REINTEGREAT
EDUCATION SOLUTIONS

TRANSITIONS

Reintegreat School Toolkit

Transitions

Why Transitions Matter

Transitions are a normal part of school life. Whether it's **starting school, moving up a year group, changing activities in the classroom, or transferring to a new school**, every transition requires pupils to adjust to:

- a new environment
- different teachers and peers
- fresh routines and expectations

While all children benefit from support with transitions, pupils with **SEND, anxiety, attachment difficulties, or limited home support** are particularly vulnerable. For these children, a poorly managed transition can increase:

- absence and disengagement
- lower academic achievement
- challenging behaviour
- reduced self-esteem and confidence
- risk of anxiety and depression

What Successful Transition Looks Like

When transitions are managed well, pupils experience:

- a strong sense of **belonging and purpose** in their new class or school
- **new teachers who understand their strengths, needs, and difficulties**
- feelings of being **emotionally and physically secure**
- opportunities for **parents and carers to be fully involved**
- smoother information-sharing between staff, so vulnerable pupils are understood and supported from the start

Pupils Most Likely to Need Extra Transition Support

- Children with **SEND**
- Children experiencing **mental health difficulties**
- Pupils with a history of **bullying**
- Children with **behavioural challenges**
- Those with **limited parental support**
- Pupils from **transient or care-experienced backgrounds**

Key Skills Needed for Transitions

To manage transitions effectively, pupils draw on a range of skills:

- **Listening skills** – to hear and process instructions.
- **Following directions** – especially multi-step ones.
- **Self-regulation** – managing emotions, thinking, and behaviour.
- **Body awareness** – moving safely around others and classroom furniture.
- **Motor planning & timing** – planning movement and adjusting speed.

Where pupils struggle with these skills, they may need additional teaching, practice, and support.

Classroom Transition Strategies

- **Prepare in advance**: give clear warnings when activities are ending.
- **Make instructions explicit**: some children may need routines broken down and taught step by step.
- **Use visual supports**: timetables, timers, countdowns, and transition cards.
- **Offer sensory breaks**: movement or calming activities as bridges between lessons.
- **Provide transition objects**: e.g. a soft toy, family photo, or fidget for reassurance.
- **Use transition songs or activities**: chants, rhymes, or short movement games.
- **Incorporate physical activity**: tiptoeing, stretching, or walking in different ways.
- **Allow extra time**: avoiding rushed transitions helps maintain calm.
- **Use social stories**: particularly for pupils with autism or high anxiety.
- **Reinforce positively**: notice and praise pupils who transition smoothly.
- **Encourage independence**: gradually reduce adult scaffolding as pupils gain confidence.

Wider Transition Support Strategies

For younger pupils

- Provide a **transition booklet** with photos of key staff, classrooms, cloakrooms, dining areas, and playgrounds.
- Use an **“All About Me” booklet** where pupils record their likes, strengths, worries, and hobbies.

For SEND and vulnerable pupils

- Schedule **extra visits** to the new classroom or school, at both quiet and busy times.
- Allow pupils to **visit with a familiar adult** for reassurance.
- Create a **pupil passport** (especially for ASD pupils) detailing needs and strategies.
- Provide access to a **safe space or calming room** for times of stress.

For whole-school transition

- Begin preparations **early (ideally in the summer term)**.
- Facilitate **meetings between current and next teachers** to share detailed knowledge.
- Arrange **peer buddy systems** where older pupils guide younger ones.
- Involve **parents and carers** in discussions, visits, and planning.

Signs a Child is Struggling with Transition

Be alert to:

- difficulties making or keeping friends
- withdrawal or feelings of not belonging
- problems following routines
- unexplained absences or lateness
- challenging or disruptive behaviour
- lack of progress or disengagement from learning

These should trigger additional support and closer monitoring.

Key Takeaway

Transition is not a single event but a **process that requires planning, support, and consistency**.
When schools create structures that anticipate pupil needs, **vulnerable children are more likely to thrive, develop resilience, and engage positively** in their next stage of learning.