Tackling Transitions
Aims and Objectives

Aims

• To explore the school based, transitions which cause ASC pupils difficulty.

• To emphasise the need for detailed transition planning to minimise difficulties.

• To consider effective strategies

Objective

To build staff capacity in providing successful transition experiences.
Guidance for Schools

Whole School Approaches

Key Messages
- Build an ethos where all pupils are equally valued
- Ensure an appropriate level of awareness among all adults, both teaching and non-teaching, across the school
- Recognise that adjustments made to ensure the meaningful inclusion of pupils on the spectrum will potentially be a benefit to all pupils
- Ensure there is ongoing CPD available to staff
- Review ethos, policy and practice to ensure that diversity is valued and accommodated within the school at all levels
- Think about the school environment, routines and practices from the perspective of pupils on the spectrum
- Be prepared, as far as possible, to adapt the environment to support pupils

Transition
Key Messages
- Be aware of and sensitive to an inherent resistance to change that is part of the profile of most individuals on the autism spectrum
- Understand the high levels of stress and anxiety that the anticipation of transition can bring about
- Recognise that stress may manifest in behaviour that might otherwise be viewed as belligerence or non-compliance
- Recognise that the capacity to cope with transition will be very individual – some pupils may need to be involved and prepared over a long period of time whilst others will not be able to cope with prolonged anticipation
- Ensure that sufficient time and gravitas is given to the process of transition
- Appreciate that older pupils will be coping with personal transitions in terms of their growth and development and that issues that arise for typically developing peers may be exacerbated for individuals on the spectrum
- Ensure there is a contingency plan as a safety net for pupils when plans do not come to fruition

Social Curriculum
Key Messages
- Recognise that most children on the spectrum will learn social behaviour intellectually rather than intuitively
- Be aware that social knowledge and social behaviour are likely to be incompatible with chronological age
- Recognise that many children on the spectrum are interested in social engagement but lack skills, knowledge and innate social curiosity to develop socially in the same way as their typically developing peers
- Value social learning as an important aspect of academic learning
- Show empathy for pupils when they make social errors
- Be aware that repeated social failure can impact on self-esteem
- Develop a range of social opportunities and initiatives that pupils can access
- Recognise that pupils on the spectrum are often socially naive and this renders them especially vulnerable to the attitudes of peers

Classroom Organisation
Key Messages
- Declutter the environment as much as possible
- Ensure there is structure, predictability and flexibility built into the school day
- Maxmise the use of a range of visual communication tools
- Ensure that social activities are well supported including agreeing an exit strategy for pupils on the spectrum
- Where possible ensure that areas are clearly defined by function
- Monitor individual pupil responses to the environment and adjust accordingly
- Be aware of a range of strategies and approaches and adapt for individual pupils
- Ensure a range of teaching styles and approaches are used throughout the day

Differentiation
Key Messages
- Consider communication and social interaction abilities as well as cognitive levels when arranging work
- Keep unnecessary language to a minimum
- Beware of a tendency to interpret language literally
- Ensure that materials are not too over stimulating or distracting or complex as it may be challenging for the pupil on the spectrum to know where to focus attention or locate information

Assessment
Key Messages
- Take account of the uneven profile of development, skills and needs that pupils on the spectrum may present
- Use a range of assessment methods
- Assess across a range of environments as pupils may not show capacity in the same or similar skill in a different context
- Engage with parents and incorporate their perspective
- Involve pupils in identifying their own learning needs
- Appreciate that motivation is likely to be inconsistent
- Take account of the views of other involved professionals

Individualised Educational Programmes (IEP)
Key Messages
- Recognise that the IEP can support learning when use consistently and appropriately
- Set SMART targets within the IEP and review regularly
- See the development and review of an IEP as an opportunity for collaboration with parents, pupils and involved professionals
- Include curricular and social targets in the IEP
- View the IEP as a working document that is used to support teaching and learning

Teaching and Learning
Key Messages
- Recognise and take account of alternative thinking, processing and learning styles
- Appreciate and value the unique interests and strengths of pupils on the spectrum
- Incorporate special interests into teaching as a means of motivating and sustaining engagement of pupils on the spectrum
- Take account of sensory processing or sensory sensitivity issues, especially in terms of the environment
- Be prepared to make reasonable adjustments to teaching, style, resources & classroom organisation to promote the inclusion of pupils on the spectrum
- Engage in reflective practice in order to recognise the impact your role may have on promoting or inhibiting learning
- Show empathy for pupils who potentially will be experiencing high and prolonged levels of stress and anxiety

AUTISM SPECTRUM INFORMATION AND SUPPORT TEAM 2012
Transition
Key Messages

- Be aware of and sensitive to an inherent resistance to change that is part of the profile of most individuals on the autism spectrum.
- Understand the high levels of stress and anxiety that the anticipation of transition can bring about.
- Recognise that stress may manifest in behaviour that might otherwise be viewed as belligerence or non-compliance.
- Recognise that the capacity to cope with transition will be very individual – some pupils may need to be involved and prepared over a long period of time whilst others will not be able to cope with prolonged anticipation.
- Ensure that sufficient time and gravitas is given to the process of transition.
- Appreciate that older pupils will be coping with personal transitions in terms of their growth and development and that issues that arise for typically developing peers may be exacerbated for individuals on the spectrum.
- Ensure there is a contingency plan as a safety net for pupils when plans do not come to fruition.
“Whatever the scale or complexity of the transition the most important factor is to consider the situation from the perspective of the pupil, taking account of their strengths, difficulties and past experiences.”

The Autism Toolbox, 2009 pg125
COMMUNICATION DIFFICULTIES
SOCIAL COMPETENCE
FLEXIBILITY AND IMAGINATION
SENSORY ISSUES
ANXIETY STRESS
Types of “BIG” macro Transitions

• Nursery - Primary
• Stage to Stage
• Primary - Secondary
• Secondary - Post School
• Moving to a new school
Pupils need to know...

- Where they have to go
- Who might be there
- What they will/should be doing
- What behaviour is expected
- How much they have to do
- How they will know they are finished
- What they will be doing next
Types of “wee” micro Transitions

• Changing lessons
• Moving areas – in class
• Stopping a task i.e. coming of the computer
• Home – School & School – home
• Staff changes
• The unexpected
Transitions -

• What kinds of difficulties are likely to be encountered during transition?
Why is Preparation Important?

Without careful preparation, the following may be experienced:

- Refusal
- Upset
- Aggression
- Loss of confidence
- Regression
- Increase in rituals
- Loss of trust
- Break down of communication

pupil, parents, staff
Why is Preparation Important?

With careful preparation:

- Stress and Anxiety are reduced
- Fear is reduced
- Familiarity is developed
- Change is more positive

pupil, parents, staff
Why is Preparation Important?

With careful preparation:

- Confidence is increased
- Independence is maximised
- Relationships remain positive
- Key information is shared
- Appropriate resources are available

pupil, parents, staff
Steps to Success

• Plan and prepare
• Have realistic timescales
• Use known supports
• Involve key people
Plan and Prepare

- Gather information
- Share information
- Provide additional visits
- Consider staffing
- Consider timescales
Timescales

• When should planning start?
  For staff?
  For parents?
  For pupil?

• What are the constants and variables?
How to support daily transitions

• Use visuals
  • Visual timetable
  • ‘Now and next’ strip
  • Photos / objects
  • Symbol sequence
How to support daily transitions

• Prepare for change
  • Time warnings
  • Use timers, countdowns, number strips etc
  • Rehearse

• Be explicit about what a task will entail and when it will be finished
How to support daily transitions

• Give the child an ‘out’ at busy transition times
  • Give them a job
  • Cloakroom
  • Lining up
  • Headphones (with music) / ear defenders

• Build in regular breaks
Supports

Visual supports - Photographs

• Social scripts
• Home - School Diary
• Familiar objects
• Supportive peers
• Appropriate curricular resources and materials
• Information “transition” passports
• Transition checklists
Supports

• Appropriate curricular resources and materials

• Current successful support strategies

• Information “transition” passports

• Transition checklists
Key People

- Pupil
- Parents/Carers
- Current staff
- New staff
- SfL Staff
- Management
- Peers