

## From mountain to sea

### Educational Psychology Service

#### Primary to secondary online transition.

#### **Things to think about for children with additional support needs:**

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In 2020 many schools realised the opportunities for using virtual means to support transitions. Some of these opportunities remain and have resulted in a hybrid transition model. However, for some pupils with additional support needs aspects of an online transition can be challenge and on occasion 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 is being can be shared, which sometimes this does 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 now routinely using video 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. Arrangements may have to be made for following up face-to-face.

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- 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 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 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) – this 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.
4. Recommend that parents/carers could consider (if possible) walking routes to school, or walk round external of the building- showing key entrances, etc. Transport pupils can also begin to think about the bus stops, etc., 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- e.g. 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 face to face 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). 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 or an online meeting targeted at this group. Perhaps invite parents to submit questions ahead of time so it does not feel overwhelming to ask questions during a live forum.
10. Perhaps produce a FAQs document which gives parents/carers with additional concerns time to digest the information.

