
*Transitions and how
Practitioners can Support Children*

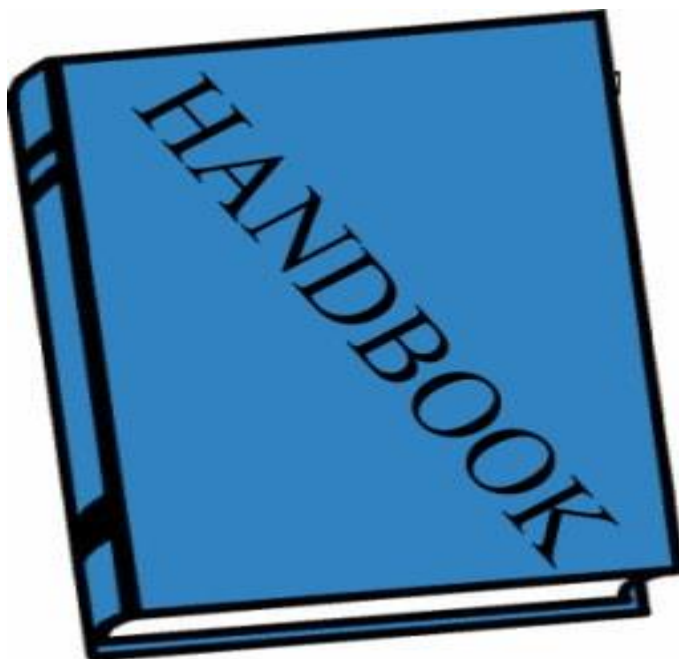


West Barns Primary School. (no date)

The importance of effective communication

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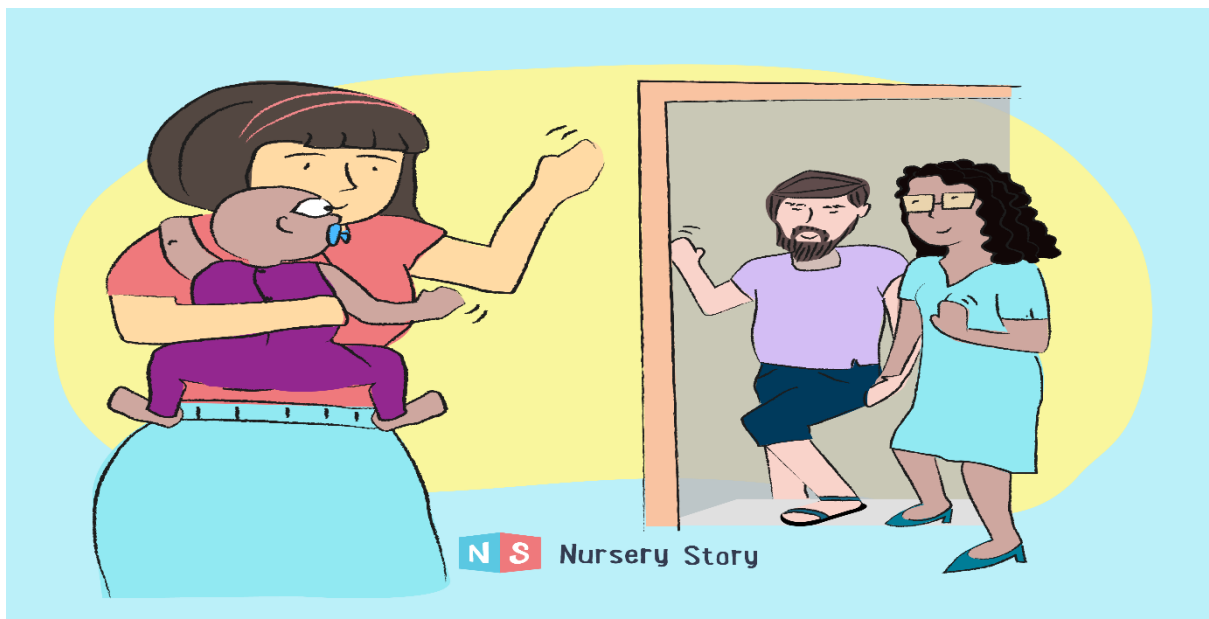


Hopkinson Elementary
School [Image] (no date)

Introduction

This handbook is intended for those who work within the Flying Start setting on how to support the rising threes who are transitioning from Flying Start to Nursery. The purpose and aim of this handbook is to provide practitioners with information about what transitions are, the effects on the child's development and how practitioners can support children holistically through this transition stage with effective communication and working in partnership with the children, their parents/carers and other multiagency professionals.

This handbook will also look at the proposed outcomes that practitioners, would like to achieve from effective communication and positive relationships through partnerships, with the idea to improve the quality of care, communication and working together during children's transitions from Flying Start to Nursery. By the end of this handbook, it is hoped that practitioners will have more in-depth and holistic knowledge of how to meet children's needs during transitions, what transitions are, the need for communication and partnerships, suggestions on interventions along with proposed outcomes.



Nursery Story, [image], (2021)

Transitions and communications

Transitions are stages in life, where children will move through different milestones such as going to school/playgroup or going through changes at home for example moving house or welcoming a new baby. Transitions could also be as simple as going from the house to the car then on to school/park/friend's house.

Early Years Matters (EYM), (no date), mentions that transitions are not one single event that will just happen and is an opportunity for growth and different learning opportunities for children, this can be exciting for children but also an uncertain time due to different surroundings, expectations and procedures, as practitioners are in a position to be able to support children through this transitional stage from one setting to the next, along with supporting their parents/carers. The EYM, (no date), states that "Transition has been described as an ongoing journey rather than a destination", this is further supported by Brooker, L. (2008), who mentions that Fabian and Dunlop (2002) and Pentriswsky *et al* (2005), both describe transitions as an ongoing change, process and adaptation of going from one setting to another setting. Reflecting upon these meanings of transitions, it shows that transition is not one singular event but

During this transition stage it is important that we are able to communicate effectively, practitioners can do this by developing: -

- Proficient listening skills
- Being able to communicate with others as equals
- Having a supportive approach without becoming interfering
- Avoiding any subtle negative messages
- Having the ability to adapt their communication skills to different people and situations

(Ward, 2010)

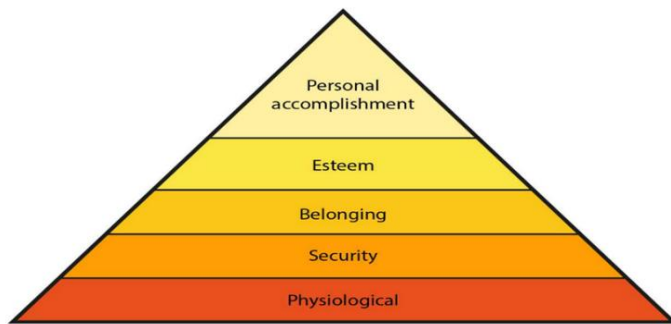
The needs of the child

Practitioners must keep in mind the child's right (article 12) to have a voice and express an opinion on matters that affect them and have their views taken seriously, practitioners must remember to take the child's age and developmental maturity into account when communicating about the transition to Nursery (Trodd, L. 2013).

Furthermore, having knowledge of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), provides practitioners with the ability to support children's rights during transitional stages, practitioners are also able to support Article 13, children's right to freedom of expression, being able to have access to information (within the law) and be able to express their thoughts and feelings ([UNCRC summary-1 1.pdf \(unicef.org.uk\)](#), no date).

Practitioners will also be aware of the UNCRC's articles 28 and 29 which state that children have the right to education and the goals of education. By having this awareness of the UNCRC, provides opportunities to empower the children through play, support open communication, helping practitioners to answer any queries parents/carers may have about the transition and the benefit of attending nursery, whilst promoting children's rights

Pestalozzi (1801), states that children have an equal right to education and should be able to have the scope to be able to gain from it. Pestalozzi also states that traditional education and learning had little concern about children's interest and experiences and that it was tedious, he contemplated that children's natural capabilities should be fostered organically through nature and encouraged to examine and explore solid and physical objects. This is shown through Flying Start settings, where practitioners are encouraged to plan on a daily basis, adapting planning to the child's voice, observations of children's play, evaluation of the activities, children's interests and developmental stage. Pound, (2005, p. 9) mentions that Pestalozzi stated that "Progress from the familiar to the new should be in a loving and secure environment". He mentions that security in the home helps to give children the origin of their reality and is the foundation of children's learning and that providing children with social interaction, love and work can form the basis of children's development (Pound, L. 2005). Similarly, Maslow (1943) developed a hierarchy of needs (see image below): -



Maslow © 50MINUTES.com

Image from Pichère, P.
and Cadiat, A.-C. (2015)

The first stage of Maslow's theory is Physiological needs, in the simplest terms, this is the children's basic needs and functions relating to personal survival, for example eating, drinking, breathing, personal care, to name a few. These needs are important as they help form the basis of children's personal needs, meeting these basic needs within Maslow's hierarchy will enable children to progress to a sense of security and belonging.

This is similar to Pestalozzi as both mention that children's need for love, social interaction and affection will form the basis for children's sense of security and belonging, children will be able to develop a strong sense of self, confidence in exploration of their environment that will benefit them holistically as they will feel comfortable and safe in various environments to explore and form new relationships and learn new developmental skills with confidence. Both Pestalozzi and Maslow mentions that this is where practitioners and parents/carers will need to take the social nature of the human being in to account, they are able to facilitate play and social opportunities that will build on trust, consistency, personal interests of the child promoting a positive support system during transitions.

These stages of Maslow's hierarchy of needs along with Pestalozzi's theory can relate to children during the transition period from Flying Start to Nursery, as this transitional stage can be a time of excitement, it can also be an anxious and uncertain stage for children. As practitioners have developed strong and positive bonds with children through a keyworker system, alongside working with parents/carers, having the knowledge to meet the needs and rights of the child, children will hopefully have a sense of belonging and safety that will support them throughout the transition, whilst continuing to meet their needs of love, affection and social interaction. This will promote positive interactions, provide them with the tools and confidence to move through future transitions. Furthermore, Maslow mentions that, the needs that children will go through will depend on the individual wishes of the child and will take any form as long as they met the child's

wishes, he touches on that the needs of each level will need to be satisfied before moving on the next, for example someone may lack the sense of belonging if they feel unsafe and uncertain during a transition stage (Pichère, P. and Cadiat, A.-C. 2015).



Katai's Child Development Center [Image] (no date)

The role of the adult

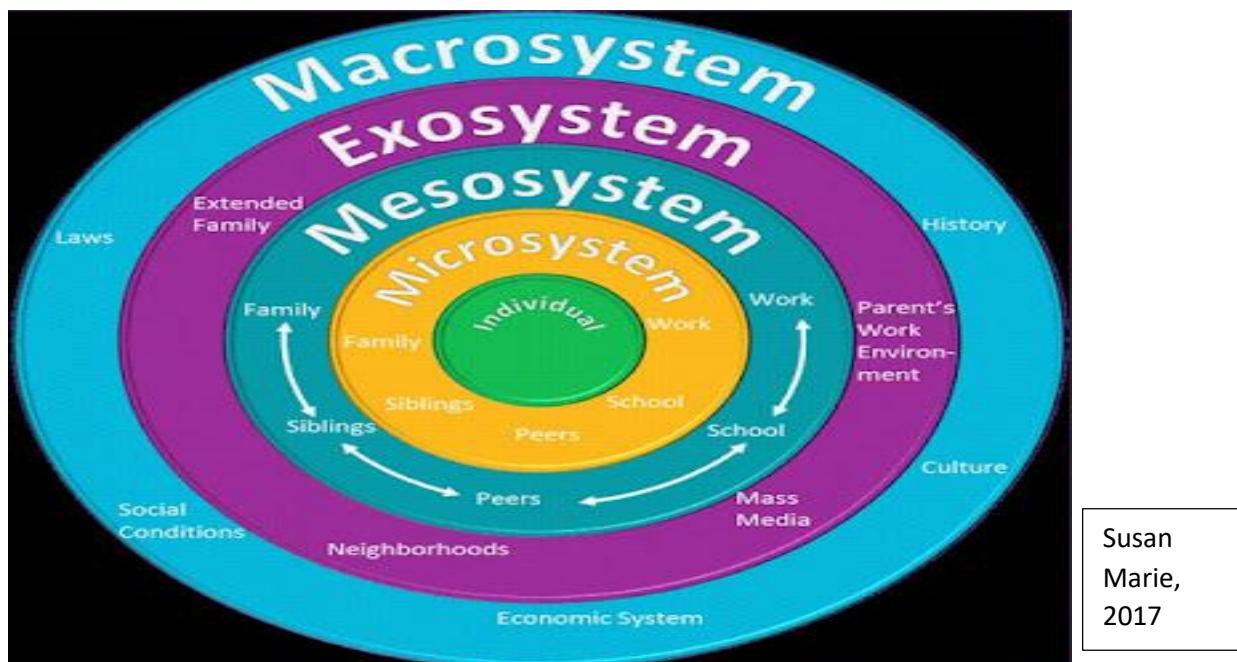
The role of the adult will be to develop a positive and knowledgeable relationship with children and their parents/carers. Children will be allocated a keyworker when they initially start at Flying Start, with the purpose to develop a secure and encouraging relationship to help the children transition in to the setting. This relationship will continue to grow and become stronger during their time at the setting and will support them during the transition in to nursery. These bonds will have formed over social interactions, observations, planning for the child's interest with their rights and needs kept at the forefront of practitioners minds.

Through the keyworker system, practitioners are able to support and monitor the initial transition to nursery, working with parents/carers and other team members. Keyworkers are able to hand over information through one page profiles, I am Threes, all about me forms, these will include information such as children's interest, practical needs, emotional/social support, any additional support with either general or additional needs, these will be completed with the children and their parents/carers. Practitioners can also support and help their key children get ready for the transition to their nursery school by talking about the visits, discussing teachers, that they are going to see what's available, what they may need to wear and who they are going to school with. Staff will also need sufficient time to gather information about the child, such as if they are vulnerable/additional learning needs and have the opportunity to liaise with other professionals whom may be involved. (Flying Start, May 2017). In some settings, practitioners may also go over with the children to visit the nursery in addition to visits with parents/carers, as well as the nursery teachers may visit the Flying Start setting to meet the children.

The keyworker system embraces the attachment theory; attachment theory originates from the theorist John Bowlby (1958). Bowlby began to observe children through an evolutionary point of view rather than a psychological viewpoint. Bowlby put forward that children, with their reliance on their mothers, will develop certain behaviours that will keep their mothers near them. This is similar to Maslow's hierarchy of needs as Bowlby theorised that "...these behaviours were essential to infants' survival..." (Watson, M. 2018, p.15-40). In essence, Bowlby's attachment theory suggests that when a caregiver interacts

with a child and supports their development and meets their needs, this becomes necessary to giving them a successful life. Being able to socialise through interactions, children are able to develop the skills they need to grow but also gives them a sense of self belief and a belief in those around them, Bowlby suggests that the way children develop progress is the result of children's nature and the caregivers (or mother's) behaviours.

In 1979, Urie Bronfenbrenner developed his theory on the ecology of human development, following five environmental stages that children will move through, as shown in the image below: -



Within Bronfenbrenner's theory first environmental stage that is closest to the child, the Microsystem, consists of family, siblings, peers, school and work. The environments that will be most common for the child will be either the classroom or home, these will enable children to have multiple interactions with not only family members but also friends/peers, community members such a neighbours, childcare practitioners and teachers. Within these first environmental stage children will develop an initial understanding of social interactions, rules and behaviours. Bronfenbrenner advocates that within the Mesosystem stage the regularity and quality of the relationships formed enriched children's development when strong links have helped form strong links from the Microsystem. Aubrey and Riley (2009, p. 154) mention that Bronfenbrenner later observed that "... the individual as being key to how interactions within the environment influenced development.". In comparison to Bowlby, Maslow and Pestalozzi's theory, Bronfenbrenner also supports that social interactions have

a benefit to children's development, helping provide connections, sense of security and belonging, along with a sense of autonomy and self.

When comparing Bronfenbrenner's theory to Bowlby's theory and the Keyworker System mentioned by Flying Start, they are all quite similar in suggesting that having strong relationships with a key adult has a positive effect of children's holistic wellbeing and development, this can be beneficial for children during the transition stage from a Flying Start to Nursery, ensuring that the transition is communicated effectively to the child, parents/carers and other professionals involved and is as smooth as possible with the child's best interests at the centre and that their sense of security, belonging and autonomy is not hindered.



Real Play [image] (2018)

Partnerships

Developing partnerships with parents/carers is not only beneficial for the child whilst at the setting but also valuable to the wider community. By developing a trusting relationship with parents/carers can help practitioners to provide opportunities for support and information, this could lead to more proactive and extensive support for the whole family (Wilson, 2016). This can start as the base for a solid partnership, with the children's needs, rights and development, at the forefront of transitioning to Nursery. Practitioners are able to work with other multi-agencies such as social services, speech and language, inclusion to help support children through the transition period working closely with parents/carers and children to provide as much information about the child to support them on their school journey. Wheeler and Connor (2009, p. 38) mention that's "Davis, Day and Bidmead (2002) suggests a partnership model based on the Parent Adviser Approach". Some key elements of the partnership model are as follows: -

-  Having open communication with all parties
-  A common aim
-  A mutual respect for all those involved
-  Being able to work together

The Parents, Early Years and Learning (PEAL) team holds the belief that the partnership model can be supportive for practitioners and parents/carers as it encourages greater involvement for parents/carers in their children's learning (Wheeler and Connor 2009).

The partnership model can also be applied to the child's transition to nursery school, as it requires everyone to work together towards the common aim of helping the child transition smoothly from one setting to another. This also requires good communication skills during the whole process as parents/carers and the child will have developed a sense of trust with the key person and will likely feel confident that the practitioner will be able to communicate the child's needs and what support may be needed within the nursery setting. This may also involve working with other multi-agencies such as speech and language or inclusion who may have been working alongside the child, parent/carer and practitioner during the child's time at the Flying Start setting and will be able to communicate additional

information that can support the child's holistic developmental needs along with an individual developmental plan or one-page profile.

Lumsden (2014), mentions that Harrison *et al.* (2003) stated "that there is no single, agreed definition...", for the meaning of partnerships, although, it is also mentioned that the term partnership is sometimes interchanged with the term collaboration. They propose that some characteristics to keep in mind for successful partnership: -

- ✚ Having a common aim and acknowledging a shared vision for an agreed outcome
- ✚ Acknowledging and respecting others and their contributions to the partnership
- ✚ Being flexible to the needs of others for example different cultural needs or values that may arise during the partnership
- ✚ Have agreed communication systems and exchange information
- ✚ Establish the agreed communication systems between the relevant agencies
- ✚ Sharing any resources and/or skills

(Lumsden 2014).

In comparison, this is similar to the partnership model and highlights the importance of communication and having strategies to support children and their families through this transitional stage. Having these key ideas that are mentioned in the partnership model and by Lumsden (2014), by forming a trusting and strong relationship with the children and their families, practitioners are able to provide individualised and effective support to children during this stage and be able to implement various communication methods along with age and maturity appropriate support for the child.



(Dreamstime, [Image], no date)

Intervention

Within this section, there are some methods and activities that will assist the transition period, hopefully making it as successful as possible. This section will look at the communication of information between both settings and the families and any practical steps that can be taken.

The National Minimum Standards (NMS) talks about Standard One which concerns information about the childcare service and requires that parents/carers will be given all the information required, so that they can make an informed decision about the services they need within the childcare sector, this can help parents/carers and children through the transition period to Nursery as parents/carers can access information about the nursery their child is transitioning to and are able to ensure the nursery is the right fit for their child, also enabling parents/carers and practitioners to be able to communicate to the child about the routine, the staff and activities and resources of the nursery setting they will be attending (Care Inspectorate Wales, April 2016, p. 14). These standards provide settings with guidance on the minimum standards that are required of the, setting are able to develop their own methods of these standards and inspire settings to develop best practice both nationally and internationally.

The Te Whariki curriculum emphasis the children's confidence in exploring their environment, expression of their ideas, developing the ability to express themselves and their emotional needs and have a sense of belonging (mentioned by theorists Maslow and Pestalozzi) and an ownership of their environment, wellbeing and own situations. "The early childhood curriculum reflects the holistic way children learn and grow" (Lee. W; Carr, M; Soutar, B and Mitchell, L. 2013, p 58). This helps to promote empowerment for the child to develop relationships and life skills they will help the child to thrive

Foundation Phase and Flying Start are curriculum's in Wales that have been put on place for babies and children to have an opportunity to experience play opportunities through first hand experiences, the opportunity to develop through quality care and education and have an equal start in life. (Welsh Government, revised 2015). Some supportive interventions could be: -

- ❖ Facilitate opportunities for parents/carers with opportunities to ask questions and feel relaxed and confident to express any concerns that they might have regarding the transition.
- ❖ Communicate with parents/carers about visits to the nursery school that will provide children and parents/carers, providing the chance to meet the teachers and start to develop relationship with them, children should be provided with play opportunities to familiarise themselves with the areas of learning and activities for when they start.
- ❖ Provide children with the nursery routine at can be discussed at the Flying Start and at home to help provide familiarity to the setting
- ❖ Ensure that children have plenty of settling in time for example a minimum of two weeks to allow them to settle in the nursery routine before being left for the whole session
- ❖ I am threes, one page profiles, all about me forms can support nursery staff to facilitates children's needs during visits to the nursery
- ❖ Some nursery schools may also visit the Flying Start setting to meet the children, furthermore practitioners may also have the opportunity to visit the nursery setting with the children



Intervention

Oasis Academy: Wintringham, [image], (2023)

Proposed Outcomes

Ideally the preferred outcome during this transition is a child that is happy and confident, who is engaged in the process and well prepared, both emotional and socially, to move through this transition to the next stage of their educational journey in addition to being able to trust those around them to support their individual needs.

Practitioner are able to support this through observation and recording the child's achievements, facilitating staff with the opportunity to create a glimpse of how the child is developing, recording their interests, stage of learning and ideas. Froebel mentions that if an adult is good at observing children "... and able to tune in to a child's biological and social, cultural and community needs ..." (Bruce, 2012, p. 158) they will be influential to children's learning. Similarly, the founder of Reggio Emilia approach, Loris Malaguzzi, promotes documentation of children's development through observations, enabling practitioners to understand the child's individualised learning, observing and guiding their interests, providing child with opportunities to reflect on and understand their learning (Thornton and Brunton, 2007). This allows practitioners to support as well as promote children's security, autonomy and belonging during the transition stage, meeting their basic developmental needs and rights to explore and move to the next educational journey.

Observations help practitioners to acknowledge and respond to children's developmental needs and provide next step opportunities, they can adapt to the child's individual needs during the transition to Nursery as they have been able to develop a foundation of trust, care and familiarity and further solidified this through observations to meet interests and needs, enabling in them to communicate these to support the child and parents/carers during the transition and support the nursery staff to also support the child to the next stage of their educational journey. Having a holistic assessment of the child enables the child in the moment to make positive connections between home and the setting and facilitates planning for the next steps in their learning. Holistic assessment enables practitioners to be able to help provide the child acquire the skills and confidence they will need to help them through subsequent transitions in life.

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