**Newcastle City Council**

**Top tips for transition from middle to primary to high school for autistic pupils**



**June 2020**

**Transitions to middle/high for autistic pupils**

A social /affirmative model perspective sees autism as a difference rather than a deficit and recognises that every autistic child or young person (CYP) has a unique set of strengths but that neurodiversity in autism can make transitions especially tricky and CYP can feel isolated or different and this can contribute to stress, anxiety and mental health issues. Transitions that take account of the tremendous variation of presentations of autistic differences and bespoke to the CYP are helpful.

Co-production should be at the heart of transition.

Things that might help:

* A co-produced bespoke transition plan/transition booklet
* A co-produced pupil information sheet to be shared with staff across settings
* Knowing what has helped the CYP with other transitions in their life
* Additional visits to new school
* Opportunities for the CYP to build relationships with key person /people prior to transition
* Knowing what adjustments are in place to support the CYP
* Knowing how friendships will be supported
* Practise travelling the route to school
* Setting up a mentor /buddy system
* A pupil friendly map of the school with explicit instructions for navigating
* A pupil friendly timetable (may be visual)
* Visual supports
* Transition stories from pupils in Y7 /Social StoriesTM explaining about transition
* Photos of key areas /staff photos /profiles /introductions
* System for communicating between home and school
* Knowing what pastoral support systems are in place

Supporting with understanding daily structure and carrying out routine activities including:

* Ensuring the CYP knows where to go and who to ask for help (e.g. during lesson, lunchtime, breaktime, before school). Might need to use a ‘help card’ or other symbolic action that only pupil and teacher understands (e.g. putting pencil down centre of book), and which may be outlined on pupil info sheet;
* Managing their planner /getting about the school
* Moving classrooms
* Managing books, folders and equipment
* Using specialised rooms like the music room and gym
* Unstructured times
* Working with unfamiliar /supply teachers
* Preparing for changes to the school calendar such as trips and events

The planner that CYP get when attending middle / high school is usually extremely helpful for autistic CYP. Using this to plan for changes and up-and-coming events can be especially useful.

Co-production with the CYP on what reasonable adjustments will help them settle into secondary school should be at the heart of a good transition.

Some examples of co-produced pupil information are attached below.

The communication and interaction specialist teachers can support with bespoke transition plans and resources for individual pupils. A set of lesson plans /transition booklet with examples of additional autism specific information can be provided where necessary.

**My Co-produced Pupil Information**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Name** | **\*\*\*EXAMPLE\*\*\*** | **Photo** |
| **Year Group** |   |
| **Nature of Additional Need** | Autism, Anxiety, Social, Emotional and Mental Health |
| **Things I want you to know about me:**My friends are……I play Fortnite with my friends on my Xbox.I like to watch YouTubers playing games.I have my own YouTube channel called ….I like to watch YouTube videos about….I enjoy gaming and anything to do with computers.I’m interested in cars.Sometimes my back and neck hurt so I have to fidget and move them about. |
| **It helps me when:**Give me clear instructions.Don’t shout.Say my name before asking me a question.Let me fiddle with my fidget.Let me know if anything is going to change. | **I find it hard when:**There is lots of noise when I’m trying to concentrate, especially when I’m reading.I’ve got no one to play with at break time.I need to ask someone to play with me.Something unexpected happens or things change. |
| **Main areas of difficulty:**Suffers hugely with anxiety. Copes in school but lots of hidden strategies to minimise during school day so doesn’t impact at home.Can stand to close to people.Proprioception.Social skills, making friends.Understanding social situations.Noise.Processing speed very different to IQ. | **Suggested strategies:**Give ideas of what to do at break time /support to find someone to play with.Don’t shout at.Make sure knows what happening (timetable).Warn of changes.Provide opportunities for success and praise to build confidence and resilience.Support to develop understanding of social situations.Support during group work.Access to fidget. |
| **Additional Information**Academically able, consistently works above age related.Excellent computer skills.Sensory issues include noise, smell and texture of clothing.Transition points – needs lots of preparation. |  Behaviour in school fine but working hard to manage anxieties.Meltdowns at home:* Worse if bad day at school
* Change that nobody warned about
* Teacher shouts/tone
* Injustice – rules not being followed
* Social – anyone to play with
 |

**My Co-produced Pupil Information**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Name** |  | **Photo** |
| **Year Group** |  |
| **Nature of Additional Need** |  |
| **Things I want you to know about me:** |
| **It helps me when:** | **I find it hard when:** |
| **Main areas of difficulty:** | **Suggested strategies:** |
| **Additional Information**  |  |

**My Co-produced Pupil Information (AET Template)**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Pupil Name:** | **DoB:** | **Date completed:** |
| **Communication and social interaction** |  |
| **Interests and motivators** | **Photo** | **Academics** |
| **Sensory needs** | **Practical/Self-help/Independence skills** |
| **Strengths and Skills** | **Sources of stress and anxiety to include strategies** |
| **Support needs and preferences** | **How to support participation and engagement** |
| **Summary of any risks and implications for Safety Management** | **Health/Medical** |
| **Unstructured times- skills and support needs** | **Other relevant information?** |