



Community Children's  
Health Partnership



# Change and Transition

**Top Tips from  
Speech & Language Therapy**

Service provided by

**Sirona**  
care & health

Some children and young people find change and transition difficult and this can cause anxiety. Keeping things as predictable and consistent as possible is important where practical.

## Managing routines

A visual timetable can be used at home or at school to show what is happening across a whole day. Each activity (e.g. assembly, playtime, Art) should be represented with a picture and word. Refer back to the timetable regularly and remove or cross out completed tasks.



Visual timetables can also be hand drawn using simple words and stick figures.

## Different events and new people

Whilst certain things do have quite a set pattern, more unusual events, such as Christmas activities, a new adult visiting or a school trip need advance warning.

Use plenty of pre-warning and simple language to explain what will happen. Using a calendar to show when the event will happen can be helpful. It is important to say when things will be back to normal.

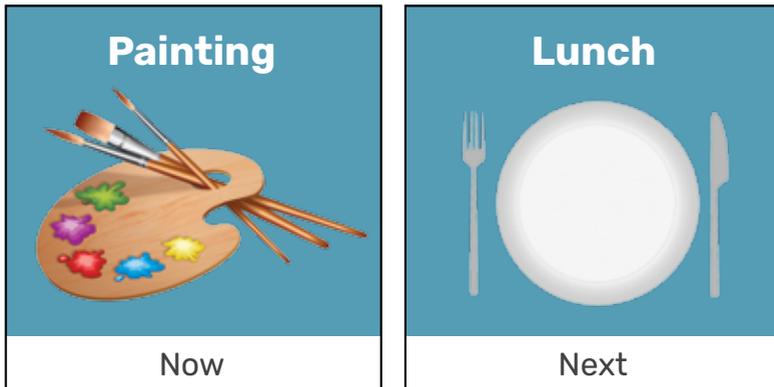
Using social stories can help to explain what is going to happen.

Photographs can be useful to introduce new people and new places so that the child has some idea of what to expect.

Simple comic strips can be drawn to show a sequence of new events – you do not need to be a great artist to draw one out.

## Transitions between activities

- Egg timers are a simple and effective visual prompt to help children know when an activity is about to finish.



- Now and Next boards can be used to help a child move from one activity to another.

## Transitions to different classes and new schools

Moving between classes or schools is a significant change and should be managed carefully. Transition should include:

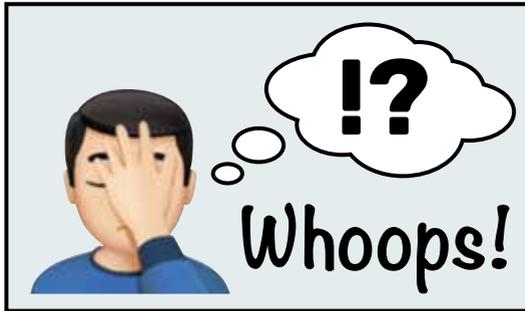
- Plenty of visits to the new setting.
- Teaching staff sharing ideas and strategies that work well for a student. A 'one page profile' can be created which summarises a child's strengths and needs. This can be done in collaboration with the child.
- When preparing for secondary school, small group work teaching key skills such as reading timetables, what to expect in different subject lessons and practicing problem solving for specific scenarios (e.g. forgotten lunch money, unable to find lesson etc) can be helpful.



## Unexpected changes

Sometimes things happen unexpectedly. This can be tricky for a child who prefers things to be the same.

A 'whoops' symbol can help to signal to the child that there has been an unexpected change in plans.



- Choose a time to test out using the 'whoops!' symbol at home. "Whoops! We have no vanilla ice cream. We only have chocolate." Change is easier to cope with when it is good change.
- Have another adult or sibling model a good reaction, "Oh dear! I am sad that there is no vanilla ice cream. Oh well, I will have chocolate instead."
- Praise the 'model' for their good reaction. The child will be watching and learning.
- Next time try a less rewarding 'whoops!' Ask a friend to stage that unexpected call or visit. By role playing a change situation we create a stepping stone. Practicing when the situation is not 'real' removes the pressure and helps prepare the child for a real "whoops" situation.

## **Useful information**

For advice on how to use visuals to support change and transition

<https://teacch.com/>

For advice on using social stories

<https://www.autism.org.uk/about/strategies/social-stories-comic-strips.aspx>

Resource for preparing for transition to secondary school

<https://www.blacksheepress.co.uk/product/talking-about-secondary-school>

## **Advice and Support**

For further advice and support from a Speech & Language Therapist, please contact us via our Telephone Advice Line 07825 016 335 (Wednesdays 9am-12pm) or by email [sirona.slt@nhs.net](mailto:sirona.slt@nhs.net)





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This service is provided by Sirona care & health  
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## Let us know what you think and get involved

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