

## WAMHS Newsletter

Welcome back to the WAMHS newsletter! This half-term's newsletter focuses on transitions. We hope you will find useful tips on how to support children through all kinds of transitions and changes, but it may be particularly relevant to those parents who just found out which secondary school their child will go to later this year. Transitions are exciting, but can also be worrying for children.

### What are Transitions?

Transitions are periods of change, in which a family moves from one stage of the life cycle into the next. Families experience many transitions such as moving house, new siblings, separation and children leaving home.

The secondary school transition marks the movement into a new phase of family life cycles. Moving into a new school year is also a smaller transition. Transitions require change and reorganisation within the whole family and can be difficult for young people.

### Common reactions to transitions

Children often find it difficult to use words to express how they feel; therefore, they show how they are feeling through their behaviour.

**Temporary regression:** Children may return to a younger way of behaviour and may need more support to complete tasks they could previously do independently.

**Mild hostility/aggression:** Children may ignore parents/siblings, be quieter than usual, have trouble concentrating, or complain about headaches/tummy aches.

**Trying to be perfect:** Children may try to be perfect in school in order to feel safe. This can sometimes lead to behaviour that may be difficult when they get home from school or may come out later in the school term.

**Wanting predictability:** In a bid to manage worries they may want as much control as possible and may like routines to be predictable

**These feelings and reactions don't usually last very long once they have had time to adjust.**

Successful experiences of school transitions can be a key opportunity to develop your child's emotional resilience, which can be defined as **"the ability to take hard knocks, to weather the storm and to continue to value oneself whatever happens"** (Cooper, 2000).

### Top Tips for Parents

It is important to be aware that your child could be feeling mixed emotions. Try to focus on positives but also allow space for doubts and concerns.

- Talk through with your child about what is going to happen
- Look at the school website with your child and give them a chance to ask questions.
- Remind your child that not everything will be changing and that home life will stay the same.
- Sharing positive stories of your own transitions throughout school and reflecting on times when your child tried something new and it went well.
- Encourage younger children to talk to older friends/siblings who are already in secondary school – encourage older children to share their top tips.
- Prepare for getting back into a routine after a long period of time off – including packing their bag, trying on their new uniform and checking the school route.
- Reassure your child about common worries – explaining that they will soon know their way around; homework will be manageable and speaking about any worries about bullying.



## A Successful Transition to Secondary School

### Social adjustment

- Confidence/skills/knowledge to deal with new change.
- Peer and teacher relationships.

With these things in mind, it's helpful to encourage children to connect with peers and teachers when they start a new school e.g. making friends, joining after school clubs.

### School adjustment

- Becoming familiar with new routines and expectations.
- Bridging between primary and secondary school.

Ideas include visiting your child's new school, trying out their new journey, practising the morning routine, trying on their new uniform.

Having conversations about similarities and differences between primary and secondary school are helpful, too.

## What About You?

It is helpful to be aware of your own emotions relating to transitions:

Have you had difficult experiences of transitions?  
Did you find secondary school tough?

Has your child had previous difficult experiences of transitions?

Are these experiences causing you to experience anxiety?

Children tune into how we are feeling, so it's important to demonstrate confidence in your child's ability to manage the transition and succeed in their new school!

## Secondary School Worries

It is typical for children to feel a mixture of anxiety and excitement about starting a new school. Common worries include getting the bus, making new friends, homework, bullying and scary teachers.

To support them to manage anxiety, teach them calm breathing techniques during the summer break (e.g. inhale for 4 (seconds) – hold for 4 – exhale for 6) – then they will be ready to put the techniques into action on their first day.

Follow this link to a news report made by children about common worries associated with secondary school: [School Resources to Help With Transitions | Mental Health | YoungMinds](#). The children also share top tips for managing worries.

## Marking Endings

It is important for the school and families to help children mark the ending of this period in their life.

Help them to reflect on their time in primary school.

What are they most proud of? What have they enjoyed? What will they miss?

Sometimes having a reminder of what is being left behind can be helpful. Transitional objects can reduce anxiety and help with bridging the gap between settings e.g. painting a picture of their time at primary school or making a photo album and asking their teachers and friends to sign it.

