



SWEN

Walking With You Parent Support Group (Oxfordshire) Newsletter 16

The Theme for WWY in May was managing transitions.

Many thanks to our guest, Ruth Kennel, Director of Learning and Development at SOFEA who provided a powerful personal and professional insight to the support that young people need.

Main themes:

- It is important for parents to think through what their child needs for a successful year group transition and discuss this with their child's teacher so that the right steps can be built into their transition plan e.g. extra visits to their new classroom, spending time with new teaching staff, an extra meeting between parents and their new teacher both before and after the transition and identifying quiet / safe spaces.
- Having a routine and sticking to it can be really helpful
- Physical activities e.g. scootering and sensory activities e.g. chewing gum, breathing games, racing to get the heart rate working, can be helpful in supporting a transition.
- Try to reduce pressure by taking the focus of the anxiety away from the child / young person.
- The system places a lot of pressure on young people to do things at certain times in relation to their education. This doesn't work for everyone. There is no rush. Young people can take their time. If now isn't the right time to e.g. take SATS, GCSEs or A-Levels there will be other times or alternative opportunities.

Experiences shared by parents:

Primary School:

- It is helpful to prepare uniform the night before. This helps to plan and have some order.
- Certain things that are due to happen during the day can make the transition to school harder e.g. swimming. When things get really hard the young person can just get stuck.
- Getting out of the house in the morning can be tricky.

Thing that parents have found helpful to reduce pressure during a transition.

- Have a list of routines that you can tick off as you complete them. This can help the young person feel in control of what is happening.
- Parking away from the school and having a short walk or using a scooter to get into school can be helpful.
- Take away your child's anxiety about school by finding an activity your child can do that is pleasurable and they enjoy. Scooting is an amazing sensory experience.
- Building in a game to a routine
- A worry box
- A feelings diary that could be shared with parent and a teacher.
- Visual calendars
- Rather than trying to describe emotions, try to say e.g. I notice your arms have lots of energy, I notice this looks tricky.

**SENDIASS Oxfordshire –
Information, advice and support**

<https://sendiass-oxfordshire.org.uk/>

There are resources on the SENDAAS Website to support parents raising concerns. SENDAAS are happy to work with parents to put together an email to the school asking for help.

By email –

sendiaas@oxfordshire.gov.uk

By Text

07786 524294

Advice Line –

01865 810516 (if they are on the phone leave name, number and a good time to call back)

Moving to Secondary School – Transition to Key Stage 3.

https://view.officeapps.live.com/op/view.aspx?src=https%3A%2F%2Fsearch3.openobjects.com%2Fmediamanager%2FFoxfordshire%2Fsd%2Ffiles%2Fmoving_to_secfondary_school_senss_information_for_parents_of_children_with_communication_and_interaction_needs.docx&wdOrigin=BROWSELINK

<https://sendiass-oxfordshire.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/E081-27-A-Parents-Guide-to-Concerns-about-your-childs-SEND-support-2nd-version.pdf>

Contact SENSS Communication and Interaction Team

<https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/contactus/contact-senss-communication-and-interaction>

- If external strategies are too complicated they can be hard to achieve perfectly causing frustration.
- There are lots of things that you can change that are external to the child. These can be helped by supporting your child to develop some internal strategies e.g. regulating their breathing. Breathing exercises can be really helpful but they may not work for everyone. One parent shared that their child can't recognise when they are anxious and wouldn't know when to try the breathing exercises. One parent shared that the same teacher meets their daughter every morning in the playground to help her walk into school. When their daughter became more distressed, they agreed a new plan with the school allowing her to go into the library in the morning with 2 friends and a TA to help her calm down before going into class. This has been really helpful.
- One parent shared that their child did drawings to show that they were unhappy. This is important evidence to share with the school that they were struggling. The child's voice must be at the centre.

Exams

- There is no support to manage stress around SATS Tests.
- One parent shared that their child doesn't sleep so is going into school tired. He is the only child that doesn't go to SATS breakfast club
- It is important to remember that SATS tests are designed for schools not for the child. If your child isn't getting any benefit from doing them and it is putting them off going to school, contact the school to explain and ask what supports will be put in place to help them.
- If your child goes into the room where SATS are being taken and picks up a pen, tell them they are doing really well. It doesn't matter if they do not finish
- Exams should not define your child. It is more important to focus on your child's mental health and wellbeing.

Transition to / within Secondary School

- Start to plan for the transition during the holidays.
- Social stories can be really helpful in preparing for this transition.
- Build up to the transition in small gradual steps. Try to reduce the pressure around the transition as much as possible.
- Explore options for having extra meetings with new teachers before the changes takes place.
- Are there quiet places to go if the environment is becoming too overwhelming?
- A parent shared their child has asthma. He doesn't know when he needs his inhaler and will often forget to use it before PE. He is anxious about how this will be planned for in the move to secondary school.
- It is important to talk to the school to find out what support will be put in place to manage these situations.
- Information on having an Enhanced Transition Is available in the Oxfordshire County Councils Local Offer [Special educational needs and disability: The local offer | Oxfordshire County](#)

Education Employment and Training (EET) Team

EET have 3 responsibilities

1. To track all young people aged 16 yrs to the September after their 18th Birthday providing learning and employment opportunities
2. Casework for young people not in education, employment or training
3. Digital Safeguarding

<https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/contact/contact-education-employment-and-training-eet-team>

OXME

An online resources with lots of information about learning opportunities, local jobs, apprenticeships & training & regular fun activities.

<https://oxme.info/>

Autism Education Trust Resources

Phase specific teaching tools to parent guidance

<https://www.autismeducationtrust.org.uk/resources>

Meet Max

<https://www.facebook.com/daisychainproject/posts/3662662537088339?msockid=e65ecd0cc2c11ec8b1fab61c27e2e29>

Council

- The Autism Education Trust have produced some really useful guidance on what to ask for.
- A SEN Report should be available on every school website. This will provide information on what support is available.
- Schools generally focus on transitions after the June Half Term. Ask the school if you can have a walk around when the school is empty.
- A parent shared they use a Body Sock with their child – when there are bigger events than yourself, you can zip yourself in the body sock fabric for 15 minutes to help you get through the event.
- Try to identify signs that your child is becoming anxious. One parent shared that when there was a transition their son was not happy with, they would start to itch their nose. They would also find running through maths problems calming and knows to use this strategy when anxious.
- One parent shared that their daughter can't tell you why she is stressed. She is Demand Avoidant, and you never know whether she'll go to school. There is no easy way to help or to self soothe.
- Doing something physical can be helpful e.g. walking to school.
- Having a special item e.g. a special teddy, in your pocket can be comforting
- What you see your child doing / not doing is just the tip of the iceberg. Trying to work out what you can't see is really difficult.
- The Anxiety Ladder – Try to help your child to break down what is causing the anxiety into small junks. What is the highest thing that is causing the anxiety e.g. walking into school, attending a particular lesson. What can you do to half the anxiety around each junk? Break the activity down into small stages and try one stage at a time.. If you find a stage is too big, reduce it. Keep practising each step. Stick with it until you achieve it and feel ready to move onto the next step. If you are getting stuck at particular stages have some rewards ready.
- Making adjustments to your language can make a real difference – 'We've got this' rather than 'you can do this'.
- Try to take the anxiety away from the young person by externalising the problem – focus on the environment rather than the individual.
- Offer your child some choices e.g. I can come into school with you or someone can meet you. One parent shared that this only works a certain number of times. Strategies need to change.
- Transitional objects can help to reduce pressure e.g. using lego before an activity they find difficult.
- One parent shared that their son was moving into Yr 9 and will need to attend a different school site. At times he can be calm and wonderful. At other times he can become violent and has a lot of bad thoughts. He knows they are wrong and wants to stop having them, but he finds it difficult to express his feelings. Difficulties are happening more often at school.
- Communicating that he is angry is an unmet need. It is important to discuss this with the school, what is going to happen to help understand their needs and for the right provision to be found.
- Moving to a different site / different school may be a positive, fresh start.
- Looking at opportunities for young people to explore feeling away from parents can be helpful.

The Abingdon Bridge

TAB is a well being charity that supports young people aged 13-25 yrs. Support enables young people to have the resilience to help overcome life's challenges through

- Counselling
- 1:1 wellbeing support
- Healthy Lifestyle program
- Group Work
- Bespoke training and educational workshops.

<https://www.theabingdonbridge.org.uk/>

Autism Family Support Oxfordshire

AFSO use understanding, expertise and a lot of fun and care to support the development and well being of children and young adults on the autism spectrum. have youth groups and holiday activities

[Autism Family Support Oxfordshire | Home \(afso.org.uk\)](https://afso.org.uk/)

SHIFT



- One parent shared that their daughter struggles with anger and low self-esteem. She started Taekwondo. It is a great outlet & the discipline has works wonders.
- If your child has not been in school for a while or is struggling to attend regularly it is important to help manage expectations. Working towards attending for one hour or one day rather than a whole day / week is a result.

Post 16:

- The hardest Transition for young people with Autism is starting work. The brain finds it hard to compute all the changes that happen.
- Transitions for all young people happen at multiple levels. Any transition can be difficult and can be hard to predict.
- Preparation for transitions need to start with the basics.
- Where possible, start to plan for transitions well in advance of the change happening.
- Plant the seed of change early on and let it develop over time. Leave information about different options lying around for your young person to find and read in their own time.
- As young people get older change can become overwhelming. Young people have more time that is unstructured. Learning how to manage this can be difficult and needs support.
- Transition to adult services can be difficult. When young people turn 18 they are considered to be adults with capacity to make their own decisions. However the need for help with e.g. making and attending appointments is still there.
- Executive Functioning refers the skills that young people need to develop to help them plan, focus attention, remember instructions and juggle multiple tasks.
- Scaffolding support around the young person to help them develop these skills is really important.
- Parents shared their worries about their sons / daughters who were struggling to engage with their GCSEs and what to do next.
- A-levels are not the right thing for all young people. There are many alternative options available to explore.
- One parent shared that their daughter started an animal course which was her dream. Unfortunately she was removed from the course due to being unable to manage the 2 busses every day. If an EHCP is in place this could be reviewed.
- One parent shared that their daughter transitioned to Ruskin Mill, Residential College in Gloucestershire. The college is centred around therapeutic outdoor and creative education. It is the best thing that has happened to her.
- Ruth explained that at SOFEA, young people have started their transition with a drive by, then starting half a day a week. Gradual steps are essential.

Please note this newsletter is based on the experiences and suggestions that parents have shared.

CAMHS work in Partnership with the following charities around Oxfordshire, providing In-reach support. However any one can contact these charities directly without a referral from CAMHS.

SOFEA - [SOFEA: Enabling the transformation of people's lives](#)

SOFEA provide education, employability and well being programmes for vulnerable youngsters. They tackle food insecurity and the disadvantages it causes while having a positive impact on the environment and reducing waste.

If you would like to have a look around please contact annemarie@sofea.uk.com

TRAX – Oxfordshire Mind <https://www.oxmindguide.org.uk/minditem/11413/>

Trax runs courses to engage young people aged 13 – 18 yrs in Oxfordshire. Trax aims to divert young people away from anti-social behaviour, crime and negative activities and encourage personal, social and education development.

ARK-T <https://www.ark-t.org/>

ARK-T is a Community Arts charity where people arts and powerful ideas come together. ARK-T use the powers of creativity and community to tackle inequality and transform lives. People of all ages go to ARK-T to make art, make friendships and make changes in their own lives and the world around them.

SYNOLOS - <http://www.synolos.co.uk/>

Synolos support young people to build a future and live an empowering life. Working with you people in West Oxfordshire Synolos specialise in working in small groups allowing those who have struggled with mainstream education or services the opportunity to thrive, gain a sense of belonging and work toward empowerment for the future.

BYHP - [About BYHP - BYHP](#)

The mission of BYHP is to improve the wellbeing and opportunities of every young person we work with, through our specialist interventions and personalised support, to prevent youth homelessness. BYHP offers a range of NEET projects that provides 1-2-1 mentoring and coaching for young people to help them develop self-confidence and improve their self-esteem. BYHP will support clients to stay in education, access alternative provisions or give them the confidence to be work-ready and move into employment.

RAW - [Social Business | Raw Workshop | Oxfordshire \(raw-workshop.co.uk\)](#)

RAW make high quality furniture and deliver class-leading commercial services. RAW believe that every young person no matter what they've been through or how life is today, has the potential to live life beyond their expectations. RAW can do 1:1 work in the workshop an with up to 4 young people at a time offering more in-depth support.



