

Section 10: Transition

Transition is the process of moving from one stage or setting to another, such as, starting a new school, moving up a year group or into the world of work.

While transitions can bring challenges, especially for those who find literacy or cognitive tasks more difficult, they also open doors to new experiences, relationships and skills. With the right support, every transition can be a chance for young people to thrive and discover their potential.

Opportunities:

- **Making New Friends & Joining Clubs:** The chance to meet new peers, build friendships and take part in clubs and activities that help them feel part of a wider school community
- **Exploring New Subjects:** As they move through school, children/young people begin to study a broader range of topics and can start focusing on subjects they enjoy most
- **Developing Key Skills:** Transitions offer opportunities to strengthen reading, writing, spelling and oral language skills, while also building a deeper understanding of how language works
- **Building Independence:** Children/young people learn to manage daily routines with more independence, helping them grow in confidence

Common Challenges:

- **Adjusting to New Routines:** Longer school days and unfamiliar schedules can be tiring and confusing at first
- **Navigating New Environments:** Learning to find their way around new buildings, follow timetables and understand new rules and expectations
- **Interacting with New People:** Meeting new teachers and classmates can be exciting but also overwhelming for some
- **Organisational Demands:** As children progress, they're expected to manage homework from different teachers, keep track of deadlines and organise their materials independently

- **Knowing When to Ask for Help:** May feel unsure about how to ask for help with new tasks or changes. Tools like printable traffic lights (to show how they feel about their work) and editable coloured timetables can support them in expressing their needs
- **Understanding Safety:** Learning about new boundaries and potential dangers in unfamiliar environments is essential for keeping safe

Communication:

Regular communication between parents, children and school staff is key. Talking with your child and their school helps ease worries and ensures everyone is prepared. Sharing important information - especially about learning needs, health, or medication - helps schools put the right support in place from the start.

Children with additional needs such as ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder), Autism, DLD (Developmental Language Disorder), Dyspraxia or Dyslexia benefit greatly from early planning and consistent support. Whether your child is moving from preschool to primary or from primary to post primary, staff can work together to share valuable insights and ensure a smooth transition.

There are helpful resources available, including:

- [AAIS - Early Years Transition to School](#) (for preschool to primary)
- [AAIS - Moving-On Up Transfer Support Pack](#) (for post primary transitions)

Supporting your child with organisation

Make copies of their timetable and have it on display around the home, for example, in their bedroom, in the kitchen and in their homework diary. [Printable Resource: Editable Colour Coded Timetable | Literacy Inclusion Toolkit](#)

- Colour-code subjects on the timetable and match colours with their books. This makes it easier to organise what is needed each day
- Creating an evening checklist of what to pack in their school bag. This builds independence, making sure they have everything they need

Transition to Post-16

For Year 12 school leavers in Northern Ireland, there are a wide range of post-16 education and training options available:

- Sixth forms
- Further Education colleges
- The College of Agriculture, Food and Rural Enterprise (CAFRE)
- Other education and training providers

Year 12 school leavers are encouraged to talk to a [careers adviser](#) from the Careers Service to help them decide on their next steps. Young people may benefit from advice and support to ensure that the transition is successful.

For young people who have a Statement of Special Educational Needs (SEN), the transition planning process begins in Year 10. In Year 12, they can meet with a careers adviser and a member of the [EA Statutory Assessment Service](#). For Year 12 pupils who have a Statement of SEN, the EA Statutory Assessment Service can help with communication with the post-16 education or training destination.

Many sixth forms in Northern Ireland offer a range of academic and vocational subjects. If your child is staying at the same school for sixth form, the move is often smoother. The teachers already know your child and understand their learning needs. However, for a young person moving to a new school's sixth form, it is important to inform the Learning Support Coordinator (LSC) of their literacy difficulties so that reasonable adjustments can be made.

Further Education Colleges

There are six regional colleges of Further Education (FE) in Northern Ireland which offer a wide range of post-16 options for students – academic, vocational, technical, training and leisure related courses:

- [Belfast Met Inclusive Learning Development](#)
- [Northern Regional College Education Support](#)
- [North West Regional College Learning Support](#)

- [South Eastern Regional College Learning Support](#)
- [Southern Regional College Learning Resource Centre](#)
- [South West College Learning Support](#)

Students are encouraged to share any additional needs they have with the FE college during the application process. This helps the college provide the right support. Support could include:

- Access Arrangements for Exams
- Assistive Technology
- Advice and guidance
- Recommendations for lecturers, trainer assessors or work placement providers

Each college has a student support department with an online presence providing information and signposting.

Higher Education Opportunities

Northern Ireland offers a wide range of higher education opportunities through three universities, two university colleges, six regional Further Education (FE) colleges, and the College of Agriculture, Food and Rural Enterprise (CAFRE). Many students also choose flexible options like distance learning through The Open University. CAFRE, part of the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA), provides specialised courses in agri-food and agriculture. Like FE colleges, CAFRE has a dedicated [Student Support Officer](#) to ensure students receive tailored support based on their individual needs.

Student Support Available

When applying to any higher education or training provider, it's important for students to share any additional needs early in the process. This helps institutions put appropriate support in place from the beginning. Support may include reasonable adjustments under relevant legislation and students may also be eligible for the Disabled Students' Allowance.

Support in higher education may look different from what was offered in school but it is still designed to help students succeed. Whether transitioning to university, college or CAFRE, open communication ensures students with ADHD, Autism, DLD, Dyspraxia, Dyslexia or other needs are well-supported throughout their journey.

Transition to the Workplace

Moving into employment is a significant transition that should be carefully managed to ensure the right support is in place from the start. Under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, employers must make reasonable adjustments for individuals with disabilities, including those with literacy difficulties if their challenges meet the legal definition of a disability.

Prospective employees are encouraged to share any additional needs during the application process so that support, such as, adjustments for interviews or Assistive Technology can be arranged. Employers are responsible for identifying and implementing appropriate support to help individuals succeed in their roles.