

## Supporting Transitions

Individuals who are on the autism spectrum are especially vulnerable at times that involve moves within, and between, schools due to changes of environment and routine which provide the structures necessary for successful functioning. Thus, a carefully planned programme of transition/transfer is crucial and this should take account of the needs of the individual in of time given to it as well as prepared activities. Transitions can refer to many different aspects of a persons life, but the most common transitions that pose difficulties for people on the autism spectrum, during their school life, include;

- Moving on from one activity to another
- Changing environments daily/weekly e.g. home to school and vice versa
- Changing class within school
- Changing boundaries, e.g. when moving through key stages and accessing different playgrounds, etc
- Beginning nursery
- Moving to Primary school
- Moving to Secondary School
- Moving on to Higher Education or work



Such times of change can produce feelings of anxiety within any pupil, but for the pupil on the autism spectrum they are particularly significant and often result in feelings of uncertainty, confusion and even fear. Some specific strategies, which have proven useful for pupils on the autistic spectrum in effecting a smooth transition to a new setting, can be employed to ensure as successful transition.

### Strategies to Support Transition

- Hold regular liaison meetings involving parents, current and receiving staff, to devolve important information about the pupil, e.g. stress factors, successful strategies used etc, including a pen portrait
- Develop, and carry out, a programme of visits to the new setting, involving different times of the day/week
- Use Comic Strip Conversations and Social Stories to help prepare for the move (see later information)
- Develop a 'personal passport' compiled by the pupil, with help as needed, which would inform adults in the new setting about the pupil and his/her autism
- During visits to the new setting take photographs, meet staff, check out the environment, etc, to help to develop a visual picture of what's coming
- Organise a Circle of Friends approach, providing peer support that will be available in the new setting (see later information)



*Ideas & Tips Box*