



# Year 7 Starters

## Supporting successful transitions to secondary school

Virtual Schools working together

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supporting successful transitions to secondary school

## Session outcomes:

- Increase your understanding of why transitions for adopted children can be more complex
- Increase your understanding and knowledge of what's new, different and might be particularly tricky for your child
- Build your range of strategies, tools and resources to support the transition process





# Virtual Schools working together



The remit of the Virtual School is to provide advice, guidance and signposting



*“For previously looked-after children, the VSH will be a source of advice and information to help their parents to advocate for them as effectively as possible. VSHs are not acting as part of the corporate parent role in these circumstances, but are there to promote the educational achievement of these children through the provision of advice and information to relevant parties” DFE Feb 2018*



**Hampshire** : Jacqueline Marsh

Please note: our work and this presentation is set principally within the context of mainstream secondary schools, not private or independent schools.

**Hampshire & Isle of Wight:** Matthew Bell

**Southampton** : Niki Freckelton



**Portsmouth:** Sarah Major

# Change...

Change can be exciting and scary at the same time and a real challenge for many children and adults.

Leaving behind everything you know and feel comfortable with, to face the unfamiliar and unknown can be extremely daunting and difficult for some children.



# The challenge of transitions:

Change: Relational, Behavioural, Environmental, Academic, Physical

Memory: Traumatic or Subconscious

Control: Fear / Loss / Unpredictability





**Similar but different...**

# Similar but different

- School environment (size, scale, noise, smells, look etc)
  - Teachers (many different styles, mannerisms, personalities etc)
  - Curriculum (more specialised lessons, movement around site)
  - Peers (11 years old to 16/18 yr olds, diverse groups/individuals)
  - Expectations and behaviour management (rewards & sanctions)
- 
- *Prepare for change/differences and use positive talk...*
  - *Prepare yourself for change, to enable you to support your child*
  - *Your parental involvement and contact with school will change at Secondary School*



# Prepare for change/transition

Think about 3 core stages to this change/transition

- Prepare & Plan (Start)
- Goodbyes & Hello (Middle)
- Settled & Secure (End)

What can parents do across these stages?...

...Keep calm, ask the right questions and provide really positive reassurance

... apply a high level of care, compassion and empathy...





# Prepare & Plan

- What might be particular challenges for your child?
- What are the particular needs/triggers/risks for your child?
- What are the particular concerns your child has?
  
- *Raise these questions with both primary & secondary school*
- *Think about how you prepare and support your child with this change*
- *Think about how you prepare for this change...*

Pause, reflect  
& think about  
- 2 mins

# Prepare & Plan

- Transition planning meeting with school
- Transitional EPAC (Education plan for Adoptive Children or similar)
- Transitional EHCP Annual Review Meeting
- What support/interventions are PP funds used/needed for
- Attending information evening, transitional events
- Request meeting or extra visits if needed
- Go prepared with your list of questions for any meetings
- Make sure you have direct emails for key staff (Year Leader, Class Tutor, SENCO, Designated Teacher etc)
- Move-up Days July (additional visits)



# Goodbye to old

## Ending Primary

- Know what is planned at Primary for the goodbyes & endings
- Prepare your child for each day / event / activity
- Remember heightened emotions will likely lead to more extreme reactions, responses and behaviour
- Keep routines, keep calm, use PACE approach
- Watch out for self-sabotage
- Watch out for anxiety and stress
  
- Apply buckets loads of care, compassion, empathy, warming food and drinks
- Ensure child has time and space to recover from very emotional days

Pause, reflect  
& think about  
- 2 mins

# Hello to new

## Starting Secondary

- Ensure the new routines, uniform, PE kit etc are ready well in advance
- Practice and prepare new day routine (even walk to school)
- Ensure all key contact emails for staff are know
- School enrolment / letters / communication (PLAC status)
- School lunchtime arrangements (cashless / quiet lunch areas)
- Connect with key staff straight away
- Ensure your child know who/where their key adults are in school
  
- Apply buckets loads of care, compassion, empathy, warming food and drinks
- Ensure child has time and space to recover from very emotional days



# Hello to new

## Starting Secondary

Be aware...

- Nearly all teachers in school will have full time teaching timetable, allow them time to respond to emails
- Keep all communication very focused and specific; asking direct and concise questions
- Allow enough time for new routines and experiences to settle down, the first half term is likely to be a little bumpy
- You cannot attempt to address every little issue that arises, keep focused on the big things / priorities for your child



# Hello to new people

## Starting Secondary

Think about...

- Who are these new friends?
- Difficulties with new and old friendships
- Relationships with new adults
- Possible triggers with people, curriculum, visits
- School behaviour policy (rewards & sanctions - detentions)
- Connect with positive role models (neighbours / old primary friends)

Pause, reflect  
& think about  
- 2 mins

# Settled & Secure

- Many adopted children can struggle with executive functioning and working memory so be prepared to be a PA for your child
- Structure and support their staggered independence
- Provide the right level of scaffolding/support they need
- Put in place visual reminders / timetables
- Have they got all right stationary and resources
- Keep home items at home (avoid taking things to school)
- Keep routines and repetitive structure in place
- Make routines as stress free as possible
- Keep questions to a min after a school day



# Settled & Secure...top tips

## Uniform & School Kit

- Check and make sure you have all the uniform early (try/practice putting on and off)
- Perhaps buy a spare item or two, for those pieces they are likely to lose (tie?)
- Use permanent marker to put their initials on labels, so if lost they can be re-united
- Check what stationary they need from school prospectus.
- Again if needed perhaps put a coloured sticker on each item, to help keep it together.
- If needed create a check list for your child of items they need (put it on the bedroom door as visual reminder)
- Most children will need help organising themselves, do this in a supportive and encouraging way to build their confidence and self-organisation
- Practice putting on uniform and check there are no annoying labels that need to be cut out
- Get a copy of timetable and be aware when PE days are on





# Settled & Secure...top tips

## Communication

- Ensure you have contact for DT and key school staff
- Most schools have pastoral or year leaders, make sure you have their names and contact details.
- Your child will have a form tutor at Secondary school, again make sure you have their name and contact details.
- Keep a list of all of these to hand so you can get in touch easily.
- If there are any issues communicate with school as swiftly as you can.



# Settled & Secure...top tips

## Supporting Learning & Development

- Be prepared for school/homework apps and systems, keep a check on these regularly and ensure login details are saved
- Be prepared for resources needed with Design Technology (DT) lessons, and these (food tech, woodwork) tend to change regularly
- Be prepared with a device and internet connectivity for your child to complete homework
- Have a quiet space set up for your child to complete homework, perhaps somewhere you can oversee and support when required
- **Be prepared for it to take some time for your child to settle into secondary school**



# Settled & Secure...top tips

## Social and Emotional Needs

- Teenage years are a challenge for all children. Prepare for this challenge and respond in the most therapeutic way you can
- The social, emotional and physical exertion children use during days at school can sometimes mean when they get home they either collapse in a heap or explode. Food, kindness and rest can usually address both of these
- **Think about and prepare your therapeutic strategies to support your child's social and emotional needs throughout secondary school**
- **If you need more specialist advice and support with complex needs seek out your local appropriate agency (SENDIAS / Adopt South / CAMHS / HIEPs / others )**

Pause, reflect  
& think about  
- 2 mins

**Prepare & Plan**

**Goodbye & Hello**



**Settled & Secure**

**But also remember...**

# Remember Key Adults — incoming and outcoming

- Importance
  - Identification
  - Building a relationship
  - Consistency / Sustainability
- How might you support this change of relationships over the summer?*



# Remember Common Difficulties / Triggers

- Home Work
- Punitive Behaviour Policies
- Anxiety / Stress
- Mobile Phones / Social Media
- Friendships / Social & Emotional Needs
- *How might you support these?*

Pause, reflect  
& think about  
- 2 mins



What do I do in September ?

# Summary ...top tips

- Become a highly organised PA
- Be in communication with key adults in school
- Be calm and keep own anxiety minimised
- Be focussed on priorities for child to be happy and successful in school
- Be positive and talk up school/education
- Be focussed on calm, repetitive and organised home routines
- Be as caring, compassionate and empathetic as you can
  
- Be ready for the full on teenage years to come!



# What Survival Looks Like In Secondary School

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When I was younger, wires got connected in the wrong places. I often think and feel like I am under attack, even when I'm very safe. This is when my brain activates survival mode to protect me.

Sometimes I won't even know that I have gone into survival mode, I probably won't be able to tell you what feels wrong. It has happened so often for such a long time, that this part of my brain is now incredibly strong and it controls the calm parts of my brain. I find it difficult to turn it off by myself.



<https://beaconhouse.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Survival-In-Secondary-School.pdf>

# Further information

Rees  
Centre

## Rees Centre Video

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eKoXWHEBhko>

Transitions and change for care-experienced young people in school. Includes Adoption UK input via Rebecca Brooks

### Other useful resources

<https://beaconhouse.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Supporting-Transitions-2.pdf>

<https://www.annafreud.org/media/11465/helping-cyp-manage-anxiety-apr2020-v3.pdf>

<https://www.adoptionuk.org/blog/transition-from-primary-to-secondary-school>

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/teach/transitioning-to-secondary-school/zkc9pg8>

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/articles/zrynnrd>

<https://www.mentallyhealthyschools.org.uk/risks-and-protective-factors/school-based-risk-factors/transitions/>

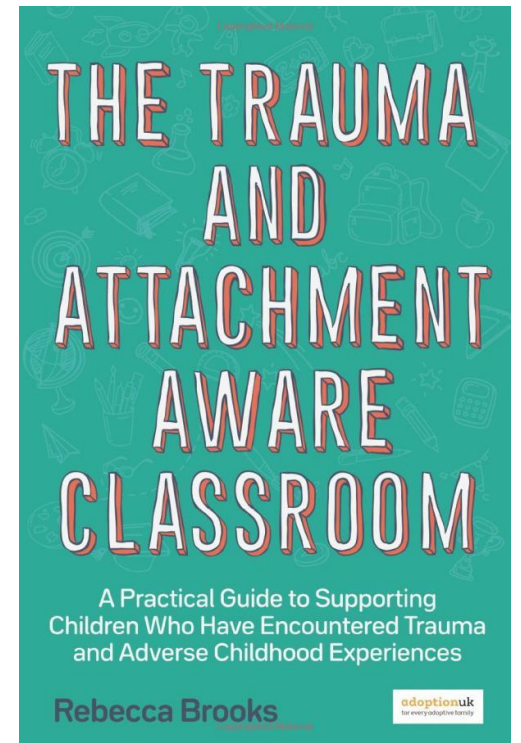
<https://beaconhouse.org.uk/resources/>

<https://www.hants.gov.uk/socialcareandhealth/adoptsouth>

[How Parents Can Help With Secondary School Transition | YoungMinds](#)

[Internet-Matters-Moving-To-Secondary-School-Guide-A4.pdf \(internetmatters.org\)](#)

[SecondarySchool TransitionBooklet Compass.pdf \(compass-uk.org\)](#)



*“When a flower doesn’t bloom, you fix the environment in which it grows, not the flower.”*

*Alexander Den Heijer*





*Questions*

*Comments*

*Ideas..*





*Please get in touch if you need, email the Virtual School for your school authority area.*



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**Adoption Support** - Advice, consultations, workshops, learning and community events for families who live in Hampshire, Isle of Wight, Portsmouth and Southampton – 0300 3000 001