

eleos

KNOWLEDGE HUB

RESOURCE

When a transition isn't settling

Building a clearer picture for teachers and educators of what has changed, what is becoming difficult, and what seems to help.

Purpose

When a child or young person appears to be struggling with a transition, it is easy to focus on the most visible behaviour.

They do not want to come in. They are becoming upset in lessons. They seem withdrawn. Behaviour has changed. They are repeatedly asking to go home. They appear to be coping at school but home is seeing something very different.

Before deciding what the behaviour means, it can help to build a clearer picture.

Use this resource when:

Choose one child or young person and one transition to think about.

You are not trying to diagnose the problem, you are trying to understand what has changed, where the difficulty appears and whether things are moving towards greater familiarity or becoming harder over time.

1 What has changed?

Start with the transition itself. What is different now compared with before? Look beyond the obvious change of class, school or setting.

PEOPLE

Who is new?

Who is no longer there?

Have important relationships, trusted adults or peer groups changed?

PLACE

Is the environment different?

Are there more rooms, buildings, transitions between spaces or unfamiliar places to navigate?

ROUTINE

What does the child now have to remember, anticipate or organise differently?

Are routines less predictable?

EXPECTATIONS

Are they being asked to manage more independence, different behaviour expectations, increased academic demand or greater responsibility?

SUPPORT

What happened previously that helped them manage?

Has all of that understanding and support moved with them?

Now consider: **Which of these changes appears to be requiring the most effort?**

2 Look for the pattern.

Try to move beyond whether the child has had a "good" or "bad" day.

WHEN IS IT EASIER?

Are there parts of the day they manage more comfortably?

Who are they with?

What is different about those situations?

WHAT HAPPENS BEFORE, DURING AND AFTER?

What is seen at school?

What happens before arrival?

What is happening after the school day?

Is home seeing something different?

Different accounts do not need to compete - put them together.

The pattern across the day and across settings may tell you more than the most difficult moment.

3 Which way is it moving?

Think across days or weeks rather than one particular incident.

BECOMING MORE MANAGEABLE

Are routines becoming more familiar?

Is recovery getting quicker?

Are difficult moments becoming less frequent or intense?

Is the child beginning to need less support?

Are relationships and confidence developing?

BECOMING HARDER

Is difficulty appearing in more situations?

Is attendance becoming harder?

Is recovery taking longer?

Are sleep, behaviour, relationships or functioning changing?

Does maintaining the school day appear to be requiring increasing effort?

STAYING THE SAME

Has enough time passed that you would have expected some movement?

Is something repeatedly getting in the way of adaptation?

The important question is not: ***"Have they settled yet?"*** It is: ***"Which direction are things moving?"***

4 What seems to help?

Look at the occasions when things are easier - what's different? Consider:

FAMILIARITY

Does knowing what will happen make a difference?

PEOPLE

Are there particular relationships that help the child manage?

PREPARATION

Does advance information or preparation for change help?

ENVIRONMENT

Are some spaces, times or situations easier than others?

DEMAND

Does changing the amount, pace or complexity of what is being asked make a difference?

RECOVERY

Does the child need time or reduced demand after particularly effortful parts of the day?

Try to identify what appears to help rather than simply adding more support. Something that reliably changes the child's ability to manage can also give you useful information about what was difficult in the first place.

Bring it together.

You should now have a clearer picture than "they aren't settling." You can now consider:

- What has changed for this child or young person?
- What appears to be hardest for them to manage, and what seems to make the situation easier?
- When is the difficulty most and least visible?
- Are home and education seeing different parts of the same pattern?
- Which direction are things moving?
- What useful understanding from before the transition do we need to keep?

With a clearer picture, we can consider what might need to happen next. That may be continuing to observe, adjusting something, preserving an existing support, speaking with the child or family, bringing different observations together, or seeking additional advice where the pattern suggests something more is needed. The aim is not to explain everything, it's to understand a little more clearly what this transition is asking of this child, and what might help them find their way.

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