

Key Considerations

- The process of **transition will take time** as schools prepare for phased reopening. School life will not suddenly return to normal.
- **Changes to structure, routine and social interaction will continue** as staff, parents and children adjust to phased reopening, changes in lesson delivery, social distancing rules and new practice and routines to keep everybody safe.
- Many **adults in school will be experiencing the same feelings and emotions as the children**, young people (CYP) and their families.
- Effective communication has been essential in helping schools maintain relationships with pupils, parents and staff during the lockdown. Transition therefore should **build on the existing good communication** that schools have already been practising.
- Psychotherapist Andrea Perry (1) discusses the importance of communicating a sense of 'calm and hopefulness' in times of uncertainty. **Planning, preparation and communicating honestly** will therefore be key in supporting this.
- Transition can be a positive time to help schools reflect on school values and how they are communicated. Language used should reflect **listening, belonging, kindness and empathy**.

Communication with Parents

- **Families will need to feel they are being listened to.** Keep talking to assess the impact, find out what the family experience has been (Have they experienced illness? Loss or bereavement? Changes within family?)
- **Make parents aware of all plans** for transitions and enhanced arrangements. Consider what information might be important to parents such as: What changes have occurred in school and with staff? What new routines are in place? Think about ways you have communicated well throughout lockdown and build on this (Weekly emails? Phone calls? Information sheets? Text messages?)
- Use transition activities to **reinforce this information** such as photo books or perhaps a virtual school tour.
- Identify which pupils will need a more personalised transition plan and how this is shared with parents.
- Make parents aware of the **emotional support available** and how this can be accessed - do you have a school counsellor or mentor, for example? [Module 2 Staff and Pupil Wellbeing](#) has further information on this.
- **Acknowledge parental fears** and the genuine concerns they have for their children's wellbeing. If a child isn't attending, make personal contact to find out why. **Listen and be honest** in your reassurance about how social distancing and safety measures are being implemented to address anxieties.
- Consider how you have conducted wellbeing 'check ins' and how these will continue. Some families may benefit from more frequent 'check ins' so that questions they have can be addressed. **Worry boxes or inboxes and drop-in sessions** could be used as part of the normal school routines - let parents know about these through your regular communications.
- Discuss concerns parents may have about how learning may be impacted and what steps school will be taking to address them or how this is being addressed through a wider recovery curriculum.
- Be prepared to **keep repeating the messages** you are giving out in clear and simple language, so they are heard and understood.

Communication with Children & Young People

- Adults in school have a key role in helping children look positively towards the future and in providing reassurances, as this will help with managing anxieties and worries but they should avoid making unrealistic promises. **Reassure children that school is following advice**, make expectations clear about what they need to do and explain what steps are being taken to ensure we are looking after each other to keep safe.
- Any discussions about Covid-19 should take the CYP **developmental stage and personal experiences** into account.
- CYP are very good at attuning to adults' emotional states so encourage adults to share their own feelings but **take care not to alarm or overwhelm**. Modelling emotion focused conversations will help children to share their own feelings which can help reduce anxieties (Acknowledge their feelings and let them know that we all have these feelings too. Discuss strategies you find helpful to cope and regulate when you feel this way.) You can **ask your EP** for further information on this if you feel unsure about what to do.
- **Think about what emotional need is being communicated**. Some CYP may show their anxieties in challenging, externalising behaviours and not through ways we might typically expect them too, such as being sad, worried or tearful. For children experiencing high levels of anxiety, trauma or loss, an attachment aware approach should be used (recognise behaviour as communication; put relationships at the heart of what you do; empathise before problem solving and be positive in your response.) Emotion Coaching can also help children make sense of their feelings through adults validating and empathising with them whilst helping the CYP problem solve.
- For older children worried about the impact on exams, share plans for how learning needs will be addressed but **avoid using language that might add to their anxieties** such as 'missed work' or 'lost time'.

Communication with Each Other

- Share plans and communicate regularly.
- Recognise the contributions that all staff are making during such uncertain times. **Celebrate success stories** and good practice in such challenging times, take time to show appreciation and thanks and most importantly **take time to listen!**
- Check in with each other! A simple survey on how staff are feeling about their return to work could be used. Buddy up or think about using a relational tree. Allow yourself to take a break when you can! Acknowledge feelings of anxiety and worry. Ask simple questions to ascertain what help may be needed and emphasise the support available. Listen with compassion and don't judge what is being said. Review the positive actions being taken in managing the situation.
- Remember, before you help others you have to help yourself. Take time to focus on your own well-being and focus on steps you can take to reduce your own levels of stress. [Module 2 Staff and Pupil Wellbeing](#) will help.

Acknowledgements

- Andrea Perry: Meeting the ripples of trauma with hope and clear thinking (May 2020)
- Transition, Recovery and Learning in the Aftermath, Bi-Borough EPCS (April 2020)

Applied Psychologies

COVID-19 Transitions Pack

MODULE 1 Communication During Transition

MODULE 2 Staff and Pupil Wellbeing

MODULE 3 Settling to Learn

MODULE 4 SEND and Vulnerable Children