

Script for Video: Preparing for transition to primary school

Title slide

This is a recording of a webinar which was coproduced with parents and carers in Suffolk. It is based on what families said would help them and their child prepare for the transition from an early year's setting to primary school. The majority of information we explore will be relevant for parents considering mainstream or specialist schools.

Slide 2

Moving up to primary school can be daunting for parents and children.

It's a time of great change for your child so mixed feelings are natural.

Planning and preparing for transition will help ease the process. You, your child's early years setting, and the new primary school can all play a part in supporting this.

Slide 3

This recording will explore:

What we mean by compulsory school age from slide four.

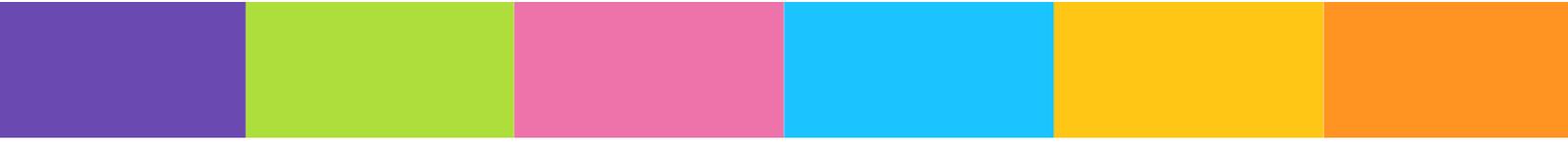
We're going to look at what is helpful for you to find out about school from slide six.

We'll explore what information is helpful to share with school before your child starts and what resources can support you and the early years setting to do this, from slide twelve.

We'll look at how to start helping your child prepare, including establishing new routines, from slide twenty-seven.

And we will explore additional considerations for children who have special educational needs or disabilities or SEND from slide forty-nine.

We have created time stamps under the description of this video on Youtube so if later you wish to watch only part of the recording again, you can click on a particular section and the video will start at that point.



Slide 4

So let's start by explaining compulsory school age.

Although most children start school in September after turning four, they don't have to be in education until they reach compulsory school age.

Children who turn five between the first of September and the 31st December reach compulsory school age on the 31st December. So they don't have to start school until the spring term.

Children who turn five between the 1st January and the 31st March reach compulsory school age on the 31st March.

Children who turn five between the 1st April and the 31st August reach compulsory school age on the 31st August so this means that the summer born children don't have to start school until a full year after they could have been admitted.

Slide 5

Now let's think about choosing a part-time or full time start.

Some schools have a staggered entry for new Reception starters, with children attending part-time at first, while other schools prefer children to attend full time from day one.

Whatever the normal procedures at your child's school are, you have the right to send them part-time until they reach compulsory school age.

The arrangements for this should be discussed with your child's school. Once your child has reached compulsory school age, they must attend full time. Later in this recording we will look at the situation where a school might suggest a part-time start for your child because of their special educational needs.

Slide 6

Let's consider what is helpful for you to find out about and find out from the new school.

Slide 7

We recommend you spend time exploring the full primary school website. A menu of information on the website is usually at the top of the home page. Different schools may post information about transition to reception under different tabs. Look for a parent/carer section to start with. There you may find a transition or a new reception tab as you can see in the examples on screen.

Slide 8

Since the pandemic, many schools have produced video tours and picture guides of their schools which can be especially helpful in supporting your child to understand what to expect and also spark their interest.

You could watch them first on your own to look out for any toys or outdoor resources you can see which you know match your child's interests. Then you can watch with your child & draw their attention to these resources and help build some excitement for their new class.

Look under class sections on the website as well; there you can often find photos of fun days like 'World Book Day' and Children in Need fundraisers which may also help build your child's interest and excitement.

Slide 9

Some schools have created videos introducing the Headteacher or key members of staff, welcoming you and your child to their school.

All schools will have some information about starting reception class on their website and it's worth exploring the full website menu.

Slide 10

If your child has special educational needs (or SEN), then you could look at the school's SEN Information report. Every school must publish this on their website and could be part of their SEN policy or published separately. The report must include:

Explaining how the school assesses SEN, how they review progress and evaluate how effective a support plan is.

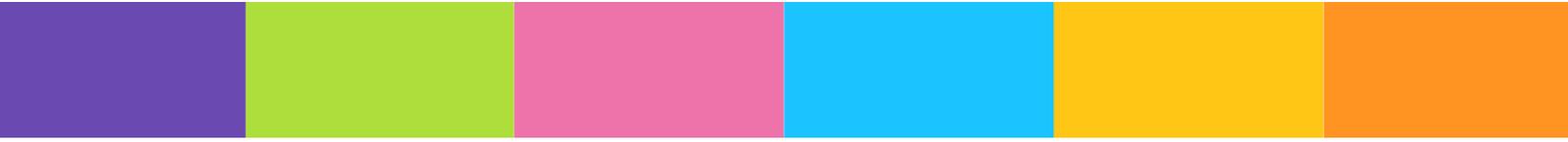
It must show how the school will involve you and your child in the process of SEN support and it must include the SENCo's details

And it must explain the school's approach to teaching pupils with special educational needs and how adaptations are made to the curriculum and the environment.

We're going to consider special educational needs in much more detail later in this recording.

Slide 11

Many schools arrange a meeting for all new parents (sometimes it's a parent evening or a half-day session and usually this is held in the summer term).



There is often a presentation which goes through the school routines and explains things like school meals and uniform and school practices etc. This is a really good opportunity to ask questions.

The [School Run website](#) has a list of [starting reception questions](#) which may help you form your own.

Slide 12

Next, we're going to think about what is most helpful to share with school before your child starts there.

Slide 13

Talk to your early years setting first to find out what preparation they have planned.

Many settings do a great deal in the summer term to help children prepare for moving up to primary school.

This might include:

Practising getting changed for PE. And they may use visual prompts like those on the screen to support this. (You can find similar prompts on the [Twinkl website](#))

They might role play using school uniform.

Often a transition visit to the primary school is planned.

And they might organise a return visit from the reception teacher.

Settings can prepare information to share with the school. This is especially important for children with additional needs which we'll look at later.

Slide 14

Early years settings can use a variety of resources to help share with school the best ways of working with your child.

You can support this process too, as you have so much knowledge about your child.

You have been making adjustments for several years to help your child to listen to you, focus on a task, to get ready to do something, to eat, to dress and to play.

All of these are skills your child will need to do in school so it's really helpful to share with the new school what you have found to be the best way of working with and communicating with your child.

Slide 15

All About Me booklets can help children share how they feel. Some settings may have their own booklet. The Inclusion Facilitator team in our county of Suffolk have created a number of free resources like this template which families and schools can google and download for free.

[Suffolk Inclusion Facilitator free resources](#)

Slide 16

Settings often fill the booklet in with a child, but your child may find it easier to do this at home with you. This is another free template which is available from the [Twinkl website](#). This organisation has a number of resources, many of which are free to download.

Slide 17

One Page Profiles can be especially helpful as they focus on a few key areas.

If you've never seen one before, here are a couple of examples on screen.

[Sheffkids variety of one-page-profile templates](#)

[Helen Sanderson Associates](#) (Social enterprise with lots of free person centred resources and one-page-profile templates to download)

Although they look like simple summaries, they can be very effective in supporting children and young people to share their views and feelings and are used a lot in primary and secondary schools and also post 16 settings.

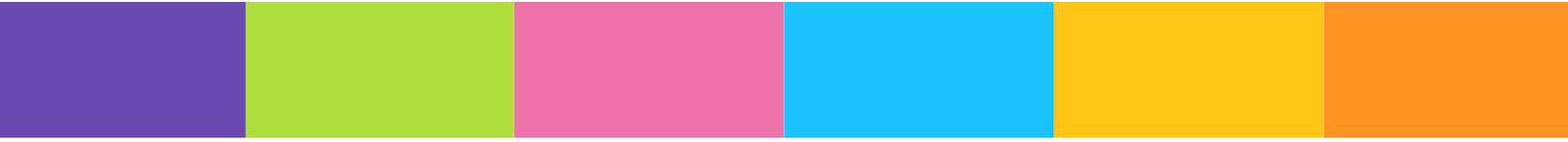
They work best when a learning setting, the child and the family work together to create it. As your child gets older these can be a helpful bridge between school and home.

Slide 18

If you want to find out more, the Suffolk Psychology and Therapeutic YouTube channel has a short video which explains [how to create a one-page-profile](#) and how they can help people of any age.

Slide 19

You or the early years setting could ask the school's reception teacher or teaching assistant (often referred to as a TA) to send a one-page-profile of themselves back.



This can be a friendly way to introduce your child to their new teacher.

Slide 20

It's helpful for schools to know the best way to help your child to calm down if they get anxious or distressed when they first start school.

Early years settings may help with this. You could also take some photos with your child of what helps and share them with the new school yourself.

And don't forget to share what your child enjoys doing. If your child gets distracted or upset, bringing in a book or a toy linked to something they like or just talking about it may help them to calm down quicker or help refocus them on an activity.

Slide 21

If your child has little language or is non-verbal, they may enjoy creating a collage with you of what they like and dislike or use drawing. Early years settings may do this as part of their preparation. This drawing template is one of the free resources which can be downloaded from the [Twinkl website](#) we referred to earlier.

Slide 22

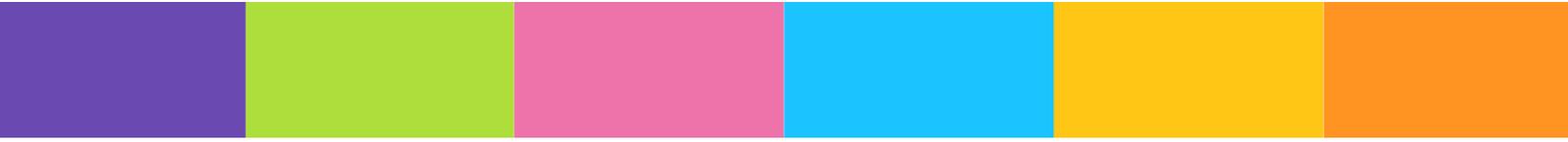
The [Anna Freud National Centre for Children and Families](#) have produced a range of resources to support wellbeing, including this free superhero template.

Character strengths don't depend on a particular achievement, they're the core virtues that make us who we are. Helping children to recognise their character strengths is a great way to build their own self confidence and help them appreciate others' strengths too.

Slide 23

In coproducing this session, parents were keen to see what resources could help support their child during transition, but we don't want you to feel overwhelmed. Remember this is not all down to you.

You can support the early years setting to help ensure that the school understands the best ways of supporting your child to learn.



An important role which parents and carers can play is in helping their child share their feelings about going to school.

Slide 24

Doing a fun positive activity together with your child can be a great way to provide a safe space for them to express their feelings without having a 'big chat' or putting pressure on them.

Slide 25

It's important to establish a sense of safety and calm through just listening, validating and reassuring. Show them that you are taking them seriously.

Be open and curious about their emotions - it's helpful to be quite tentative about suggesting what they're feeling.

Asking open questions is better than closed yes or no questions as this encourages them to reflect and share more information.

Slide 26

In this slide you can see an idea for an activity which could help some children to think about what might make the things they are worrying about better at school. It's one of the range of free resources created by Suffolk's Inclusion Facilitators.

[Suffolk Inclusion Facilitator free resources](#)

[Magic wand activity](#) (referred to in the slide)

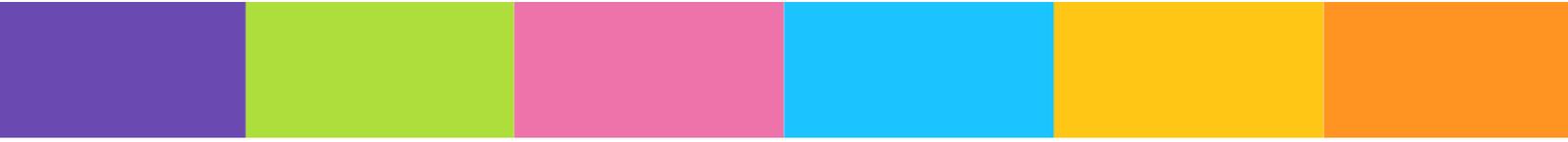
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Now many parents often want to know more about what their child will be learning at school and also how they can help their child to prepare.

Slide 28

Some schools have produced presentations on their websites which include what and how children will learn.

In Suffolk, to make a request all you need to do is contact the Family Services Team by email or phone.



Slide 29

And the [School Run website](#) has a free taster pack and webpages which explain foundation stage English, Maths and Science, which may help give you an idea.

Slide 30

Most practitioners do not suggest lots of academic preparation for school.

A child who is pushed too much before they are ready can be turned off learning before they even start school.

For example, your child doesn't have to be able to read for school - so don't worry!

What is helpful is laying the foundation for a love of reading through telling stories, through reading together and sharing different books or comic with your child. You could practice telling stories to each other or make up fun or silly rhyming games.

Lots of speaking and listening together are key foundations for building literacy skills.

Slide 31

And many skills can be learnt and practised through play, especially fine motor skills, like learning to apply and control pressure and direction with hands and fingers.

Activities which can help can include pushing pegs into pegboards, playing Duplo or Lego, cutting with scissors or simply tearing paper to make a picture, and rolling, pinching and pushing playdough.

Slide 32

You could support your child to build their independence through helping them practice some of the practical skills they will use at school, like putting their coat on a peg, practising fastenings, or opening and closing a lunch or a snack box.

Clothing items are very easily mislaid when children are young!

You could perhaps show them how to push a hat down one coat sleeve and a scarf down the other, then hang their coat up. You might have seen the peg/coat area in a school video tour or pictorial guide so this could help encourage them to practice.

And remember to label everything when they are ready to start school!

Slide 33

If your child struggles to put on a coat, you may find the [Montessori method for putting on a coat](#) helpful. They have produced a short video to explain this.

Slide 34

You could make your own checklist of independence skills. This can help build confidence for some children.

(Screen shows an image of a checklist from the [Twinkl website](#))

However, every child is different, and you know your child best. If they have additional needs, you will most likely want to focus on just a few key areas.

Slide 35

If you find videos and web resources helpful, BBC Bitesize has a series of videos to help pupils with making the transition to primary school. You might like to have an explore first yourself before perhaps looking at some with your child.

[BBC Bitesize Starting primary school](#)

Slide 36

The BBC Bitesize online interactive game called '[My first Day at School](#)' might be a fun way to help your child prepare for this next step in their lives.

Slide 37

You may find this [preparing your child for school guide](#) helpful. It is produced by the organisation [PACEY](#) and is free to download from their website.

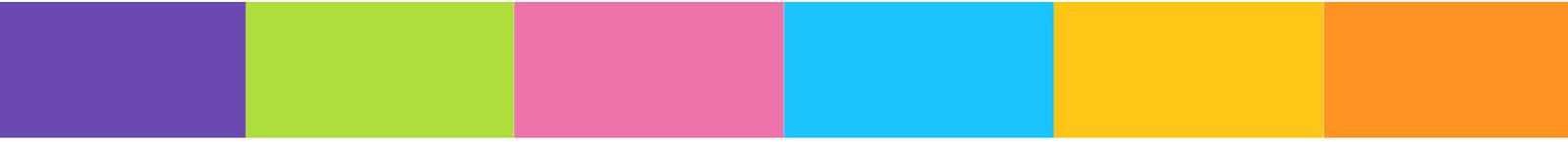
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It will help your child to start establishing new routines for school well before term starts.

Slide 39

It's helpful to do some practice runs of the journey to school with your child, especially if this is a new route.

And you might start switching mealtimes to match those of the school day



Establishing routines is especially important when it comes to sleep patterns and getting up in the morning. Visual sequencing cards may help with establishing these school day routines.

Slide 40

Many early school settling issues are related to the exhaustion of learning a new routine, following instructions and schedules all day. So, getting good sleep in the first year of school is very important.

We often hear from families that their child has difficulty sleeping and getting into an established pattern.

The Psychology and Therapeutic service in our county of Suffolk has a webpage with a number of resources and videos around sleep which you might find helpful.

[Psychology and Therapeutic Services: Sleep Resources](#)

Slide 41

A task checklist might help you both prepare, making sure you've got the resources your child will need, and you've helped your child find out as much as possible before they start.

This resource is one of many created by the Suffolk Inclusion Facilitator team, which is free for you to download.

[Inclusion Facilitator going to school task checklist](#)

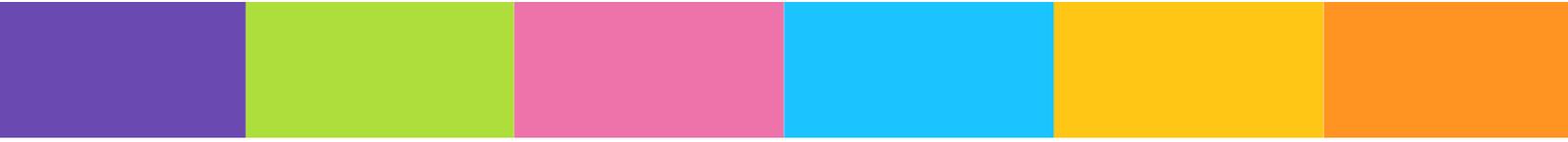
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Find out what activities/clubs are available at the new school to help your child get excited. There may be photos on the website often under a tab for clubs or they could be found under tabs for individual classes.

And before term starts, can your child get together with some other children who will be going to the same school, perhaps at a park, so that they can begin to build relationships and will know some faces when they join reception.

Slide 43

Remember to focus on the positives!



It's really natural to feel nervous about your child's transition to primary school but remember that your child can easily pick up on your emotions.

So, try to be relaxed and positive, rather than showing your nerves. They'll be looking to you for reassurance.

Encourage your child to think about things to look forward to at their school.

Slide 44

Earlier we referred to the organisation [PACEY](#). Their website has some charming videos where different children share their favourite thing about school. Hearing other children say what they like about school could really encourage your child.

[What I like about school video](#)

Slide 45

Reflecting on your own best school memories can also help your child build positive associations with primary school. 'Netmums' has a school memories webpage which you might like to look at for inspiration!

[Netmums 'Remember when..'](#)

Slide 46

There are lots of books, some old and some new, which explore what it feels like to start primary school. Books can offer comfort and reassurance about new experiences and can be read again and again in the lead up to the start of term.

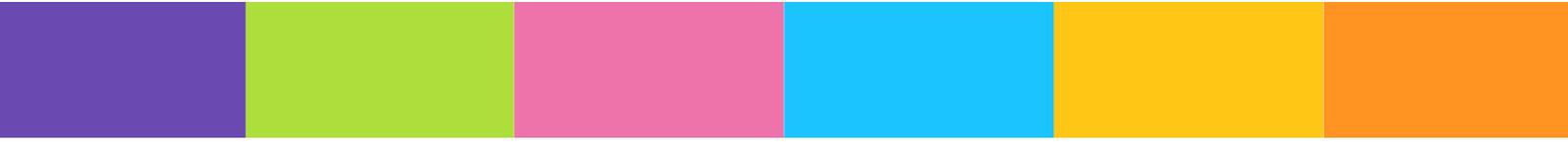
Slide 47

This may sound obvious, you'll want to take time to have everything ready the night before so that there aren't any last-minute and stressful rushes on your child's first day of school.

So, try to leave the house with plenty of time to get to school early, so you that feel relaxed.

Planning a game or music to listen to on your journey to school may help your child relax. Games we have heard have worked well are the kind of I spy games which encourage your child to spot things on route, whether you're in a vehicle or on foot.

When you arrive, introduce yourself and your child to other families. And remind your child of how much they are going to learn and enjoy their day. Let them know



you will be thinking about them and how excited you will be to hear about their day when you see them after school.

Be a bit early on the first day at pick up if you can, so they aren't waiting for you.

Slide 48

Transitional objects are things which children can touch and hold to help them feel safe and give some comfort.

They are visual and tactile reminders that someone is thinking of them, and they can help a child feel close to that person who can't be with them at school.

You might like to have a think about whether it would help your child to have something small and light which they could have in their school bag or pencil case which connects them with you.

Slide 49

Now we going to look at additional considerations for children with special educational needs or disabilities (or SEND) in more detail.

Slide 50

A child or young person will have a special educational need or SEN if they have a learning difficulty or disability which means they need:

Educational support 'that is additional to, or different from, the support made generally for other children or young people of the same age.'

(SEND Code of Practice Intro para xiii and para xv)

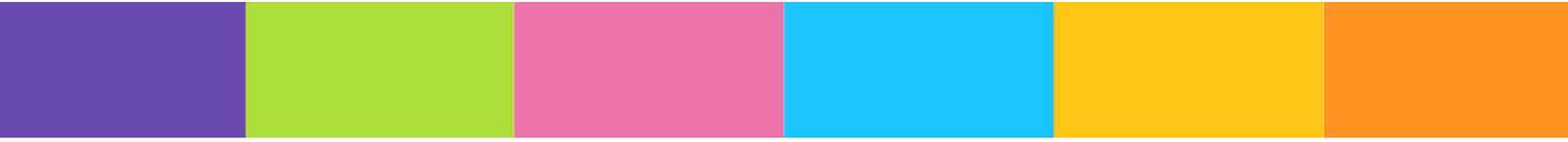
This is called special educational provision.

The quote is from the [Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice of 2015](#) which is statutory guidance. This means it comes directly from law. You can download this guidance for free if you would like to. It is very long, but there is a clear contents and you could scroll through to chapter 6 which is all about SEN support in schools.

We will be giving direct references to this SEND code of Practice in some of the following slides, to help increase your overall confidence.

Slide 51

You may be new to SEN.



If special educational needs only emerge as your child reaches school age, our SEN videos on our Suffolk SENDIASS [YouTube channel](#) may help build your understanding and confidence.

We also offer free information sessions every term which explain what is known as the graduated approach to SEN support in schools.

Slide 52

The SEND Code of Practice says that 'where a setting identifies a child as having SEN they must work in partnership with parents to establish the support the child needs.'

It goes on to explain that 'SEN support should include planning and preparing for transition, before a child moves into another setting or school.'

(SEND Code sections 5.37 and 5.47)

So, what might the planning and preparation include?

Slide 53

Additional transition support could include:

A first visit to the new school at the end of the school day, to help your child get used to the environment when it is quiet and not full of people.

Using photographs is one way we can help ourselves feel prepared we begin new things.

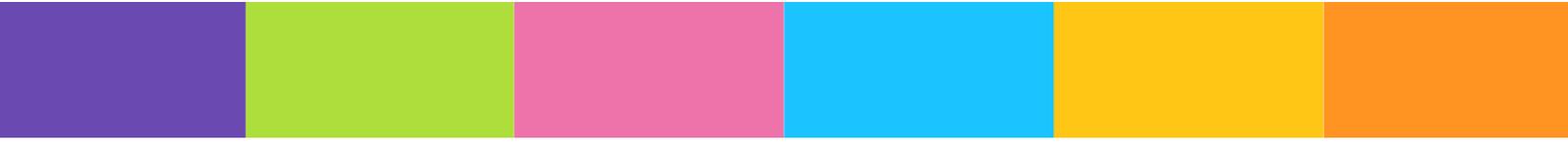
So, can you and your child take photos of key places in the school and of key people your child will be working with?

Or perhaps the school could make up a photo pack. We know that many schools do this for children with additional needs.

Slide 54

The [Suffolk Inclusion Facilitator free resources](#) I referred to earlier include this template [Transition focused photo book](#) if you wanted to create one with your child.

You can look at a photo book again and again over the summer holiday before term starts. The book will help remind your child of what things look like and can help regulate feelings and emotions about them more effectively.



Slide 55

The new class teacher or Teaching Assistant (or TA) may be able to visit your early years setting to start to build a relationship with your child and to give the school a chance to see what adjustments have worked well in the early years setting and what might need to change for the school environment. The school environment is likely to be very different so some strategies of support might need to be adjusted but it's always helpful to start with what has worked well until now.

Could the teacher or TA attend a transition meeting with you and the early years setting the term before your child starts, to explore support for the beginning of term?

Slide 56

The SEND Code says:

To support transition, information should be shared by the current setting with the receiving setting or school. The current setting should agree with parents the information to be shared as part of the planning process.'

(SEND Code section 5.47)

A transition meeting is an ideal way for information to be shared together.

Slide 57

The early years setting can share what support they have found helps your child to learn.

For example, maybe your child learns best through doing (sometimes called kinaesthetic learning)

Maybe visual sequencing cards help your child understand what to expect or what to do next.

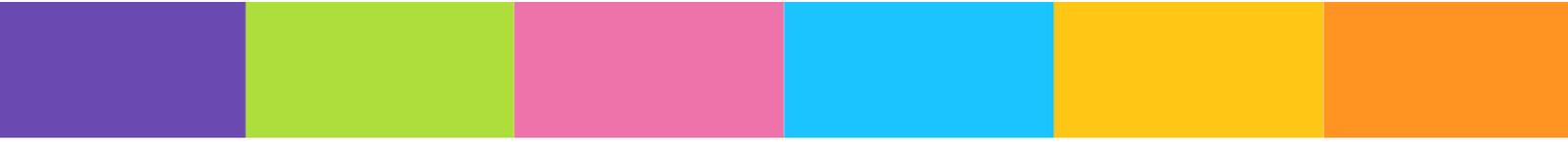
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Remember you are an expert on your child!

You can share what you have found helps your child best at home and when you are out and about.

For example, do you break down instructions and give them to your child one at a time?

Do you also find visuals help your child at home?



How do you get your child's attention or help them refocus if they get distracted?

Slide 59

Do you need to prepare them for anything new or a change to routines?

If so, how do you usually do that? Do things like social stories help or visuals which show now we're doing this and next we're doing that.

What's the best way to communicate with your child? many families use visuals to help their child develop their language.

Some children may already have some identified language difficulties and may for example be using Makaton symbols, signs and speech. It helps the school to know what your child is familiar with and what is already working well.

Slide 60

The SEND code says that parents know their children best and it is important that all professionals listen and understand when parents express concerns about their child's development. They should also listen to and address any concerns raised by children and young people themselves.

(SEND Code section 6.20)

There's been a lot of research in the last 20 years to show that pupils make the best progress when families, schools and (where relevant) the Local authority are working together in equal partnership.

So, we would really encourage you to approach the new school offering to work with them to support your child.

Slide 61

Earlier in this recording we mentioned that every school has to publish a SEN information report on their website.

This is meant to increase your confidence and understanding of the process of SEN support and it's one of the first places you'll find the contact details of the special educational needs coordinator or SENCo.

The SEN information report must explain the school's arrangements for supporting pupils with SEN and how they involve parents and pupils in the process.

Jot down any questions you have from looking at the report before your transition meeting with school.

Slide 62

The SEND code states that all schools must:

'use their best endeavours to make sure that a child with SEN gets the support they need - this means doing everything they can to meet children and young people's SEN.' (SEND Code, section 6.2)

This doesn't mean that they have to offer the same strategies as early years settings or other schools.

If the primary school is unable to offer an approach which your child is used to, it's important to ask, what can they offer instead that will have a similar impact? What is key is that they are going to do all they can to meet your child's individual needs.

Slide 63

School website information often explains new routines to help prepare your child. You can note down additional questions to share at a transition meeting.

Often parents have questions related to what their child might currently find tricky.

For example, will your child get help changing their clothes for PE?

Some parents want to know what will happen at drop off/pick up? Do children need to line up? Will there be a separate entrance and exit to the older children?

Maybe you'd like to know if your child will get help with toileting? What happens if your child has a toileting accident?

Do schools have spare clothes? Parents are often unsure if they should send some spare clothes in to school.

And parents often want to know if there is still a lot of learning through play.

Remember, no question is a silly question, and some things can be answered by email if there isn't time in the transition meeting. So it helps to have a bullet point list of your questions prepared in advance.

Slide 64

Depending on your child's individual needs, a Care Plan for Transition could be shared with school before term starts.

Slide 65

For a child with medical needs you could ask about putting together an Individual Healthcare plan or IHP. This is different from an Education, Health and Care plan. Any child with medical needs may have one. It records the key information about a child's medical needs, the actions which are required to support the child effectively, who will provide the support and when. They are especially important for any children who might have an allergic reaction to something.

[Medical conditions at school template individual healthcare plan](#)

Slide 66

BBC Bitesize has some additional helpful videos and information for starting school for pupils with special educational needs that you might like to explore.

[BBC Bitesize starting primary school with SEND](#)

Slide 67

If your child has autism, the [Autism Education Trust](#) has a range of helpful free resources, including a resource pack for schools around supporting learners with autism during transition. You could share details with your child's early years setting and your chosen primary school.

Slide 68

The [Autism Education Trust](#) has also produced a [guide for parents of children with autism around working with schools](#), also free to download.

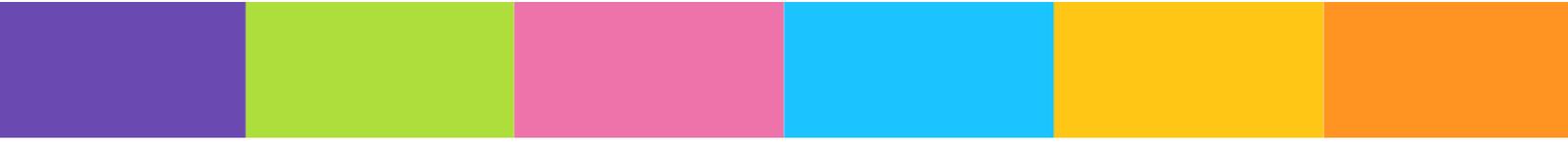
Slide 69

For children with autism, [Autism Education Trust](#) has also produced a sensory assessment checklist which the early years setting might be happy to fill in with you. This could help the school gain a better understanding of your child's sensory profile and help explore what might help regulate your child on a sensory level.

Slide 70

Some parents ask our service what to do if a school has recommended a phased start for their child due to their special educational needs. A phased start means starting on a part-time timetable and gradually building your child's time in school.

All children of statutory school age have a right to a full-time education.



However, an agreed part time timetable may be helpful in exceptional circumstances if:

It is of short duration

If there is a clear purpose and benefit which is agreed by everyone, including the family. For example, maybe this would be to allow time for school to access some additional specialist advice while meanwhile offering your child positive experiences.

And there needs to be a clear plan for gradually integrating your child into full time learning.

Slide 71

If your child has a disability, we recommend you look at the school's Accessibility Plan. Every school must publish one and this must set out how the school plans to increase access for disabled pupils to:

The curriculum

The physical environment

And to the information they share.

They often include examples of the kind of adjustments they might make for different types of disabilities so it can be a helpful starting point for your discussions with school.

Slide 72

If you're not sure if your child meets the threshold for disability according to the Equality Act, we have a short video which explains this on our [Suffolk SENDIASS YouTube channel](#) along with other videos around inclusion and support for pupils with disabilities and medical conditions. And we have a lot of information on the education webpages of our [Suffolk SENDIASS website](#).

Slide 73

This includes leaflets around SEN and practical tips for managing meetings and conversations with schools.

For a more detailed exploration of positive and solution focussed approaches for working with schools and the LA, you may like to join one of our Working with Schools sessions or watch our video recording.

[Suffolk SENDIASS videos](#)

Slide 74

Some parents ask us if an Education Health and Care (or EHC) needs assessment would help bring their child the right support when they move up to primary school.

The law expects the majority of pupils with SEN to have their needs met through the 4-stage cycle of SEN support which is often referred to as the graduated approach.

As we mentioned earlier, schools have a duty to do their best endeavours to meet your child's needs.

This includes accessing specialist advice, with your agreement, if they have exhausted their own strategies.

The specialist education services in Suffolk support schools to support children and young people aged 0 - 25 years and an EHC plan is not needed for schools to access their help.

The transition meeting is where you can discuss your child's needs in detail and explore whether any further advice or assessment would be helpful.

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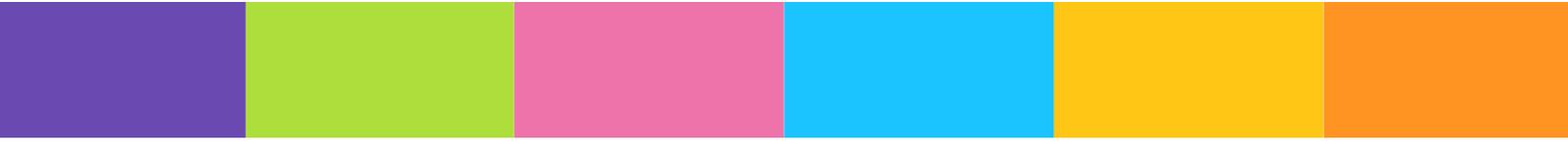
To find out more about Education, Health and Care needs assessments and plans, see our [Suffolk SENDIASS website](#). We also have a range of short videos on our [YouTube channel](#) around EHC processes, including explaining the purpose and threshold of an EHC needs assessment, who can request one and how.

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If your child already has an EHC plan, then the SEND Code is clear that it must be reviewed and amended in sufficient time prior to a child or young person moving between phases of education, to allow for planning and, where necessary, for commissioning of support and provision at the new institution.'

(SEND Code 9.179)

For transfer to primary school, the review must be completed by the 15th February in the year of transfer. The SENCo from the school can be invited to the review meeting to help ensure that the provision or support in section F of your child's EHC plan will continue to support your child to make progress.



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You will be asked to name your preferred school and the local authority must consult with the school and they must name the school in the EHC plan unless there is a lawful reason for them not to do so. Any such reason would need to be clearly explained to you and you will have a right to appeal if you are unhappy with their decision.

The EHC plan will be amended to name the school by the 15th February in the year of your child's transfer up to primary school. So, in order for the plan to be finalised by this date, the transfer review process is usually started in the autumn term, with the gathering of information.

We have further information about choosing and naming a school in an EHC plan on our [Suffolk SENDIASS website](#) along with information about EHC plan reviews which may help you.

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This video was made by Suffolk SENDIASS but if you are watching from another county or will be moving to another county, remember that we are a statutory service so every county must have an impartial and confidential SEND Information, Advice and Support service.