EARLY YEAR CHILDHOOD

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(Source: Tides online, 2023)

TRANSITIONS HANDBOOK FOR PRACTITIONER

Preschool to Year 1

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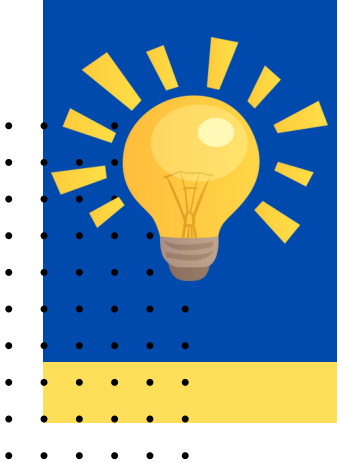

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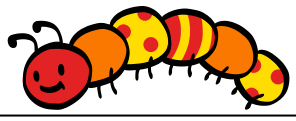
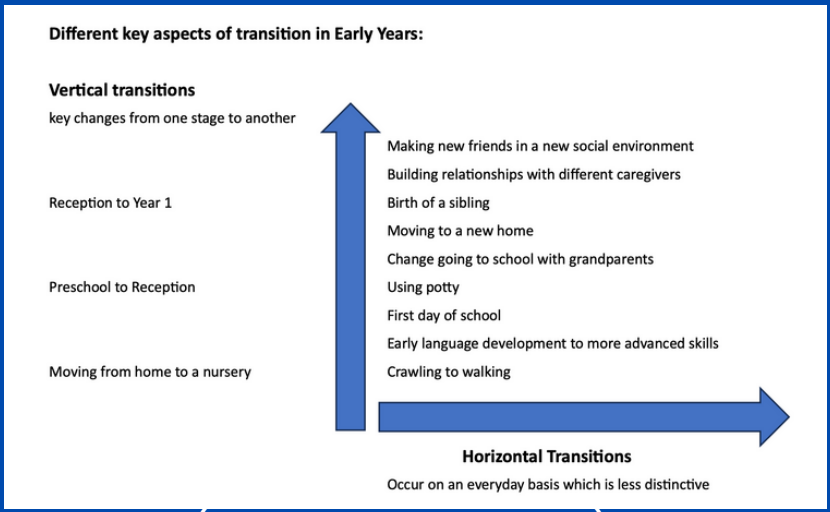


(Source: Rydal Penrhos School, 2021)

Introduction

What is transition?

The transition of early years children refers to the process of change over that young child's experience. These transitions can occur at various points in a child's early years and may include changes such as moving from home to an early childhood education setting, transitioning between different grades or classes, moving from preschool to primary school, or moving from the health visitor to school nurse. The concept of transition encompasses not only the physical change in location but also the social, emotional and developmental adjustments that children go through during these shifts. Successful transitions are crucial for the well-being, learning and development of young children (Vogler et al., 2008).



(Source: CHU, 2023)

What is the purpose of the handbook?

Transitions are an integral part of a child's developmental and educational journey. Well-supported transitions benefit children and their families by reducing stress, promoting learning continuity and fostering social and emotional growth (Fabian et al., 2007). Research that developmental theory supports the importance of effectively managing transitions in childhood and education (Rouse et al., 2023). This handbook serves several important purposes including the needs of the child, the role of the adult, partnerships, interventions, proposed outcomes and reference list. Provide a structured, informed and supportive framework to all relevant stakeholders through different aspects. It ensures a successful transition for children, promotes consistency and facilitates effective communication and collaboration to create a positive and educational experience for preschool children as they enter reception class.

Why transition of children from preschool to reception class is important?

Children's transition from Preschool to Reception is a key stage in their educational journey. This refers to the significant changes and transitions they experience as they move from one environment, routine, or stage of development to another. It involves moving from a more informal and game-based learning environment to a structured educational environment. Understanding and managing this transition is critical to promoting positive development and laying the foundation for a successful educational journey (Fabian et al., 2007).

(Source: Healthy Kids are Happy Kids, 2014)

Needs of the Child

What do children need as they transition from Preschool to Reception?

- Familiarization

  A study by Pianta and Kraft-Sayre (2003) emphasizes the importance of orientation and visits to the new school environment for preschool children. Organise a guided tour to visit the new setting, and provide opportunities for children to explore the new school environment through visits. Familiarising them with classrooms, playgrounds and other facilities helps reduce anxiety and increases children's comfort levels.

- Building Positvie Relationships

  Burnham (2016a) underscores the significance of positive relationships during transitions. Building positive relationships with new teachers and peers to organise sessions where children and teachers can meet before the official start of the reception class can build familiar faces foster a sense of security and support children's social and emotional well-being.

- Consistent Routines

  Establish consistent daily routines that align with the reception class schedule to a positive transition experience. Predictable schedules and routines provide a sense of structure and help children feel secure and understand expectations. (Burnham, 2016a).

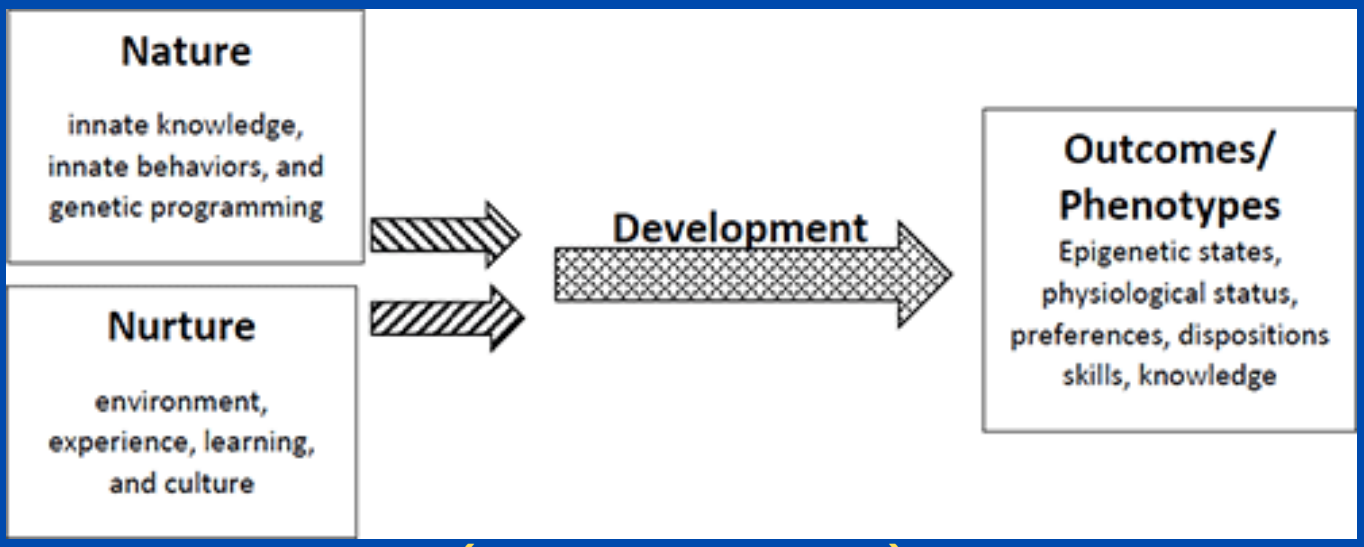
- Play-based learning and emotional support

  Play supports cognitive, social and emotional development. Encourage children to express their feelings and address any concerns they may have about the transition making it a valuable component during the transition. (Yogman et al, 2018). Copple et al, 2009 emphasise the need for emotional support during transitions. Emotional check-ins and responsive interactions help address children's emotional needs.

Developmental Theory of Children

Nature versus Nurture effect on development

The Nature versus Nurture debate in children's development explores the relative contribution of genetic factors (nature) and environmental influences(nurture) on various aspects of a child's development. The heritability of cognitive abilities is supported by twin and adoption studies. Studies on identical twins separated at birth show similarities in IQ scores, suggesting a genetic influence (Plomin et al, 2019). Silventoinen, 2003 researched that genetic factors play a role in physical health and growth but environmental factors such as nutrition and access to healthcare are crucial.



(Source:Honeycutt,2019)

How human needs effect with children development

Maslow's hierarchical theory of needs

Cullen,2011 explained that Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs is a psychological theory that outlines a five-tier model of human needs, often depicted as a pyramid. According to Maslow, individuals are motivated to fulfil these needs in a hierarchical order, with lower-level needs requiring satisfaction before higher-level needs become relevant.

Maslow's hierarchy of needs
(source: Honeycutt,2019)

Example of children transition from preschool to reception class

Physiological needs:
Children transitioning to reception classes need access to nutritious meals and sufficient sleep to support their physical growth and well-being.
Safety needs:
A safe and secure environment is crucial for a smooth transition.
Love and belonging
Children in reception classes should be able to develop positive relationships with peers and new teachers.
Esteem:
Children need positive reinforcement and recognition for their efforts and achievements in the new academic environment.
Self-actualization:
Children should be provided with opportunities for intellectual and creative development.

- Physiological needs are the basic survival needs necessary for human existence. Such as eating when hungry, drinking water when thirsty, seeking warmth and getting enough rest.

- Safety needs, once physiological needs are somewhat satisfied, individuals seek safety and security. This includes physical safety, financial stability, health and protection from harm.

- Love and belonging with basic physiological and safety needs met, individuals seek social connections, love and a sense of belonging. This involves forming relationships, friendships and connections with family and community.

- Esteem includes achieving personal goals, gaining respect from others and feeling competent.

- Self-actualization represents the realisation of one's full potential and the desire for personal growth and fulfilment. It involves pursuing personal interests, realising creativity, and achieving a sense of purpose.

The role of the adult

‘Providers must inform parents of the name of the key person, and explain their role, when a child starts attending a setting. The key person must help ensure that every child’s learning and care is tailored to meet their individual needs. The key person must seek to engage and support parents and / or carers in guiding their child’s development at home. They should also help families engage with more specialist support if appropriate.’
(Department for Education 2023)

(Source: Children with autism thrive in mainstream pre-schools, 2018)

Who are the key people to support children’s transitions?

The purpose of this handbook is to provide a comprehensive and structured guide that assists various stakeholders, including children’s key person/ all early year’s practitioners, reception teachers, parents, carers and nursery administrators, in facilitating a smooth and successful transition for the young children.

Child’s Key person/ early year practitioners who play a crucial role in facilitating a smooth transition for children moving from preschool to reception class. Their responsibilities involve creating a supportive and nurturing environment that addresses the unique needs of each child such as temperament, learning styles and social-emotion development (Fabian et al., 2007). Strong communication and collaboration with parents or carers, providing them with information, reassurance and opportunities to be involved in the transition process (Sheridan et al., 2009). Plan and implement transition activities that help children become familiar with the new setting, routines and expectations of the reception class (Pianta et al., 2003). Provide emotional support to children during the transition, acknowledging and addressing any anxieties or concerns they may have (Shonkoff et al., 2000).

Parents and carers have an important role in supporting children's transition from preschool to reception class. Their involvement and responsibilities significantly impact a child's adjustment and well-being during this period of change. They foster a positive relationship with the school and reception class teachers. Actively engage in open communication and participate in school activities (Sheridan et al., 2009). They also provide emotional support and help children understand what to expect in the new setting (Shonkoff et al., 2000). Promoting a positive attitude toward learning by engaging in educational activities at home such as reading or playing educational games (Sheridan et al., 2009). Participate in transition activities organised by the preschool or reception class enhances the connection between children, families and schools (Pianta et al., 2003).

How does attachment affect security in the development of children

John Bowlby and Mary Ainsworth developed attachment theories that emphasise the importance of secure emotional bonds for healthy child development. A secure attachment provides a foundation for exploration, emotional regulation and the formation of positive relationships, influencing various aspects of a child's development and well-being (Bretherton, 1992).

(Source: Child attachment training, No date)

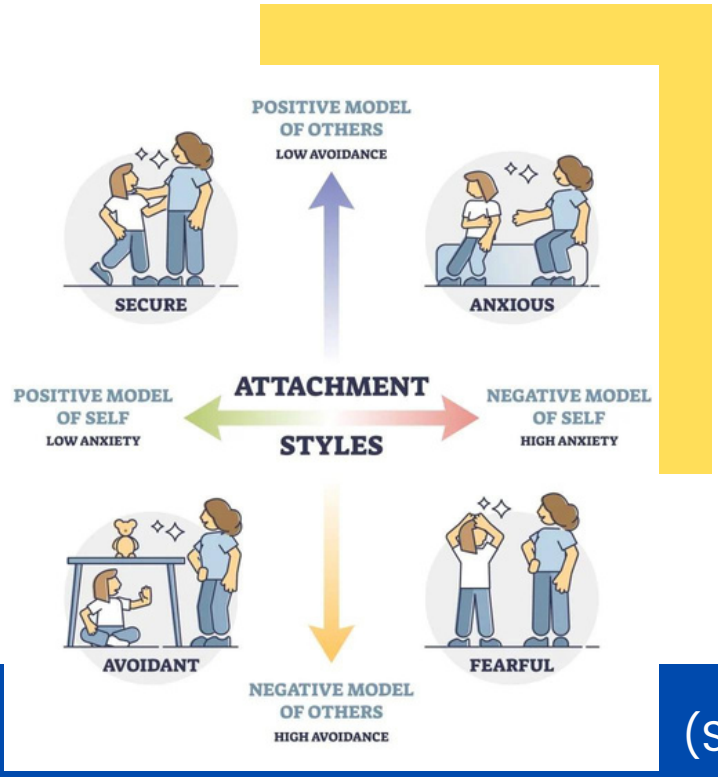
(Source: Red heart in parent and children holing Hans together, 2019)

BOWLBY'S ATTACHMENT THEORY

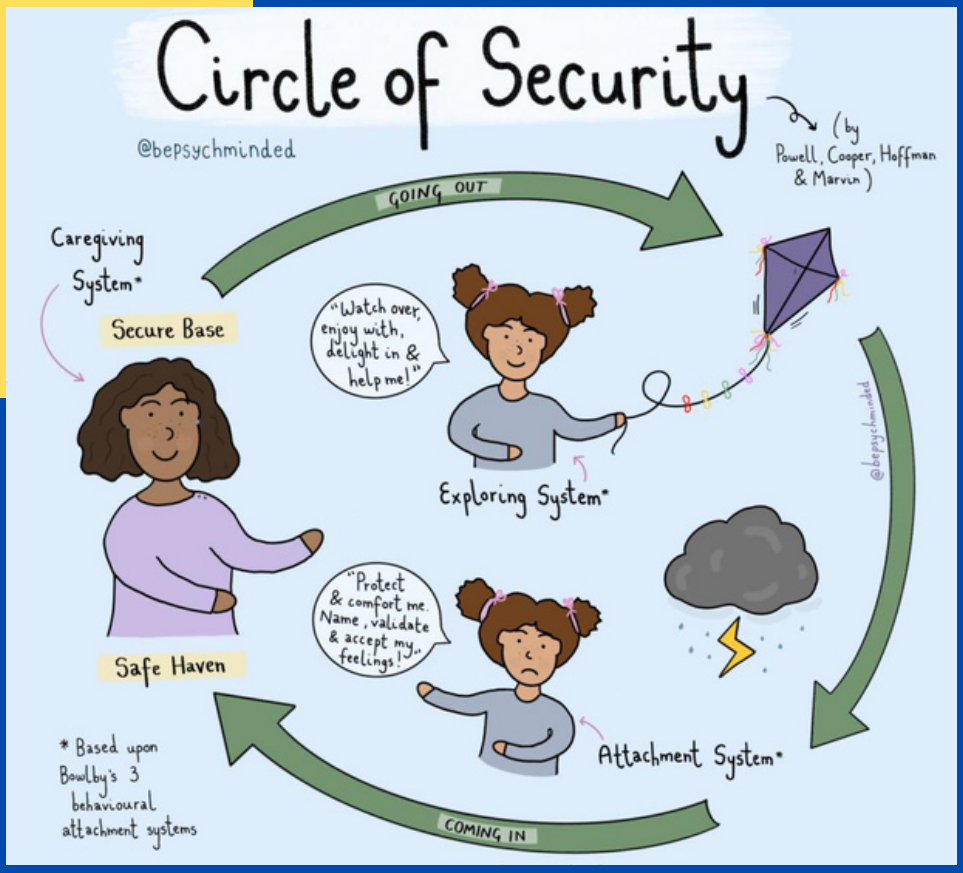
Bowlby proposes that attachment is an evolutionary adaptive behaviour, a biological instinct that promotes survival. He emphasised the innate need for infants to form strong emotional bonds with their primary caregivers. Central to Bowlby's theory is the concept of the "secure base". He argued that a secure attachment with a primary caregiver serves as a secure base from which children can explore their environment, learn and develop. Bowlby introduced the idea of "internal working models" which are mental representations of attachment figures and relationships. A secure attachment to a caregiver contributes to the development of effective emotional regulation. Children with secure attachments are more likely to seek comfort from their caregivers in times of distress, facilitating the development of coping mechanisms (Holmes, 2006).

AINSWORTH'S ATTACHMENT PATTERNS

Ainsworth developed the Strange Situation Procedure, a research method to assess attachment patterns in infants. This research identified distinct attachment styles, including secure, insecure-avoidant, and insecure-ambivalent. Ainsworth found that infants with secure attachments use their caregiver as a secure base for exploration. They exhibit distress when separated but are easily comforted upon the caregiver's return. Infants with an insecure-avoidant attachment may avoid or ignore their caregiver upon reunion and show little distress during separation. Infants with insecure-ambivalent attachments may be anxious and show difficulty exploring their environment. They may display mixed emotions upon reunion, seeking comfort but also showing resistance or anger (Brain et al, 2005)



(Source: Mcleod,2023a)



(Source: Mcleod,2023b)

THE CIRCLE OF SECURITY

The Circle of Security is an attachment-based intervention designed to enhance the quality of the parent-child relationship, promoting secure attachment. The Circle of Security model was developed by Glen Copper, Kent Hoffman, and Bert Powell. It is grounded in attachment theory, specifically the work of John Bowlby, and seeks to help parents understand and respond effectively to their child's emotional needs. The Circle of Security is represented as a graphic depicting a caregiver as a secure base from which a child can explore the world and return for comfort (Hoffman et al., 2006).

Hofmann et al. A 2006 report states that interventions for attachment-related issues among preschool and early school-age children are increasing, and preliminary evidence supports the effectiveness of safety circles in reducing confusion and enhancing child safety.

How can effective communication support practice?

Bretherton 1992 listed that well-supported transition effectively involves planning to ensure that the educational content and learning objectives are developmentally appropriate and progressively build on what children have learned in preschool. Recognise the importance of hands-on and experiential learning which aligns with preschool practices and supports a smooth transition for children. Understanding each child's strengths and needs for growth facilitates targeted educational practices in the reception class. Create individualised learning plans for children who may need additional support or challenges. Evaluating their cognitive, social and emotional development, can inform instructional strategies and support tailored to individual needs. Sharing information about each child's learning style, strengths and areas for improvement enables a more personalised and effective approach to education.

Key persons can organise transition activities that bridge the gap between preschool and reception. These may include joint activities, plan visits and orientation sessions to help children become familiar with the reception class environment. This can include introducing them to new classrooms, and playgrounds and meeting reception teachers to reduce their anxiety and facilitate a smoother transition. Informing parents about what to expect in reception class, providing resources for at-home support and encouraging parental involvement in school activities contribute to a collaborative educational environment. This approach helps build on the foundations laid in preschool, ensuring a positive and effective educational experience for children as they transition to the next stage of their academic journey.

(Source: Wilson, 2018)

Partnerships

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) framework is a set of standards and guidelines for the learning development, and care of children from birth to five years old in the UK. The EYFS framework promotes inclusive practices by focusing on equal opportunities, individualized learning and inclusive play. Additionally, it encourages effective partnership by recognising parents as partners, implementing the key person approach, facilitating information sharing and supporting collaboration with external professionals when needed (Department for Education,2023).

Burnham 2016b stated effective partnerships create a collaborative and supportive ecosystem that enhances the quality of early year transitions. By fostering communication, sharing information, and aligning efforts, these partnerships contribute to a positive and successful experience for children moving from preschool to reception. Promotion of a positive outcome for children during transition periods.

1. Effective communication between parents, preschool educators/ early year practitioners and reception teachers is essential. Sharing information about each child's strengths, individual needs and preferences facilitates a seamless transition (Burnham, 2016c).
2. Partnerships help establish consistent routines for children both at home and in the settings. Consistency contributes to a sense of stability and security during the transition and can support children's well-being and development during transitions (Burnham, 2016c).
3. Allows individualised support for each child. Information sharing between preschool educators and reception teachers ensures that the transition plan is tailored to the unique needs of the child. (Sheridan et al., 2009).
4. Provide a strong foundation for offering social and emotional support to children. Partnerships involve creating a supportive network that addresses emotional well-being (Shonkoff et al.,2000).

(Source: Painted kids hands wallpaper, no date)

Interventions

'States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child'
(The United Nations Convention on the Right of the Child, 1989)

Communication is the KEY in setting during transition period

Effective communication during transition periods involves preparing children through clear information, supporting parents, fostering positive practitioner-child relationships, and collaborating among professionals or multiagencies. This comprehensive communication strategy contributes to a smoother and more positive transition experience for young children in early year setting (Burnham,2016c).

For example:

Effective communication between practitioner, children and their families helps build trust and a secure attachment (Johnson, 2010).

- Practitioners can use story time, change routines or transition charts to communicate with children about upcoming transition and listening with their concern. That can help children understand the sequence of events during transition, alleviate anxiety and fear associated with change.

- Providing parents with clear and timely information (Newsletters, digital updates or parent consultation) about upcoming transitions allows them to prepare their child at home. Offering parents the opportunity like parents to express concerns or challenges fosters a collaborative approach between parents and practitioners.

Effective communicate between provider, colleagues within the setting and other professional help build positive relationships that develop and benefit children (Burnham, 2016c)

- Early years setting can through noticeboards, and regular staff meetings share clear communication among team members ensuring a cohesive and coordinated approach to children's transition. Ensures that everyone is on the same page regarding the transition.

- Share relevant information about children's needs, preferences and any additional support with professionals and multiple agencies to create a stable and predictable environment for children who have EAL/hearing or visual impairment or who have additional learning needs during the transition.

Proposed Outcomes

(Source: Outdoor Play is essential for kids, 2019)

"States Parties recognize the right of the child to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts."
(The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989)

Play is a crucial aspect of child development and it can be a valuable tool in supporting children during early years transitions. Play provides a natural and enjoyable way for children to explore, express themselves and make sense of new experiences (Smidt, 2013).

For example:

1. Introduce role-play activities where children can pretend to be the teacher, parent or even different roles within the new setting. This type of play allows them to act out scenarios related to the transition and helps them understand different roles and expectations to reduce their anxiety.

2. Use Play-based assessments to observe and assess children's development. Involve informal play observations that help practitioners understand each child's strengths, interests and areas where additional support may be needed during the transition.

Smidt 2013 explains that different kinds of play help children build resilience, express emotions, develop social skills, and adapt to new situations, contributing to a smoother transition experience in early years settings.

Smooth transition benefits children, their families and professional educator

Benefit children: A well-managed transition from preschool to reception can have a positive and lasting impact on children's outcomes by creating a foundation for success in academics, social interactions and overall well-being. That minimises stress and anxiety, start fosters a sense of security and belonging, creating a conducive atmosphere for learning. Allowing children to adjust smoothly to the new setting environment. Interaction with new peers, and teachers supports the growth of communication, cooperation and emotional resilience. These social connections are critical for a child's emotional well-being and contribute to a positive social environment. Focus on ensuring that children are academically ready for the reception class curriculum engage with new academic challenges and contribute to positive educational outcomes. This holistic approach contributes to well-rounded outcomes for children in terms of their overall development. The effects of a positive transition experience can extend throughout a child's educational journey. The transition process plays a crucial role in shaping a child's early educational experiences and sets the tone for future learning to a lifelong love of learning and positive educational out (Allingham, 2012).

Support their family: Effective transition involves an educational journey that not only supports the child's transition but also enhances the overall quality of education by building strong partnerships between home and school (Allingham, 2012)

Benefit professional educator: When teachers from preschool and reception collaborate, a shared understanding of best practice, teaching strategies and methods in early years education can be fostered, which helps Reception teachers develop teaching plans to meet the diverse needs of pupils. This allows for a personalized support plan to be implemented, ensuring that each child's unique strengths and challenges are effectively addressed. Collaborative transition planning encourages continuous professional development for educators. This ongoing learning process helps teachers stay informed about the latest research, best practices and innovations in early years education (Burnham, 2016a)

It builds on the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum to support a seamless learning process and avoid gaps or redundancies in educational content, which benefits children, the families who support them, and even professional educators.

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