Katie Cornelius-Davies
2315284
3000 words

The Early Years Handbook-

All About Transitions

(Source: Send Supported, 2023)

(Source: West Barnes Primary, 2023)

Katie Cornelius-Davies
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Introduction

Transitions can be challenging but a vital milestone, no matter what age you are. Transitions can be a difficult and emotional time in an individual's life; however, it is important for an individual to go through to build strength and courage as they face upcoming challenges and life experiences. Transitions in an early years setting can be varied depending on the child's situations. For example, transitions in school may occur from going from home life to attending school, moving classes or from a primary setting to a secondary school. It is essential to remember that transitions do not only arise within an education setting but can also transpire within a home environment too, such as moving houses, bereavement, or divorce. Birth to 5 Matters (2021) and Education Scotland (2023) agrees by mentioning how transitions do not only include movements but can also include a change in routine to more of a structural, scheduled plan. For example, having a set time for lunch. Many children find these situations a positive aspect in life and tend to look forward to moving on. However, other children can find this time a challenging experience which is where they seek comfort and support. To ensure all transitions go smoothly and comfortable it is important to greet the children in a positive manner, having an inviting and nurturing classroom while having the staff ready to play, and accomplish goals together.

Within this handbook, we will be discussing transitions from home life moving onto a nursery setting within a primary school. Moving onto a nursery setting means that there is structure and changes to a child's life as their day-to-day routine changes. During this period there are scenarios children and families may come across, such as home visits and communication with new staff members, outside agencies as well as getting involved within the setting by building relationships with practitioners. Attending a nursery from the age of three can be very beneficial for children as they start to build friendships and relationships with different adults and children. This can be beneficial as they start to feel comfortable around others early on in life. This can help when it is time to move on, the fear will not be so significant as they have already gained knowledge and understanding about what is going to happen during transitions. Early Years Alliance (2023) adds starting school is a major transition for children due to separation from families, it is essential to remember children need to prepare for this big change to be able to approach the transitions within the school setting with confidence.

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Role of the Adult

Structural Learning (2023) and Simply Psychology (2023) agree there are different attachment theories and aspects within transitions. Attachment ranges from secure attachment, ambivalent, avoidant, and disorganised attachment- all which you will see within a nursery classroom. Bowlby's attachment theory proposes that emotional and social development of a child is completely shaped by relationships with their primary caregivers. If relationships are not built, then it is suggested to lead onto mental health and behavioural problems. Simply Psychology (2023) adds, Vygotsky's ZPD theory refers the differences between what a pupil can do without help and what they can achieve with support, guidance, and encouragement from a skilled practitioner. The theory indicates task should be beyond the learners' individual abilities but attainable and accomplished with support. Vygotsky believed that a child should be academically pushed to enable them to build the knowledge to accomplish bigger and better activities. This is for the role of the adult to achieve every day to ensure children's needs are being met and pushed to obtain more than what their capable of, together!

Essex County Council (2023) suggests the role of the adult while working with children includes many different values, experiences, and individual skills. This is extremely important when a child is transitioning from home life to a nursery environment, it is vital you have a variety of interaction skills with the children during planned and child-initiated play, and activities. Communicating and modelling language while interacting with children is vital to be able to build upon their skills. It is important to show, explain, demonstrate, explore ideas while encouraging, questioning, recalling, and providing a narrative for what they are doing as you start to set challenges, and boundaries. Within the nursery it is essential to be able to communicate with staff, parents/carers, children, multiagency workers, and communities. Multi-agencies may be called or asked for during different situations and it is important to be able to pass on all details and stories that you are aware of. Communicating and interacting with the community can be helpful if you are looking for support, school trips or visits from outside organisations. During all communication and interacts it is vital that you remember to keep all confidentiality around the setting and certainly outside your school!

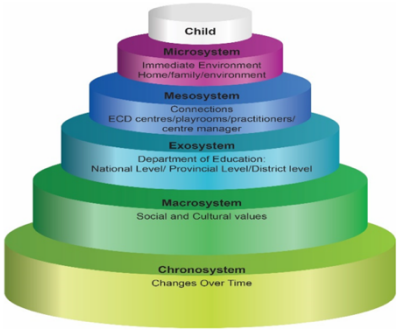
Communication may include linear (one way where feedback is not included), transactional (a two-way conversation) and interactional (social media, AI or communication apps like Seesaw or DOJO). Online communication can be very positive as you are able to share your day-to-day activities with parents, post photographs of children's learning, play or interactions with staff and children or to send updates of day-to-day information.

Communication with families and children can also be a challenging aspect if there are language barriers. If English is not the first language for families, families can find it extremely difficult and can feel distant from practitioners within the classroom. If this situation occurs then there are ways of interaction that can

be put in place, such as video clips to physically see the subject you are explaining/talking about, physically showing them the items you are wanting to use, and the use of technology. Technology can be used by translation apps. Some families may also be bilingual – for example the child may be able to understand some English used to be able to translate information given to the parents who are unable to communicate. GOV.UK (2023) suggests that developing relationships through communication enables practitioners, families, and children to support with personal, social, and emotional development as well as early literacy skills. During conversations with parents/carers it is essential to remember that you listen to all they have to say by giving good eye contact, empathy, being considerate in the information they are giving and to present different techniques and ways to talk to the many individuals.

Building positive relationships is a curriculum priority within the school setting and must be the aim with every family. Building relationships means families need to build trust and be certain that the class is within a stable environment. School should be a safe and happy place for children at all times. Welsh Government (2014) also agrees that leaders need to be able to challenge staff in terms of how they form and build relationships as well as how they interact with families. It is important to review existing beliefs and assumptions especially if they hold a deficit view of families and carers. All schools and childcare settings place families and children at the centre of school life.

Theories say how children and families are at the heart of the role of the adult as the practitioners take care while supporting the children every day. Bronfenbrenner's theory agrees with this by always putting the child first in all situatons. Before looking at immediate environment, home life and families which then leads to connections within the early years setting such as a nursery classroom as they play and learn with practitioners in the department of education. Social and cultural values are also important to remember as the cultures make the children and families who they are and how they want to be treated. All this changes and builds over time as the children and families start to feel comfortable.



(Source: Bipath K, Tebekana J and Venketsamy R, 2021)

Introducing Bronfenbrenner (2017) (Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 2006, p. 797) suggests that Bronfenbrenner always characterised each child as being unique and has experiences which generates an individual life story. He suggested that the interaction between a practitioner and learner must be effective, regular, and progressive to help develop a child's life as they progress and process the relations between settings.

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The Needs of the Child

Inverclyde Council (no date) believes that the curriculum for excellence cannot be delivered without building good relationships first. Children should feel happy, safe, and respected while being included within the learning environment as practitioners promote positive behaviour. Effective learning and teaching are relying on the nurturing of positive relationships through communication and interactions.
To be able to accomplish this it is important that the child has a safe space that makes them feel comfortable. Building positive relationships with families is important, this can be vital for the children to see there are positive interactions and trust between home and school life to help the child settle.
Donaldson (2015) also agrees by adding, settings in Wales need a different kind of teachers and staff members who understands why and how to work with children. Staff needs to know how to work with parent/carers to ensure they trust and know who to turn to for support.
Home visits can be very comforting for the child as a member of staff goes to see them in their safe and relaxing home. This can be successful opportunities for the staff to see the child when they are comfortable and to see what interests they have. Home visits can also give a good picture of family backgrounds as they think of ways to help and support families when needed. Ark Start (2022) confirms that home visits can be one of the most important starts to a child's school life. Most importantly there are many opportunities for children to build a relationship with practitioners within their homes where they feel safe and secure. This enables the professional to see the child's speech and play for when they become under their care.
It is recommended that a child visits the school for settling in sessions for a couple of hours. Within these hours you as the practitioner can communicate effectively with the child on their level to notice the different interests they have. During this it is important to make sure all staff members within the classroom are available so the children can interact with all members of the team. Within this time a small amount of group activities could be going ahead as they start building relationships with the children.
Children may find it comforting to bring in something from home to make them feel as safe and as happy as possible, bringing something to school can also help with any attachment issues. Children may find a new routine and leaving their families extremely challenging. By bringing in their comforter can help them rely more on the soft toy or blanket rather than their families for the short time.
Visual timetables can be critical to help the children build their routine and made aware of what is happening next, this is also essential for some children who have additional learning needs as they prepare for the day ahead. Early Childhood Education Blog (2023) and Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board (2023) builds upon the importance of group activities and visual timetables by adding small group activities are great for building healthy relationships within the classroom while regulating emotions and developing empathy. Children learn through observing how other peers resolve problems and interact.
They continue by saying using visual timetables help young children to manage their fears and anxieties by

them knowing and understand what is happening next. This takes the pressure off verbal language skills but still provides the child to process and understand the routine.

It is substantial for the children to know and begin to hear about the rights that they have while attending school. Children have many rights that are there to help and support decisions within their school life and afterwards. Article 12 says every child has the right to a voice on situations that affect them and to have their own views taken seriously in accordance with age and maturity. As you can see physiological needs is the most important part of a child's life because the items are a key part to a child's growth and development. Maslow's theory (1943) and UNCRC (2023) agrees that children should be aware of their rights and should understand what they are entitled to. By talking about them briefly at an early age helps the children to begin to understand and grow.

Maslow (1943) says that people are motivated by goal achievement. Achieving their goals allows them to meet their individual needs and wants. Needs are mentally prioritised in order of what their importance are. Less important needs must be met before the most important needs can be satisfied. We always relate and refer to Maslow's theory during transitions as it is vital when working with children that their needs are met every day and to ensure that the children are at the heart of every practitioner and everything they do. You as the professional are there to meet the children's goals with them and to push any further milestones that you can to ensure the best outcome will be accomplished for the child.

(Source: Education Library, 2021)

Play within a nursery is essential, children learn and develop every day by playing, interacting, and communicating with others. Play can enhance many skills including, maths, language, and building upon perseverance and patience. Welsh Government (2015) also says children are able to practice and consolidate their learning, play with ideas, take risks and experiment while making decisions individually or with others.

Children's brains start to develop shortly after conception and continues throughout their lifetime. Brain development can be affective by touch, sound, vision, smells, and thoughts; therefore, it is vital we take care and support the children as much as possible. Within brain development myelinisation helps established neuronal connections more efficient, whereas plasticity has the ability of the brain and change because of environment change or learning. Coulter (1995) continues songs and movement are essential for neurological exercise. Songs and speech combine rhythmic movement for children as it enables further development for their minds as well as language development and social skills.

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Partnerships

As a practitioner you work with different multi-agencies and form partnerships with organisations as well as parents. To form partnerships, you need to work together to ensure you are doing the very best for the children within your nursery. Some teams you may be working with will include parents, social workers, therapists, behaviour support team and more. Early Education (2021) continues by saying as a practitioner there are benefits while working in partnerships with parents, different agencies, and organisations. Some of the benefits you notice for parents and children are messages and advice given to families and practitioners about a child are consistent. This helps parents by feeling supported rather than singled out as well as helping them to understand that they are not alone through the difficult situations.

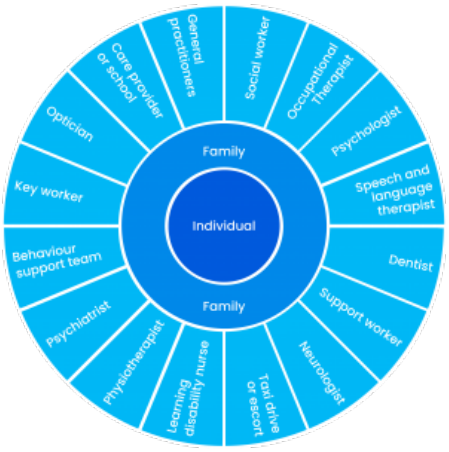
Welsh Government (2023) states that partnership working brings the diverse expertise of stakeholders to meet the individual needs of all children and to ensure smooth transitions and consistency in children's lives.

Successful partnership working draws on skills and experiences of the stakeholders to provide a holistic approach to support children's learning, care, and developmental needs. Partnerships work alongside each other to be pro-active while having different viewpoints to help the children in the best way possible. All viewpoints connect to enable the team to put a long-term plan for the child to enable the efforts to work effectively.

Families know their children best and it is vital to always listen and communicate with them effectively. Birth to 5 matters (no date) believes that parents are children's first and most enduring educators while practitioners have a responsibility to work with all families. Practitioners should consider levels of engagement to make the most of being able to relate to families.

Single parents should also be treated as an equal. Both parents should be told the same information as the other, parents' meetings should be an opportunity for both individual parties.

(Source: Medium, 2023)



(Source: The Challenging Behaviour Foundation, no date)

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Interventions

Within a transition within a nursery class there is often introduction sessions for parents, this can be a positive outcome for parents to understand and experience the environment, toys, working materials, members of staff and to communicate with other parents while asking any questions they may have. Home visits and stay and play sessions can be comforting for the children within the new environment to be able to explore, construct and play. Children can find it relaxing to be within their home environment when first meeting staff as their home is their safe place. Play sessions helps the children to engage and have contact with new children who they will be seeing daily. Raising Children Network (2023) explains that play sessions and play within a nursery helps to build confidence, feel loved, happy, and secure as well as developing intellectual skills, social skills and language and communication.

Within the setting there will be a settling in policy that will help and support you in the best way possible for the children. This policy will include many pointers and aims that will help and encourage the children when followed through to have a happier and more comfortable transition. Within this policy you may see tips of positively meeting and greeting the children and parents to ensure they are comfortable. Truly Scrumptious Nursery (2023) explains within their policy that it is beneficial that you minimise disruption to home routines as possible and taking into consideration all family backgrounds and experiences. The policies explain how important it is for families and practitioners to work together to help the child feel more confident and secure.

Within a primary school one-page profiles can used for a variety of aspects. For example, getting to know the child, background knowledge, any learning additional needs, or meetings for multi-agency meetings. Halton Children's Trust (2010) agrees by adding one-page profiles capture importance to enable practitioners to personalise and differentiate activities and learning for the individual. They enable teachers to set targets and to focus on different aspects to help the children during their transition times as they get to know the children's likes and dislikes.

(Source: Brackla Primary School, 2023)

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Proposed Outcomes

There will be many indictors that a child has successfully navigated a transition, for example a child will be happier coming into the classroom, they will be engaging, learning, and developing within their environment with members of staff. The child will be more settled as they start to want to come into nursery, will show a lack of sadness when leaving their families at the door.

Children start to make progress with development and learning aspect as well as engaging more with adults and children around them and start meeting milestones when they have successfully overcome their transition. Children will find learning easier as well as playing and learning concepts of communicating and sharing amongst themselves.

Children also start to feel safe and secure within your company, build positive relationships as they start to interact and communicate with children and staff around them.

Toneworks (2015)

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