

Transition to Primary School – a guide for settings and carers/parents

Transition must be prepared for. It can evoke strong feelings in children with attachment difficulties, because of the loss inherent in transition. Good preparation will enable a child to receive some important key messages that will lower their anxiety levels, and help them to continue to negotiate the developmental stages of permanency and constancy.

When preparing a child for school, it is important to remember that the preparation is not about assessing his/her academic skills. It is about helping him/her to develop positive self-esteem and confidence. A positive disposition will promote a child's readiness for school.

Positive Relationships

- Transitions can be eased by careful proactive planning, sharing of information and mutual visiting between parents, carers and professionals.
- Listen to and acknowledge the important role of parents and carers throughout this process.
- Work together. An essential element of an effective transition is for childminders, settings and schools to work together, to establish a clear understanding of one another's aims, purpose and philosophy.
- Offer a range of opportunities for parents/carers to access information about the transition process, e.g. open days, information events, consultations, newsletters.

When the child is ready to start school, both home and school can prepare for the transition. Here are some ideas that could be suggested to parents / carers:

- Walking and driving past the school frequently, letting the child know that this is their school.
- Talking about all that they will be able to do at school. For example, if the parent/ carer sees an activity on children's TV, she could tell the child that he will be able to do the same thing at his school.
- Visiting the school and looking around both inside and outside. When walking around the outside make themselves familiar with what is there- pointing out the playground, school building, dining room, classrooms, library, toilets, staffroom, office etc. Letting the child play on the playground equipment.
- Visiting when the school is working and it is relatively quiet. Visiting when the school is on break and children are playing. Visiting at the end of the day when it is busy and the children, parents and teachers are milling about.
- Arranging to meet the teacher and key adult together and looking at the classroom where the child will be. Taking a picture of the teacher and key adult to have at home to help prepare the child for school in the mornings. Photos could be taken of other key areas: classroom, peg, toilets etc.

Many of these ideas have been taken from 'Inside I'm hurting, Practical strategies for supporting children with attachment difficulties in schools' by Louise Michelle Bomber, 2007.