

TOTAL HEALTH
West Berkshire



Back to School Better Transition Support Pack Parent & Home Support Guide





Introduction

We know that for many children, school transitions require enormous emotional and sensory effort.

This can present as your child becoming distressed before school, making excuses not to go to school or refusing to leave the house or the car.

This can be incredibly stressful for children and parents and turn every school morning into a battleground.

This guide is designed to give you some practical ideas to help reduce the stress of the transition from home to school. Either at the start of a new term or on a daily basis.

We hope that you find it helpful.

The Total Health Assessment Team

Contents

- Ways children can show stress before school transitions
- Before School: Reducing Stress Around Morning Transitions: Helpful Strategies
- Supporting School Anxiety
- Don't Forget About You
- After School: Understanding Meltdowns
- Helpful After-School Strategies
- Supporting Emotional Regulation at Home
- Important Reminder for Parents
- If these strategies aren't enough



Ways children can show stress before school transitions

Those times in the lead up to a new school term, in the evening before a school day or at the start of a school day can cause some children to be very upset.

Children may:

- become distressed before school,
- refuse school,
- hold themselves together all day,
- meltdown after school,
- appear exhausted
- emotionally overwhelmed.

**It is important to remember this is not
poor parenting.**

**It is often a sign that the child's nervous
system is overloaded.**



Before School: Reducing Stress Around Morning Transitions Helpful Strategies

Keep mornings predictable

The time you get out of bed, the order that you have breakfast get dressed, have 'play time' (if time allows), when you put shoes and coat on all being the same every day can help reduce stress.

Visual routines

Having pictures showing the order of activities and the times they happen can be helpful.

Before school try talking through:

- who is taking them
- which teacher they'll see first
- what's different today
- what happens after school

Prepare items the night before

As much as possible, this reduces the amount to do the next day and then your child will know that everything is ready.

Minimise rushing where possible

Although we realise it is called the school run for a reason!

Reduce verbal overload as too many instructions can increase anxiety

As tempting as it is try to give only one instruction at once, refer back to your visual prompts, keep a calm tone, aim for reassurance over pressure. Instead of asking "Are you OK?" "Try: "What would help right now?"

Allow regulation supports

This may include: headphones, comfort items, sensory tools, movement, music, safe foods. Things such as lighting, noise, clothing and hunger may seem small individually, but sensory stresses can build throughout the day.



Supporting School Anxiety

Children often need:

- Co-regulation (being near you and using your presence to calm them down) before independence.
- Emotional safety before learning.
- Reassurance that adults understand their distress.
- Avoid: punishment for anxiety, comparisons to peers, “just get on with it,” long reasoning during distress.
- Helpful phrases:

“I can see this feels hard.”

“You’re safe.”

“We’ll take it one step at a time.”

“Your feelings make sense.”

Don’t Forget About You

Trying to get a child who does not want to go to school into school every day is hard. It is all too easy to blame yourself or compare your child to other children who seem to happily skip into school.

Remember this is not a parenting failure, often you are having to do very hard parenting.

**If you can try to find time to take a few moments for yourself.
Take some deep breaths and know that you can do this.**



After School: Understanding Meltdowns

Many children hold themselves together all day and release emotions once home.

This can look like:

- anger,
- crying,
- shutdown,
- aggression,
- emotional exhaustion,
- withdrawal.

This often reflects:

- masking fatigue,
- sensory overload,
- social exhaustion,
- nervous system overwhelm.

Helpful After-School Strategies

Some children need an hour or more of recovery after school before they are ready for conversation, homework or activities.

Allow decompression time, many children benefit from:

- quiet space,
- no questions immediately after school,
- snacks/drinks,
- sensory regulation,
- movement, screen time to decompress, reduced demands.
- Delay conversations. Avoid asking: “How was school?” “What happened today?”
- Instead try: “I’m glad you’re home.” “You can talk when you’re ready.”



Supporting Emotional Regulation at Home

Children regulate through connection. Helpful strategies include:

- calm adult presence,
- empathy before problem solving,
- reducing shame,
- predictable routines,
- sensory regulation,
- rest and recovery time.

Important Reminder for Parents

A child who struggles with transitions is not being difficult on purpose.

Behaviour is communication.

When adults respond with understanding, flexibility, and emotional safety, children are more able to regulate, engage, and succeed.

Behaviour is communication.

If these strategies aren't enough

Need more support?

If you find that:

- your child regularly refuses school
- mornings are becoming increasingly distressing
- they come home exhausted or overwhelmed every day
- anxiety is affecting family life
- you're beginning to wonder if there's an underlying reason

It may be that you need more support.

If you're looking for additional support, you might find these resources useful:

● Speak to your school's SENCO

They will be able to tell you how your school can help you and your child.

● Access our Post Assessment Resources Page LINK

We have created a downloadable guide containing trusted organisations, charities, websites and local support services. We normally provide this to families after an assessment, but many of the resources may also be helpful while you're deciding on your next steps.

● Learn about ADHD & Autism assessments LINK

If you're wondering whether autism, ADHD or another underlying difficulty may be contributing, our multidisciplinary assessment service can help you better understand your child's strengths, needs and what support may be appropriate.

● Book a free suitability call LINK

To discuss whether a private ADHD or autism assessment would be helpful for your child.

● Parent counselling with Yvette LINK

Yvette Khoshab has worked as a special Educational Needs Co-ordinator and works with adults. She has years of experience in this area and can help you work through this difficult and challenging time. Yvette offers a free 20 minute call to see if working with her would be helpful.

**Please feel free to share this guide with your school,
SENCO, friends or other families who may find it helpful.**