

FACILITATOR'S HANDBOOK

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INTRODUCTION

My New School is an intervention for children who have been identified as requiring support with the transition from primary to secondary school. This guide is here to help with the facilitation of the intervention. The first part - Background - provides introductory information about My New School and how it has evolved.

The second part - Getting Started - includes the steps to check off before beginning the intervention. The third part - Running a My New School intervention - introduces facilitation tips and guidelines for the delivery of the intervention as well as exemplar session planning. The final part - Appendices - includes additional tools and templates to make the My New School intervention run as successfully as it can be.

BACKGROUND - TRANSITION

Transition within in pupils' education is a natural process which brings about changes across academic, social and structural levels as well as emotional and social adjustment. Transition is a well-researched phenomenon and an important finding during this time, has been an increase in the social, emotional or academic needs of students particularly with SEN (Hebron, 2017; Topping, 2011; West et al., 2010). More importantly, if left unresolved, these difficulties can continue into adulthood (Jones, 2013; West, Sweeting & Young, 2010). There is a deficit in the current literature specifically examining how the implementation of children's ideas and insights, particularly those with SEN, could inform or guide successful transition planning.

MY NEW SCHOOL

The My New School project emerged in 2015, when local schools identified a need to promote the resiliency of students with SEN during the process of transition to secondary school.

The project recognised the importance of putting the views of children at the heart of transition planning and this is a unique feature that is embedded within the intervention. My new school was also developed through collaboration with Special Educational Needs Coordinators (SENCOs), Educational Psychologists and Assistant Educational Psychologists. Several stages of refinement were completed before the final products; a booklet and facilitator's handbook were produced. The guidance has been drawn from the experiences and reflections of SENCOs and students who were involved in the project. (See appendix A for further information of the phases of intervention development).

WHO COULD BENEFIT FROM THIS INTERVENTION?

This intervention is suitable for children who are on the SEN register, are identified as less likely to express their views or as having low confidence, as well as those who have experienced a number of changes and have been identified by the school as taking longer to adapt to physical changes in the environment.

Whilst this intervention was not initially designed as a whole-school intervention, it has been successfully adapted for use with children individually across Key Stage one and two.

This intervention is not necessarily sufficient on its own for children with an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP). Nonetheless the facilitator should exercise their judgement with regard to using My New School and/or other support.

How have the children who took part benefitted from participation in the intervention?

Children that previously participated in this intervention have demonstrated positive outcomes, including an improved sense of self-advocacy and ownership over their new school, increased confidence and reduced anxieties in relation to transition. By working collaboratively with peers to find solutions, the children have also shown improved team working skills.

TIME REQUIRED

The intervention can be delivered once weekly, over a period of 6-8 weeks and sessions can range between 45-60 minutes depending on the pupils' needs.

WHO WILL BE DELIVERING THE INTERVENTION?

A SENCO, teacher or teaching assistant who has a clear understanding of group dynamics. The facilitator role is central for empowering the process of meaningful discussion and impacts the efficacy of the intervention. (Refer to the facilitator guidelines, p.4.)

GETTING STARTED

Identify a group

Identifying potential students can begin as soon as high school allocation has been confirmed. Groups may typically be made up of 4-6 students however, larger groups have also been successful. (For further guidance with identifying appropriate candidates see Appendix C).

Gather Resources

The My New School booklet for students encourages children to take ownership of their learning by recording their findings in a way that suits their needs therefore, additional resources should always be gathered before session delivery. Examples include, writing, jottings, computer-based word documents, drawings, printing out pages, photos or screen shots from tablets.

RESOURCE CHECKLIST

Digital Research Tools - (Laptops, computers, iPads, tablets)

Physical Research Tools - (High school brochures, prospectuses, maps, leaflets)

Additional Activities - (Back up activity, extension activity, discussion prompts)

Stationery - (Pens, colour pencils, camera, printer, glue, scissors, sugar paper, extra paper, post it notes)

FACILITATOR GUIDELINES

- Be equally as invested in the process as the students.
- Have a clear understanding of the intervention's purpose and process.
- Maintain flexibility in sessions and be guided by student's needs and enquiries.
- Enable students to identify their feelings and questions around transition.
- Model and scaffold effective problem-solving strategies, giving students time and space to find their own solutions through discussion.

RUNNING MY NEW SCHOOL

Before

It is important to spend some time before the intervention ensuring you are fully prepared to deliver each session.

1. Identify a group of children suitable for the intervention
2. Send out letters introducing the intervention to parents (p.15)
3. Review the resources checklist ensuring everything is in place for students to access activities in the sessions.
4. Check internet connectivity and ensure iPads/tablets/cameras are charged.
5. Have a clear understanding of the week's learning outcomes, the discussion prompts and the activities children are to be taking part in.
6. Reread the criteria for an effective facilitator (facilitator guidelines p, 4.)

During

Sessions can be framed by the individual needs of the students but should be framed by the students individual needs, objectives and enquiries.

1. Observe the children's needs and adapt the activities accordingly.
2. Record key quotes/observations from the children to build on the children's ideas throughout the intervention.

After

After each session spend some time reflecting on the children's outcomes of the session.

1. Write up notes, quotes from children ready to use as a basis for the next session.
2. Clean up and return any borrowed resources.
3. During the final session distribute the certificates.

Throughout the process

It is important to remember the intervention is flexible and recognises that support must be adapted to suit the individual needs of the students throughout the session delivery.

THE MY NEW SCHOOL EXAMPLE SESSION PLANNING

Session 1:

Starter Activity: See the 'Entry point scaling activity'. Ask the children to complete this independently (contents page in booklet)

Group discussion: Exploring existing feelings around transition.

- What school / what they already know / have they visited?
- What are they looking forward to / worried about / confidence?
- What they want from sessions / want to find out or explore?
- Gathering ideas for session content / structure / questions.

Facilitator: Could record children's responses on sugar paper/post it notes/interactive Whiteboard file etc.

Independent/Paired Activity: Refer to Page 1 of the My New School booklet, explain the activity to the children. Encourage the children to begin navigating and exploring their school websites and record their findings in the booklet.

Research could include:

- Maps and photos of school / total number of pupils / school uniform
- House system / college system / names of houses
- What subjects can they do / lunch and break time
- Pictures of teachers / form teacher / SENCO / Pastoral / Head

Children record their work using different approaches that suit their learning style, such as copying and pasting pictures from the internet, drawing, taking photographs, cutting out pictures from magazines etc.

Plenary: Children can share their initial findings and thoughts so far about their new school. Facilitator to note down some of the children's ideas and thoughts about their new school (on large sugar paper or posits) ready to revisit the following week.

OUTCOMES:

To discuss initial feelings about transition and begin to research the school websites.

THE MY NEW SCHOOL EXAMPLE SESSION PLANNING

Session 2:

Starter Activity: Review, share and compare some of the thoughts, ideas and findings recorded from the previous week. What can the children remember about their new school? Did the children encounter any surprises regarding their new school? What would they still like to find out?

Group discussion: Explore feelings around settling in.

- How they are feeling after doing some initial research on the school?
- How they are feeling about settling in / who can help / what can help?
- What are they looking forward to / worried about / confidence?

Independent/Paired Activity: Refer to page 2/3 of the My New School booklet. Explain the activity to the children. Children to navigate/explore school websites, brochures and prospectuses, recording their findings/feelings in the booklet.

Plenary: Children to share/compare findings. Look at page 4/5 in preparation for next week's activity and begin gathering ideas for the following week.

OUTCOMES:

To discuss feelings around settling in and think about some practical actions I can put in place to help with feelings.

THE MY NEW SCHOOL EXAMPLE SESSION PLANNING

Session 3:

Starter Activity: Review, share and compare some of the thoughts, ideas and findings recorded from previous week. What can the children remember about their new school? How are they feeling about settling in, what strategies can they use to help them? What would they still like to find out?

Group discussion: Today children will be carrying out detective work.

- What clubs / activities have you done at primary school?
- What would you like to be able to do at high school?
- When is break time / lunch time; how long?
- What lessons would you like to be able to do at high school?

Independent/Paired Activity: Refer to pages 4-5 in the My New School booklet. Explain the activity, children to think of other things they would like to find out and complete the Detective work research.

Children can record their ideas using resources that suit their needs.

Plenary: Sharing/comparing findings. What have they found out? What they still would like to find out? Review the notes of the children's thoughts during the previous sessions? Jot ideas down in a different colour to the previous week's and discuss if there are any differences? Invite children to explain/expand on their thinking.

OUTCOMES:

To carry out a line of enquiry in relation to my new school

THE MY NEW SCHOOL EXAMPLE SESSION PLANNING

Session 4:

Starter Activity: Peers to compare their findings with a partner going to a different school if possible. If this is not possible partners to see if they can spot differences/similarities and expand on their original findings?

Group discussion: Do the children have any further questions they would like to explore?

- School location and best route on using google maps
- Distance and times to school; what time will they need to leave home
- How will they get there / who with / mapping best route in books?
- Uniform / PE uniform: what; when; boys vs girls uniform; winter vs summer
- Friendships – who do they know there already

Independent/Paired Activity: Refer to page 6 in the booklet. Explain the activity, ask children to think of other things they would like to find out and complete the Questions section.

Extension idea: Children could begin to design a poster with information about the school which could be shared with peers who haven't taken part in the transition intervention.

Plenary: Refer to page 7 of the My New School booklet and ask children to talk in partners/small groups and share what they are good at, what they need help with, what would they like the school to know about them and what helps them.

OUTCOMES:

To explore further questions I might have (i.e. how to get to school; what to wear, friends).

THE MY NEW SCHOOL EXAMPLE SESSION PLANNING

Session 5:

Starter Activity: Encourage children to think about the things their peers within the group are good at. Facilitator to model giving compliments to all children and invite children to tell another child something they are good at. This could involve having a child sitting at the front of the group and receiving compliments from the group or an informal circle. (Ensure all children receive an equal number of compliments)

Group discussion: My One-Page Profile

- What am I good at? What do I need help with?
- What do I want my new school to know about me?
- What helps me?

Independent Activity: Refer to page 7 in the booklet. Explain the activity, the children will be writing a profile to take with them to their new secondary school. Ask the children to think about the things that they would like their new teachers to know about them.

Adaptation ideas: The children may want to think about providing additional evidence (for example if a child likes art they can attach some art work, if they engage in sporting activities, photos could be attached etc)

Extension idea: Children could begin to design a poster with information about the school which could be shared with peers who haven't taken part in the transition intervention.

Plenary: Explain that the next session will involve visiting their new school. Ask the children how they feel about this? Facilitator to record the children's ideas on a large blank piece of sugar paper/whiteboard document that can be saved. (Ready to return to in session 7). Explore additional questions about high school before visit.

OUTCOMES:

To reflect on my own strengths, weaknesses and strategies that can help me.

THE MY NEW SCHOOL EXAMPLE SESSION PLANNING

Session 6:

New School Visit:

To use as a prompt to share with the teaching staff in the new school, children could take:

- photocopies of their one-page profiles (page 7) - leave these with the new school
- any written/recorded questions for the teaching staff/peers.

OUTCOMES:

To explore my new school setting.

THE MY NEW SCHOOL EXAMPLE SESSION PLANNING

Session 7:

Starter Activity: Ask children to rate their school visit experiences out of 10 (10 – positive 1 - negative) Facilitator to record these and use these to explore their feelings further in the group discussion.

Group discussion: Site visit follow up (Facilitator could refer back to the recording of children's feelings from session 7 and add children's ideas/feelings using a different coloured pen as a visual prompt)

- How they felt before / during / after the visit
- Positives / highlights / best activity
- How has the visit changed their view of the school?
- Did they find anything new that surprised/disappointed them?
- What are they looking forward to / worried about / confidence levels?
- What could be done next time to make the visit a more positive experience?
- Any unanswered questions?

Independent/Paired Activity: Refer to pages 8-9 in the My New School Booklet. Ask the children to think about everything they have learned about their new school and imagine skipping time forward to them attending the new school. What might we see?

- What will they be wearing/ eating/ doing/learning?
- What will they do if they get lost? Who will they be asking for help/turning to for support?
- How will they be feeling/ what will they be enjoying the most?
- What activities outside the school will they be partaking in?
- How will they manage the increasing amount of homework?
- Who will they be interacting with/ learning from? How will they make new friends?

Children can record their ideas using resources that suit their needs.

Plenary: Share the children's ideas/ work.

OUTCOMES:

To be able to share my experiences and begin thinking about strategies I can put in to place when I begin my new school.

THE MY NEW SCHOOL EXAMPLE SESSION PLANNING

Session 8:

Starter Activity: Recap discussion from last week, refer to page 8-9 of the booklet. In year 7:

- What will they be wearing/ eating/ doing/learning?
- What will they do if they get lost? Who will they be asking for help/turning to for support?
- How will they be feeling/ what will they be enjoying the most?
- What activities outside the school will they be partaking in?
- How will they manage the increasing amount of homework?
- Who will they be interacting with/ learning from? How will they make new friends?

Group discussion: Exploring final feelings

- How has confidence and knowledge changed from first scaling activity?
- How do they feel sessions have helped / what could be improved?

Refer to page 9 in the booklet and ask the children to complete the exit point scaling activity.

Plenary: Present the children with certificates and congratulate them for completing the intervention. Facilitator to draw on the progress each child has made throughout the process and feedback to them individually.

OUTCOMES:

To explore my feelings before and after the intervention.

FEEDBACK FROM PREVIOUS PARTICIPANTS

Flexibility is Key

It is important to remember the intervention is a tool not a purpose and can be adapted to meet the children's individual needs. Sessions aim to be flexible, child-centred and driven by the students input.

"Dare to Deviate!

Think flexibly about the timing and structure of sessions and keep the students at the heart of the process."

(SENCO, Colman Junior School)

Have fun and enjoy the process

*"The whole thing... I don't know about you guys,
but it got me quite excited"*

(Student from a previous transition cohort)

We hope that the pupils enjoy and gain as much out of this intervention as those who have already benefited.

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- Topping, K. (2011). Primary-secondary transition: Differences between teachers' and children's perceptions. *Improving Schools*, 14(3), 268-285.
- West, P., Sweeting, H., & Young, R. (2010). Transition matters: Pupils' experiences of the primary-secondary school transition in the west of Scotland and consequences for well-being and attainment. *Research Papers in Education*, 25(1), 21-50.

APPENDIX A: THE FOUR PHASES OF INTERVENTION DEVELOPMENT

Exploration:

Two focus groups were conducted with Year 6 and 7 pupils with SEN to explore potential issues surrounding transition for pupils with SEN, and what could help these issues. Data were transcribed and thematically analysed.

Implementation:

My New School booklet was drafted based on findings from the focus groups, and the intervention was delivered to small groups of year 6 pupils.

Evaluation:

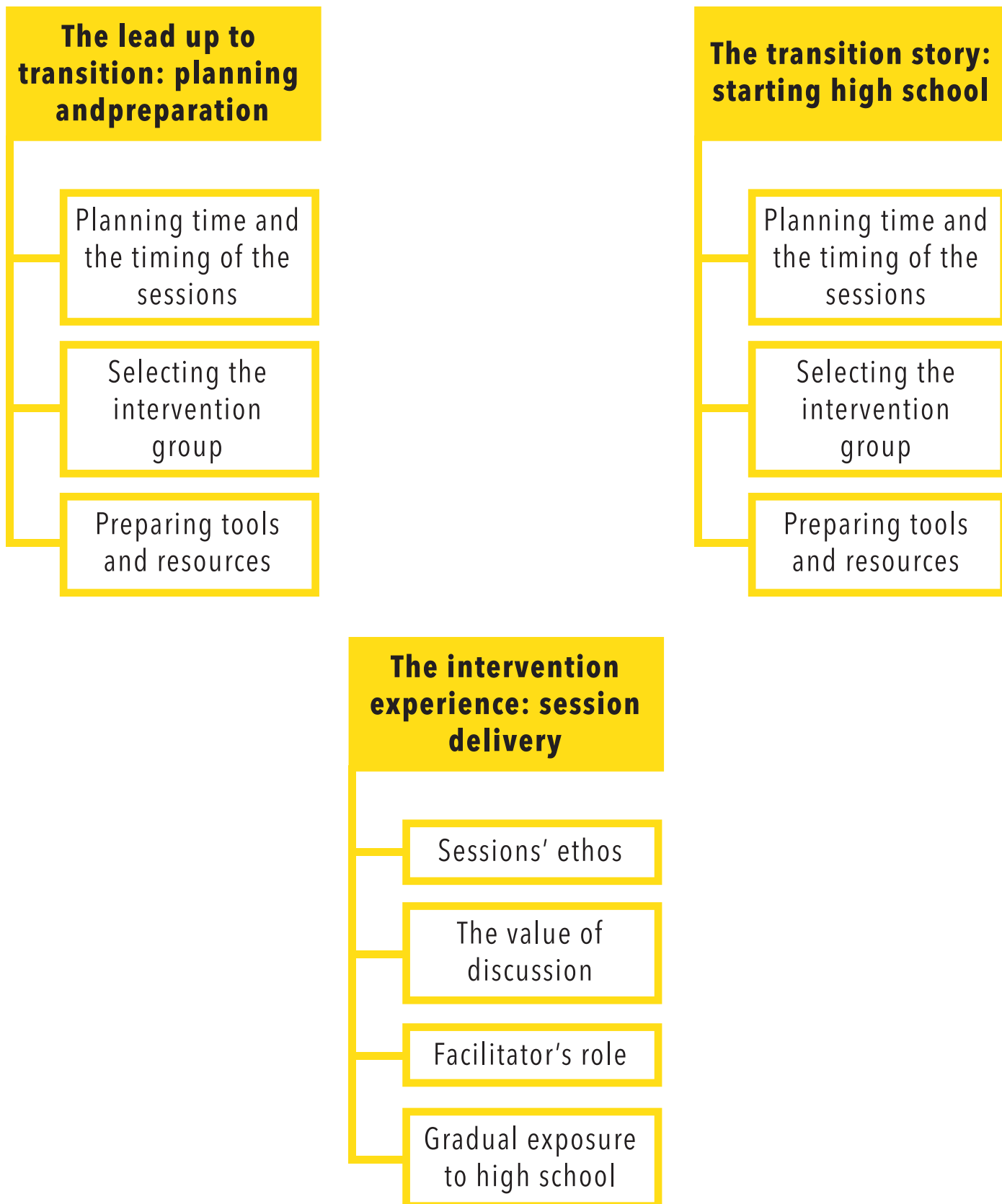
The perceived effectiveness of the project was evaluated through a final workshop, in which pupils were invited to share their opinions on the effectiveness of the project. The first booklet was produced and distributed to associated schools and findings published.

Follow-up:

New interviews were conducted with SENCOs and a group of year 7 students who had been involved in the My New School transition project. The data were thematically analysed to inform the creation of a facilitator's handbook.

APPENDIX B FIGURE 1: THEMES & SUBTHEMES

SENCO and student experiences of the My New School transition intervention: Themes and subthemes.



APPENDIX C. STUDENT SELF-REPORT QUESTIONNAIRE

Identifying possible risk factors

Name: _____ Class: _____

Did you visit a high school with a parent or carer before the application was made? (Either at an open evening or day time visit).

Yes / No (circle)

If yes, how many did you visit?

1 2 3+ (circle)

On a scale of 1 to 10, how confident are you feeling about the move to high school? (Where 0 is not at all confident, and 10 is very confident).

0 10

Not at all confident

Very confident

Do you have siblings at high school at the moment?

Yes / No (circle)

APPENDIX D. SAMPLE LETTER FOR PARENTS AND CHILDREN

Dear Parent,

We are writing to you as we would like to invite _____ to take part in an innovative and exciting intervention called My New School. My New School began as a project in 2015 after a local school identified some children who could benefit from support in the transition from primary to secondary school. The My New School intervention emerged from various phases of research and refining and has been trialled with several cohorts of children.

The intervention is fun, engaging and designed to equip your child with practical skills and confidence during the transition process.

A key aspect is that is flexible and can be adapted to fit around your child's core subjects so that minimal disruption is made within the class routine.

We are pleased to be able to offer this intervention within our school and think that your child could benefit through the 6-8 weekly sessions, which include small group discussions, collaboration with peers in a similar situation, and supported visits to the new school setting.

If you and your child are happy to participate in the My New School intervention, please complete the consent from below.

Child Consent:

I _____ would/would not like to participate in the My New School intervention.

Signed _____

Date _____

Parent Consent:

I _____ would/would not like my child to participate in the My New School intervention.

Signed _____ Relationship to the child _____ Date _____



CONGRATULATIONS YOU DID IT!

THIS IS TO CERTIFY THAT

PARTICIPATED IN THE MY NEW SCHOOL INTERVENTION

WELL DONE FOR:

DATE _____

SIGNED _____

**FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT MY NEW SCHOOL
CONTACT DR. HELENA BUNN:**

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01603 307550**



Norfolk
County Council



**Educational Psychology
& Specialist Support**



Norwich
Opportunity Area