different types of transition that may be offered:

- **‘Ordinarily Available Transitions’:**



This refers to the standard or typical transition process that is generally provided to all children and young people during key educational transitions, such as moving from one academic stage to another or transitioning between schools. This transition process is part of the regular framework and support mechanisms that schools should offer to ensure a smooth progression for **all students**.

- **‘Enhanced Transitions’:**



‘Enhanced Transitions’ refers to the additional expectations on schools where **a child or young person has, or may have, Special Educational Needs (SEN), or if there is another reason they require more support** (for example they are looked after in foster care or are from a lower income household. Some children and young people may come under more than one of these categories).

If your child or young person is likely to attend education that is other than at school, transitions support may be enhanced as standard. It is important to check this when you are researching which type of setting is the most suited to your child or young person.



#### Parent Resources



## Section 2:



### How to Help: Understanding School Transitions:

#### Ordinarily Available Transitions:

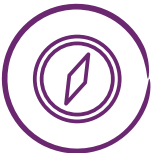
##### Communication:



- Schools are expected to maintain clear and effective communication with parents and students about upcoming transitions.
- It is important that schools share information with parents and carers regarding changes in curriculum, school structure, routines and support services.

This information will help parents to support their child or young person and prepare them for change.

##### Transition Programmes:



- Schools are encouraged to put in place structured transition programmes, especially during key transitions such as moving from primary to secondary school.
- These programmes often include: visits, tours, and activities to familiarise students with the new environment.

##### Work With Parents:



- Schools are expected to actively involve parents in the transition process.
- Parental engagement may include: information sessions; workshops; and opportunities to discuss questions or concerns.



#### Parent Resources

## Section 2:



### How to Help: Understanding School Transitions:

#### The Emotional Wellbeing of Children and Young People



- Addressing the emotional well-being of children and young people should be a priority during transitions.
- Schools are expected to have mechanisms in place to identify and support students who may be experiencing stress or anxiety.

#### Continuity of Learning:



- Ensuring continuity in learning is important, especially during transitions between settings.
- Schools are expected to work together to facilitate a smooth progression in academic content and skills.

#### Professional Development for Staff:



- It is good practice for school staff to undergo training on the effective management of transitions as well as training on good autism practice, like the kind we offer at the Autism Education Trust.
- This training helps staff understand the needs of students during transitions and how they can best support them.



#### Parent Resources

## Section 2:



### How to Help: Understanding School Transitions:

#### Enhanced Transitions:

#### Transition Planning:



Schools are required, by law, to initiate early planning for the transition of a child or young person who has or who may have SEN.



- Planning for enhanced transitions should begin well in advance and must involve parents or carers, the child or young person, and any other relevant professionals.

#### Individualised Transition Plan:



- For students on an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP), schools must create an individualised transition plan.
- This plan should address the specific needs and requirements of the child or young person during the transition period and beyond.
- Some schools will also create individualised transition plans for children or young people with SEN who do not have an EHCP, because it is good practice.



Different Local Authorities and schools may have different formats for their **Individualised Transitions Plans**, however the kind of information they include will be broadly similar.

We have put some questions together that you may want to consider so that you can contribute to the writing of your child or young person's plan: these questions can be found in our **Transitions Toolkit**.



#### Parent Resources

## Section 2:



### How to Help: Understanding School Transitions:

#### Consideration of Academic, Social, and Emotional Aspects:



- Transition Plans should cover: academic; social; and emotional aspects of your child or young person's development.
- Schools should provide transition support beyond just supporting your child or young person academically – transitions plans should address any potential challenges in social integration and emotional well-being.

#### Notification to Parents:



- Parents of children and young people with EHCPs must be informed about their child or young person's options in terms of which types of educational provision are available to them and they should be part of the decision-making process.
- Schools must actively involve parents or carers, seeking their input and ensuring their concerns and aspirations for their child or young person are discussed.



Once your young person with an EHCP is over 16, the law states that the Local Authority should deal directly with them. However, in practice, many young people still want their families to be involved and some need them to be.

**It is the law that the views and preferences of your child or young person should be central to the process, whatever their age.**



You can refer to our **Transitions Checklist** in our **Transitions Toolkit**.

The checklist outlines what you might expect to happen at specific times in terms of transitions.

**Having this knowledge will help you to follow up with schools or settings if you think things are not being done or put in place when they should be.**



#### Parent Resources

## Section 2:



### How to Help: Understanding School Transitions:

#### Collaboration with Receiving Setting:



- Schools and settings must collaborate with the receiving institution, such as a new school or educational stage, to facilitate a smooth transition.
- Information about your child or young person's SEN and preferred support strategies should also be shared to ensure continuity of support and provision.



Again, **it is the law** that schools should be including the views and preferences of the child or young person and their parents or carers as part of this process.

#### Support during Transition:



- Schools are obliged to provide the necessary support during an actual transition, ensuring that new environments are accessible and adapted as far as possible to suit the needs of your child or young person.

#### Reviews:



- Regular reviews of any transition plans should take place, so that adjustments can be made as needed, to accommodate any changes in your child or young person's support needs or circumstances.

#### Maintaining Education Health Care Plans (EHCPs):



- For students with an EHCP, the local authority must maintain the plan until the transition is complete, and the new provision is in place.



#### Parent Resources

## Section 2:



### How to Help: Understanding School Transitions:

#### Monitoring and Reporting:



- Schools are responsible for monitoring your child or young person's progress and should be especially mindful of monitoring this after a key transition. They must report back to you on a regular basis.



Check out our *Quick Guide to Reviews During Transitions* in our *Transitions Toolkit* for more information.

It is a good idea to have an understanding of what should be covered in the review meetings at each stage in your child or young person's educational journey.



#### Parent Resources

## Section 3:



### How to Help: Know Your Child or Young Person:

There will be certain aspects of transitions where most autistic children and young people will require additional support. For instance, most autistic children and young people will need support with the changing environment, routines and expectations.

However, the extent to which these things impact on your child or young person will be unique to them. All autistic people are individuals and all have their own strengths and support needs within the Three Areas of Difference in autism.

As such, the best way to help your child or young person is to think in detail about where their strengths lie, what areas they may require more support with and which key interests might act as motivators.

You might find it useful to think about these things in advance of any review or transition planning meeting.



There is a **Preparing for Transitions Template** you can use to consider some key areas it would be useful for a receiving setting to know about your child or young person, in our **Transitions Toolkit**.



### Parent Resources



## Section 4:



### How to Help: Work With the School:

- Attend open evenings, tours and information evenings, coffee mornings or visits related to transitions and getting to know staff.
- Attend review meetings and transitions planning meetings.
- Make sure you prepare well for reviews and transitions planning meetings: provide helpful information that will enable schools and settings to support your child or young person effectively with transitions.
- Make sure the review and planning meeting is minuted and that you are given copies of the minutes, notes and plans afterwards. This means you can check that they include everything you discussed in the meeting itself.
- Make sure you know what should be happening when, so you can follow up on this if necessary.
- Keep the school updated of any changes e.g. to medical information or support needs.
- Make sure you know the key contact details for staff in your child or young person's new setting - For example: The Head Teacher, the Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO), Link Person, Transitions Coordinator, Phase or Year Group Lead, Class Teacher (s).
- Use the school webpage / app / news bulletin / letters to keep track of updates regarding key dates, key events and key information regarding:

- Term dates



- Daily routines



- Uniform



- Equipment



### Parent Resources





## Section 5:



### Strategies to Support Your Child or Young Person to Manage Transitions:

It is really helpful if you can pinpoint exactly what your child or young person's strengths and support needs are in relation to transitions. This will help you to identify where you can praise to boost their confidence as well as help you to identify areas where they need support from you, the school, or more likely - both.

#### Match Your Strategies:

Having considered your child/young person's strengths and support needs, consider which strategies it may be useful for the setting to implement at school.



#### Parent Resources



## Section 6:



### Top Tips:

*If you just want a quick overview of some of our most popular strategies for supporting transitions, then read on to discover our Top Tips...*

It is important to remember, however, that these are general suggestions and you should choose the tips that you feel will be most helpful, based on your knowledge of your child or young person.

### Top Transitions Tips:

#### Help your Child or Young Person to Prepare for the big Changes:

##### Participate in Transition Events Whenever Possible:

1

- Try to attend as many transitions events as possible so that you know what to expect – this means that you will be able to explain to your child or young person what to expect also.
- Encourage your child or young person to participate in transition events too.
- If getting to events is difficult or you know that your child or young person will need support to access these events, then speak to the school. Most schools will be glad to help if it means you and your child or young person are able to join in.

##### Work with your Child on any Transition Projects – and try to make it fun!

2

- Lots of schools ask students to complete 'All About Me' booklets, 'Summer Challenges' or 'My New School' activities.
- A lot of thought has usually gone into these and it will be useful to help your child or young person to complete them if you can. Often, they have pictures of the new school, pictures of uniform, pictures of key staff and information about key routines.
- These types of activities help children and young people to feel prepared, which is very important for those who are autistic. Making things as predictable as possible will help to reduce anxiety and make big transitions easier.



### Parent Resources



## Section 6:

### Top Tips:

3

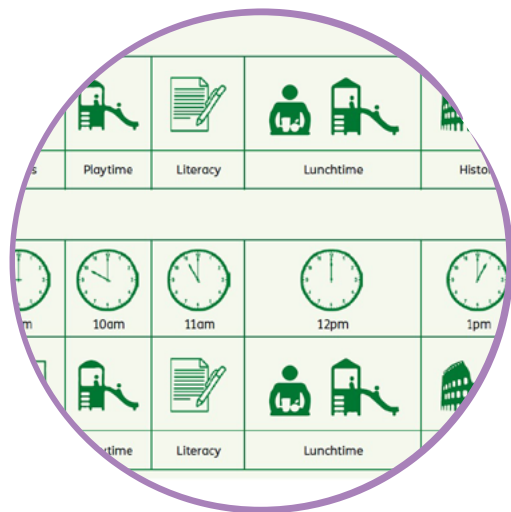
#### Practise Ahead of Time:

- Getting up at a particular time.
- Trying on the uniform.
- Doing the journey to school.

4

#### Use Visual Strategies:

- **A visual timetable:** is simply a series of squares containing pictures of key events across a day, a process, an activity or an event. Autistic children and young people often find it more difficult to process lots of verbal or written information and find visuals easier to manage.
- You could ask the school to provide a **visual timetable** – to be displayed on the wall of a classroom for a primary school child or ask for a laminated version for a young person to refer to at home and in their registration room.
- You can use **visual timetables** to help with transitions at home too – for example the sequence from getting up, to getting dressed, to having breakfast or the stages of your child or young person’s journey to school.



### Parent Resources



## Section 6:

### Top Tips:

#### Help your Child or Young Person with the Transition from Home to School:

##### Think about the Practicalities:

5

- Many autistic children and young people need support with activities requiring fine motor skills. Therefore, it is a good idea to consider purchasing clothing for school that is adapted - if your child or young person has difficulties with buttons or laces for instance.
- Lots of shops now make uniform that is adaptable. Tag-less clothes, seamless socks, clip on ties are all available.
- Speak to your child or young person's school about reasonable adjustments for clothing if you are told that uniform must be purchased from a single supplier who cannot provide adaptable clothing. Reasonable adjustments could also include wearing a T-shirt underneath the school shirt or coming into school in PE kit on PE days, for example.

##### Support them with Organisation:

6

- Try using **storage boxes** which are clearly marked with pictures and words to help autistic children and young people to keep their school equipment and resources together in one place and to help them learn to organise their materials and equipment.
- **Use checklists:** these could be used to support your child or young person with getting ready before school or with packing their bag. You could put a checklist by the door to support them to check they have everything they need for the school day.



#### Parent Resources



## Section 6:

### Top Tips:

#### Support them with the Transition Between School and Home:

##### Support with Regulation and Decompressing:

7

- Understand that when your child or young person returns home from school, they may need time to relax. Some may need to sleep. This may be because of the extra effort required for autistic children and young people to manage in school.
- You could provide sensory boxes / objects / fidget toys to support your child or young person with regulation and decompressing.
- Some children and young people like to be able to lie in a dark, quiet bedroom when they return home to help them to regulate after they have had to deal with lots of sensory input over the course of the school day.
- Some younger children may even like to lie in a dark tent.

##### Homework:

8

- Help your child or young person to break long tasks or assignments into shorter tasks to help them to not feel overwhelmed and remain on track.
- Bear in mind that what the teacher views as a short task may be experienced as a long task by your child or young person and therefore some tasks might have to be broken down into very small steps/tasks and presented bit-by-bit to them.
- This will also give your child or young person a sense of accomplishment when they complete the shorter tasks which will help to motivate them.
- You can also help your child or young person by providing them with short, clear instructions for tasks. Ask teachers to help you with this – visual supports may make work well such as graphic organisers like mind maps or tables or teachers may be able to provide scaffolds with prompts, starter sentences and vocabulary banks.
- It may be useful to give older children or young people deadlines that they can work towards for completion of tasks.



#### Parent Resources



## Section 7:

### Top Five Take Aways:

There is a lot to think about here, so below are our Top Five Take Aways. Try:

1

**Understanding what we mean by transition. This will help you to support your child.**

2

**Understanding the potential impact of autism on transitions.**

3

**Liaising with your child or young person's school to make sure that they receive enhanced transition support, for macro transitions.**

4

**Having a discussion with your young person, the school and any other involved professionals around which strategies will be most helpful in supporting with transitions – macro and micro.**

5

**Implementing some of the suggested strategies at home when supporting your child or young person with transitions – For Example: going on holiday, when suffering a bereavement, or when getting a new sibling.**



## Now, Why Not Take the Next Steps?



If you haven't done so already, check out our guide on **What is: The Impact of Autism on School Transitions?**



Check out our **Transitions Toolkit** of resources, to help you put support in place more easily.



### Parent Resources





**Autism  
Education  
Trust**

## Parent Resources

### Autism Education Trust

[www.autismeducationtrust.org.uk](http://www.autismeducationtrust.org.uk)

[info@autismeducationtrust.org.uk](mailto:info@autismeducationtrust.org.uk)

Facebook: [Autism Education Trust](#)

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