

WAMHS Newsletter

Welcome back to the WAMHS newsletter! This fortnight's newsletter focuses on transitions and is particularly relevant to those children who will transition to secondary school later this year. Transitions are exciting, but can also be worrying for children, especially in the current context; therefore, we hope you will find some helpful tips and advice in this newsletter. As this is the final newsletter of this academic year, we would also like to take this opportunity to say thank you for reading. We hope you have a wonderful summer.

See you next year!



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.

"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.

- Reassure your child about common worries – explaining that they will soon know their way around, homework will be manageable and speak about any worries about bullying.
- 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.
- Look at the school website with your child and give them chance to ask questions.
- Remind your child that not everything will be changing and that home life will stay the same.
- 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.
- Talk through with your child about what is going to happen – you could use a story book that involves similar changes e.g. [Back to School Tortoise](#) by Lucy M. George (see next page).

A Successful Transition to Secondary School¹

Social adjustment

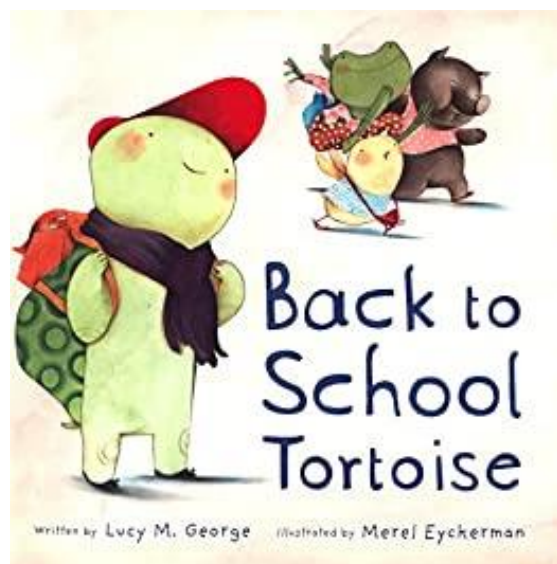
- Confidence/skills/knowledge to deal with new change.
- Peer and Teacher relationships.

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.



Soon lots of children will return to school after a long time off. They might enjoy this book about a tortoise that is nervous to go back to school - it emphasises the bravery involved in making new friends and the range of emotions involved.

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 worry or 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 -

<https://youngminds.org.uk/resources/school-resources/find-your-feet-transitioning-to-secondary-school/>.

The children also share top tips for managing worries.

Marking Endings

Due to COVID-19, children will not have the same endings as they usually would; therefore, it is important for families to help their children mark the ending of this period.

Help them to reflect on their time in primary school, what were they most proud of? What did they enjoy? What will they miss?

Children might also find it helpful to say good bye to their teacher or other school staff by writing them a letter, sending a card or drawing them a picture.

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

¹What Makes a Successful Transition from Primary to Secondary School? Evangelou et al. (2008)