



From mountain to sea

Educational Psychology Service

Primary to secondary online transition.

Things to think about for children with additional support needs:

Planning for the universal transition for P7-S1 pupils is underway with some fantastic and exciting use of technology. Some pupils with additional support needs, however, may still require an “enhanced” experience and some aspects of an online transition could be counter-productive for them.

Potential areas of difficulty:

1. **Online meets can be overwhelming.** There is a lot of noise and movement all at once. The number of people could create a sense of feeling overwhelmed. During these meetings a lot of information can be shared, and sometimes we do not give additional time for processing. Due to the lack of social context it can be difficult for all involved to read social cues which may lead to unintentional upset or confusion.
2. **Videos and language.** Schools are beginning now to create videos for all young people to watch as “introductions”. Unless these videos are carefully scripted and thought through in advance some of the language used can cause greater anxiety and confusion.
3. **Walk throughs.** Some videos of walk-throughs, depending on when they were taken, may not give an accurate picture of what the school will look like when they arrive i.e. if it is empty.
4. **Setting fixed times.** We cannot assume that every pupil has ready access to technology at a set time.
5. **Making time for parents/carers.** Parents/carers of children with additional support needs often have more concerns and questions than others. For the same



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reasons some of the online platforms could be overwhelming and give too much information at one time.

Possible ideas or adaptations:

1. **Consider smaller group meets** - e.g. targeted supported groups with key staff members. Provide a structure and timeframe to the group meet ahead of time so the pupils know what is going to happen during the “meet”.
2. **Consider letters or handouts** - written in social story formats with pictures (to enable pre-reading). These could be of key members of staff, or key information (e.g. school uniform). “Fact/information” sheets, rather than a big booklet all at once, will allow digestion of key information. This can then be added to and collated into a transition booklet.
3. **Consider differentiated shorter videos with subtitles.** This also allows for EAL pupils to use subtitles for translation purposes. Make sure you speak clearly and slowly.
4. **Recommend that parents/carers consider the route to school.** Parents/carers should (if possible) consider walking routes to school. They could also walk round the outside of the building, showing key entrances and highlighting different areas. Transport pupils can also begin to think about the bus stops, including thinking where they might need to stand and what time they might need to get up. Parents/carers may wish to consider filming this route or walking it daily as part of their daily exercise during Covid-19 to reinforce the route.
5. **Provide elaborated maps with photos and key information added** - for example this is the canteen (where you can buy food). You can use Social Stories to help with this.
6. **Consider that the children with additional support needs may not ask questions online or during meets.** Consider giving a key contact to be able to email questions and receive answers.



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7. **Consider the introduction of a buddy/prefect.** Again, videos can be overwhelming to digest, and it may be better to have a photo and a fact sheet alongside giving information about who they are, etc.
8. **Consider an interactive PowerPoint** - with sound, visual and possibly a text (multi-sensory and accessible). This could then be paused to allow for additional processing time and chunked into sections.
9. **Consider a separate forum for parents of children with additional support needs.** This could be face to face or an online meeting targeted at addressing the particular needs of individuals. Perhaps invite parents to submit questions ahead of time so it does not feel overwhelming to ask questions during a live forum
10. **Consider how parents/carers will receive the information they need.** They may be working and can't attend set meetings, or may not have ready access to the technology. Perhaps produce a FAQs document which gives parents/carers with additional concerns time to digest the information.
11. **Only give information about what you know.** At the moment things are changing rapidly and showing videos of a typical day may be confusing for children with additional needs if this is not what they experience in August. Less is more and can always be added to later.

