

The Importance of Communication in Early Years Transitions



A Guide for Practitioners

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Introduction

This handbook is for practitioner to use and support them through practice, it goes through the process of the child development and links to key theories and theorists. It will offer knowledge support and advice and an insight into transitions. Its focus will be on the transition from nursery into Reception.

Transitions are important in a child's life and can impact their development and emotional wellbeing. Transitions can impact a child's resilience to change if transitions aren't dealt with sensitively. Practitioners play a vital role in early years transitions, such as forming relationships with parents/carers and with other practitioners. These relationships help to emphasise communication. Positive relationships can ease anxiety in transitions as relationships will help practitioner meet a child's needs by understanding the needs of the specific child. (Ferguson 2020)

Transitions are changes and moves that happen in a person's life, such as the transition from home to nursery or from primary to secondary school. Transitions are always happening; however, some transitions can be challenging, having support from parents and practitioners can help ease transitions. (Parentzone Scotland – No Date)

Transitions are a process and the key to transitions is ensuring a high-quality experience for children, through communication between practitioners and parents to support the transition from nursery to reception. Children have many experiences from 3 to 4 such as family day care, multiple nurseries and toddler groups so to transition from multiple settings to full time reception could pose challenges as it's not easy and happy for all children. (Birth to 5 matters)

However, transitions are not only between different settings, but it also includes transitions to and from different parts in the structure of a day for example from different rooms within one setting, or from lunchtime back into the classroom. Transitions that are handled in a sensitive way can show positive outcomes from a child, and this can help develop their resilience to transitions later on in life. (Birth to 5 matters)

Children can be vulnerable in some transitions as sometime the fear of the unknown can take over, and if a child lacks confidence, or is moving from somewhere new, or a child with disabilities or specific needs, the transition and change can pose too much change and too much uncertainty and can affect a child emotional wellbeing. Liaising and building relationships between parents and practitioners in these situations are important as it can help ease some of the emotion strain on a child, as it gives practitioners the chance to learn about a children's specific needs and use it to help ease the transition period. (Birth to 5 matters)

“Transitions are opportunities for professional dialogue both within and between settings, as well as with the home. It is the responsibility of all early years practitioners to ensure that children feel welcomed, gain a sense of belonging and are helped to settle happily.”

(Birth to 5 matters)

The Role of the Adult

The practitioner has a role in supporting children through transition and change. Because transitions can be so variety and sometime different to each child it is important for the practitioner to take time to communication with other practitioners and families to learn about the and any specific needs they may have, as well as if there are any other changes happening in a child's life. Having a settling in period can help support the child with the transition, it gives the child the opportunity to learn and get used to their new setting and surrounding and also gives children and practitioners to form relationships with each other. Forming relationships with the families of a child helps to give practitioners a better understanding of a child's life, such as their likes and dislikes, and their specific needs. This can help ease the anxiety in a transition. ()

Piaget's theory talks about cognitive development, and how a child's intelligence changes as a child grows. There is 4 stages to Piaget's theory,

Sensorimotor stage: birth to 2 years

Preoperational stage: 2 years to 7 years

Concrete operational stage: 7 years to 11 years

Formal Operational stage: 12 years and up

Each stage is a different stage of a child's development, and a child's thinking and type of intelligence is different at each stage. A child goes through the stages in the same order but not necessarily at the same rate. The child's development is determined through the biological maturation and an interaction within an environment. Piaget states that children should have the freedom to explore and discover independently. (McLeod 2022)

However, Vygotsky states the children learn by their social interactions for example learning and expanding their knowledge from peers and adults who are more 'knowledgeable'. He believed that the culture and environment have an impact on a child's cognitive development. (McLeod 2022)

NSPCC states that Bowlby's attachment theory looks at the importance of a child's emotional bond/attachment to their parents/ carers. Parents, carers and practitioners are responsible for meeting a child's needs, having an emotional bond or attachment to that child can help to meet their needs. Forming attachments in a child's life is important as it builds their relationships, interaction, and trust. During a child's development attachment can be formed in multiple ways:

Before Birth – bonds formed before birth have positive impacts on relationships formed after birth.

Birth to 6 weeks – providing nurturing environments and responding to the child's needs can have a positive impact on attachments in a child's life.

6 weeks to 6-8 months – this time is when a child prefers the parent/carer over others.

6-8 months till 18months to 2 years – at this stage attachment can be strong towards parents/ carers and when apart the child can develop separation anxiety.

18months till 2 years onwards – children become less dependent on parents/ carers.

(NSPCC 2021)

The Needs of the Child

In transitions an adult plays a vital role on the child's development. Practitioners play a big part on a child's development, as the practitioner has the role of ensuring well being support such as food, emotional and physical support. Children learn through interactions from practitioners and families. Practitioners in school such as teachers or support staff have a role of providing structural support to the social side of a child. Child often rely on a cycle of school day such as the routines, expectations, and the familiar faces. Sometimes the structured day a child experiences will need to change, in this instance communication and relationships are vital. (Future learn – no date)

Banduras social learning theory states that observation and modelling is an important part of how and why children learn. Bandura theory focuses on an experience within an environment and how children learn through observing and mimicking behaviours. To benefit from social learning factors needs include attention, retention, motivation, and reproduction. Learning behaviours from observations don't always need to be visual it can be listening and verbal instructions. Behaviour learnt is not only from environmental factors, but it can also be a person's mental state and motivation state that can impact whether a behaviour is learnt. (Cherry 2022)

Adults have a role of supporting children, they support children with likes and dislikes, and support their choices and decisions. Adults help to build connections between school and home, as well as connections between the community such as nurseries. Its an adults role to understand children through communication, observations, behaviours and actions. Adults can support children to express their confidence by communicating, using expressions, and sharing ideas. Adults are responsible in creating environments that support learners. Children thrive in Environments that supports communication such as speaking and listening, also supports a child's emotional and physical wellbeing. Building on a child's knowledge is beneficial by supporting and encouraging them to further their learning and encouraging their development. The new curriculum helps adults to encourage children to be ambitious, curious, independent, and capable learners. The role of an adult also includes enabling children to have the freedom of environments and the freedom to explore and play to enhance their learning and encourage them to be creative and imaginative. By modelling to children that adults have a joyful approach to learning it will impact the child's engagement and interaction and behaviour towards the learning. (Welsh Government 2023)



(Fisher 2018)

Partnerships

Bronfenbrenner's ecological system talks about a child's development referring it to the development as a complex system of relationships. He states that development not only comes from the environment but looking the larger scale of the relationships within the environment. Bronfenbrenner ecological system is divided up into 5 different sections. The micro system is the most influential on development as it combines environment with family and school.

- The Microsystem
- The Mesosystem
- The Exosystem
- The Macrosystem
- The Chronosystem

(Guy-Evans 2020)

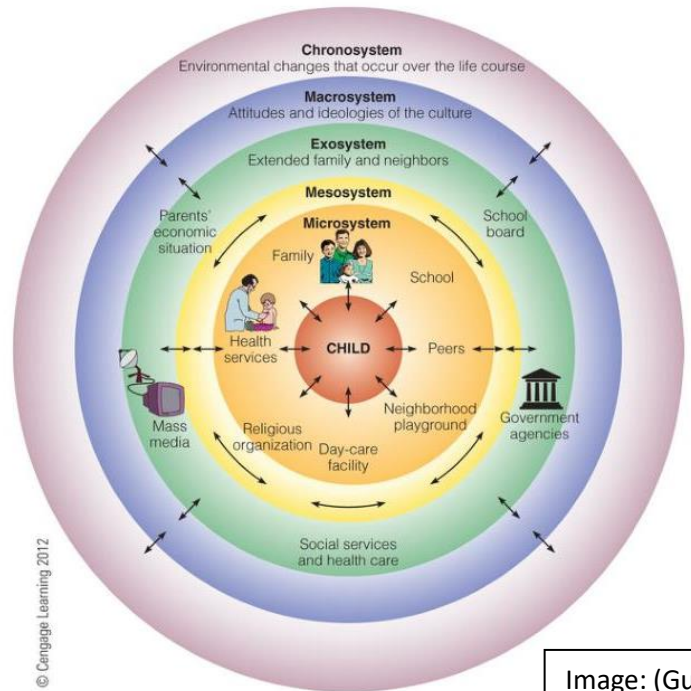


Image: (Guy-Evans 2020)

a school environment building relationships can be vital to a child's development, interacting with other children encourages positive social relationships. As well as relationships with adults, positive relationships between a child and practitioner can have a great impact on communication skills and can support language development. The communication between a child and practitioner in a setting is not always verbal, communication comes in other forms such as body language, facial expressions, and actions. These other types of communication can be vital to someone who maybe be non-verbal or deaf. So to over come barrier, thing like objects, visual pictures, hand gestures and facial expressions are so important. (Gov.uk no date)

the interactions children have with practitioners can have an impact on a child's experience. Practitioners working with other professionals has a massive impact on a child's development, as well as support the child's family. When working with other professionals having regular communication is important and having meeting to discuss progress or issues should be in place to develop the support for a child. Also making connection with other professionals about a child can help that child gain the support they may need. (Kelly 2016)

the transition from a nursery into a reception class can be seen as a milestone and a big change for children, often the change may be unrecognised by some adults, so the correct preparations, communication and support can help to ease the transition for children. The change can be excited and a change to recognise growth, however for others it can be a challenging and daunting time. The transition should be seen as a process, where children, parents and practitioners work together. Preparation is vital, as well as having good communication between the 2 settings in this case the

nursery and the reception practitioner. Also knowing about the children prior to the transition to help use their likes, needs and interests to encourage a positive transition and catering activities to suit the children's needs. Giving the children more practical activities giving them the freedom to explore the environment and surroundings as well as giving them the freedom to interact with others. (Early years matter 2023)



Image- (South Leeds life 2020)

Interventions

When a child transitions to a new setting it needs to be handled sensitively, by having plans and intervention in place these can help to ease a transition on a child. Working with families are a vital part of the transition to ensure a child's needs are met. Having policies and procedures in place can help support the process of a transition. Liaising with the parents helps a process of transition massively, communication and face to face interaction are beneficial so by inviting the parents into a setting to view the environment as well as meeting with the practitioners that will be working with and supporting the children. This lays the foundation of building positive relationships. Preparations to support a child within settings can include role playing the transition, having circle time giving the children a chance to share feelings and emotions, also a move up session giving the child a real experience of what the change will look like. Encouraging a child's independence will help support them in the transition into reception class. Making sure contact details and information is up to date and also completing one-page profiles helps to give the practitioner an insight into the children and their likes and interests. (The Educator UK 2017)

As a practitioner supporting a child through transition from a nursery to school is important as its big changes but also the little transition within the change needs to be remembered, for example, starting to have school dinners in school. Explaining the transition through a story or a form of play can help give a child a better understanding of what is going to happen. Observing the child and getting to know them will help you to understand a child better. (Pacey - No date)

The Reggio Emilia approach to learning focuses on the image of the child being the most important factor in learning. Its not about teaching the child the knowledge of the world, he states that the child already had the potential and curiosity to explore and engage within the world and takes responsibility for their own learning. In a Reggio Emilia approach expressive arts is a foundation of learning, through activities such as dramatic play, puppetry, painting, dancing, music, and creative writing. Children are very expressive, and imagination plays a key part in a child's knowledge and understanding. Reggio believes that by a child using all their senses it gives them a greater understanding through observation and experiences. Reggio describe teaching and learning as a pedagogy of relationships, and it shows that children learn through making connections with experiences and this is developed by making interactions with people within the environment. (National improvement hub 2022)

Proposed Outcomes

The new curriculum for Wales supports to enable and support learner to develop and become the four purposes which are:

- Ambitious, capable learners, ready to learn throughout their lives
- Enterprising, creative contributors, ready to play a full part in life and work
- Ethical, informed citizens of Wales and the world
- Healthy, confident individuals, ready to lead fulfilling lives as valued members of society

The new curriculum promotes exploring and children being at the heart of the learning. The framework supports Practitioners in developing an integrated approach to learning. The new curriculum emphasis on the progression of learners and giving learner the opportunities to explore and time to reflect. Welsh Government (2020)

The new curriculum supports learners in their environments by giving them the freedom to work at their own pace. Holistic and meaningful learning is vital this is achieved through enabling adults, enabling, experiences, and enabling environments. Being able to understand a child's development is vital for planning and delivering the curriculum. The adult has a role of creating safe environments that children can express themselves within in a positive way and support learners with transitions.

Observing children helps practitioners develop a deeper understanding of a child and their needs. It's an adult's role to provide children with an environment that is promoting communication, its building on children's prior knowledge, and encouraging children to have a joyful attitude towards learning and giving them the freedom to be curious. Learning experiences should give children opportunities of uninterrupted learning, the learning should mimic real life authentic situations and have choice in their learning. The learning experiences need to support a child's holistic development and to support them building on their knowledge, children should always have access to indoor and outdoor opportunities and have the control to support their choices to be critical thinkers. (Welsh gov 2021)

Observations in early years is important to track a child's progression, observations give practitioners the chance to see what a child likes to do and what they are learning through their play. Children have a variety of abilities and talents, and different traits can show with different scenarios. Observation also gives the practitioner the opportunity to plan the next stages of learning based on the observations and interest and this process will build on children prior experiences and support them in progressing. This ensures a start point for holistic approach and ensuring that the child's needs is always at the centre. (Early Years matters- no date)

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