

MOVING UP...MOVING ON!

Supporting the transition from Primary to Secondary School for pupils with an autistic spectrum disorder.



September 2009



Preface

The aim of this document is to support a pupil diagnosed with an autistic spectrum disorder who is about to undertake a transition from primary to secondary education.

The Disability Discrimination Act 2006 places a positive duty on all public bodies to promote disability equality. All primary and secondary schools maintained by a local education authority, and all local authorities themselves, are covered by the Disability Equality Duty. This means that, alongside their existing duties, all schools and local authorities will have to take proactive steps to promote disability equality for pupils, employees, and service users to

- Promote equality of opportunity
- Eliminate unlawful discrimination
- Eliminate disability-related harassment
- Promote positive attitudes towards disabled people
- Encourage disabled people's participation in public life
- Take steps to take into account people's disabilities, even where that involves more favourable treatment.

These steps should be identified within the School's Disability Equality Scheme.

Contents

Preface.....	3
What is transition?	5
Running a Transfer Group	9
Why run a transfer group?	9
How to run a transfer group?	9
What should I do on the last session?	9
Transition Checklist Year 5	11
Transition Checklist Year 6	12
Transition Checklist Year 7	14
References.....	15
Appendix A.....	16
An Example of a Transition in Torfaen	16
An example of school supporting the transition	17
Preparing for transition at home	18
Appendix B	19
Examples of social stories	19
What does a teacher know?	19
Assembly Time – How do I know when to speak?	20
Appendix C.....	21
Request for involvement from ASD Support Officer	21

What is transition?

Transition from school to school can be both exciting and daunting for any pupil. A change in environment, the geography of the school and volume of people each bring their own challenges. This can sometimes lead to a period of “melt down” as the pupil endeavours to cope, which can affect attendance levels. To support children with an autistic spectrum disorder effective and early transition planning is essential to help them realise their potential and achieve individual goals.

A transition can be considered as a movement from one thing to another. Pupils with an autistic spectrum disorder typically find transitions difficult as they may not be able to predict what such situations will be like or cope with a sudden change, thus preparation is extremely important.

Types of transitions that young people with an autistic spectrum disorder may find difficult include:

- Moving between the different structures of home and school life
- Preparing for a holiday, an activity day, a school trip, or any change in normal school routine.
- Having to wear a shirt, tie, trousers and shoes every day.
- Having a new teacher.
- Sitting at a different desk
- Moving between classrooms to change subjects e.g. moving between maths and English can be considered a transition.
- Moving to a new classroom and teacher in September.
- Moving between primary and secondary schools
- Preparing for work experience
- Preparing for the future and life after secondary school
- Preparing to start a college in September.

All of these factors (and probably more) can impact upon a pupil’s experience of school. The amount of preparation and support required for each of these transitions will vary according to the individual needs and strengths of the pupil. Where support is required the greater the work done in preparation the greater the chance of success of the transition.

A person centred approach should be adopted as a matter of course in the planning and development of services for people with autistic spectrum disorders. This involves listening to the user and making sure they are always at the centre of planning and delivery; it is also about creating and offering services that meet the individual needs and aspirations of people with an autistic spectrum disorder- as opposed to matching services on the basis of availability. A person centred approach requires services to work together. It also provides a framework for involving not just the person with an autistic spectrum disorder but also their family and wider support. The knowledge of family and other significant people (including advocates) can be invaluable in building a picture of the support needed by an individual to achieve their aspirations.

For young people with disabilities, social services also have responsibility to become involved in transition planning if the young person is known to them. For young people with higher functioning autism and Asperger's Syndrome they may not be in contact with a social worker. This can make the linking of multi-agency planning difficult, as whilst they have not previously been in contact there may be issues at transition stage that social services need to engage with; e.g. social skills support, independent living connected to a post 16 educational placement, or a need to consider other placements.

Transition planning is all about early and effective planning for a young person's future, to consider appropriate options to secure placements.

“ Primary – Secondary Transition

Throughout my life I've been reprimanded by teachers and students alike for being weird, uncooperative, stupid, weak, forgetful, slow – the list is endless... With the right teachers an Aspergers student can flourish – I'm proof of that. OK, so I may not be the most intellectually gifted person on the planet, or have many qualifications, but I began school from below rock bottom. Those teachers provided a ladder for me to get through the manhole and to climb into the average bracket... I sincerely hope I'm not the only Asperger student who was lucky like this – I really, really do.

Nita Jackson (2002), 'Standing Down, Falling Up'.



For any pupil going to a new school the transition can be a daunting experience. This is especially the case when the pupil is in the small, nurturing environment of the primary school, contemplating a move to secondary school. Undoubtedly, the consequences of a poor transition will not only impact upon the pupil's school career but also the perceptions of others towards that pupil. Indeed, later behavioural difficulties caused by a poor transition can include detachment from the new environment. There are many reasons why this transition may prove a challenge to the pupil with an autistic spectrum disorder. Here are just a few:

- **Geography of the School** – Finding your way around, coping with the environment, dealing with large, noisy crowds.
- **Anonymity** – In primary school settings most children grow up together and understand and make allowances for certain behaviours, this may not necessarily be the case in secondary school.
- **Travelling to school by bus** – allowing time to get to the bus, where to wait, times of the bus, what happens if the bus is late.
- **Following a timetable** – this is one of the most complicated parts of school life to get used to. In Primary School the child is taught by one teacher in the same classroom. They may be dependant on 1:1 support to help them with classroom activities.

- **Added responsibility** – organise their own equipment, books, writing down homework, finding the way to lessons on time.
- **Procedures for break times and lunch time and how to cope** – where to play, what to play, where to meet friends, which way to the next class.
- **Social problems** – much larger number of pupils, being the youngest at the new school, opportunities to develop social interaction.

With these things in mind, transition needs to be considered a PROCESS rather than an EVENT, which certainly needs to begin when a pupil is in Year 5 if not sooner. If we are beginning to talk about a pupil's transition between primary and secondary towards the end of Year 6, then it is already too late. An effective transition is about working in a person-centred way, and in partnership with the pupil, the family, key professionals and both schools involved.

Good working practice is already taking place within Torfaen in the form of Transfer Groups, examples are highlighted in Appendix A.

Running a Transfer Group

Why run a transfer group?

- It allows the pupil time to think ahead and to prepare themselves for change.
- It gives pupils a safe arena to talk about their hopes and fears.
- It can reassure parents of vulnerable children.
- It can reduce pupil anxiety in the first few weeks of secondary school.
- It can raise awareness of staff in primary and secondary schools.

How to run a transfer group?

- The project will work best during the second half of the summer term.
- Five or six children per group is a good number to work with. The group comprising of children transferring to the same secondary school.
- Talk to the **Head of Year Seven** and obtain; a current school prospectus, details of uniform, a copy of school rules, personal planner, map of the school, photographs, examples of timetables, etc.
- Use the '**My New School**' booklet (available from Torfaen EPS) to cover topics such as homework, school rules, break times, making friends, etc. over a number of sessions, dependent on the abilities of your group. Try to create a safe atmosphere where pupils have an opportunity to share.

What should I do on the last session?

- Invite the Head of Year 7 in to speak to the group? Or perhaps some past pupils of the primary school?
- Hand out certificates and make it into a celebration of achievement and things to come.
- Ask the pupils if they know what happens next. Give them anything that they may need to refer to over the summer holiday to take home.
- Evaluate the pupil's experiences of the group using a questionnaire or another means of evaluation.

Some pupils may require additional visual cues to help them cope with the sequence of events surrounding the transition. Social Stories (Gray, 2000) can be used to help the child learn to handle such situations. Written for the individual child the strategy helps to explain the social situation and tries to give both the perspective of others and their expectations of the individual. An example of a social story is illustrated in Appendix B.

Communication passports are an additional and useful resource to provide an overview of the pupil's strengths and weaknesses. In the summer term the ASD Support Officer will work with the pupil, family and school to complete the booklet. There are a variety of formats which can be used but each is individual to the pupil. The pupil is encouraged to give a copy of this information to their new form teacher during one of their visits in July.

With Government providing the opportunities for more mainstream inclusion for children on the autistic spectrum (DfES, 2001; WAG, 2003) the earlier the process begins the more likely the transition will be a success.

To support the transition process a checklist has been outlined for key actions to be carried out during Year 5 through to the autumn term Year 7. These are based on good working practice and recommendations from the National Autistic Society (2006).

Should you wish additional information please contact Cheryl Deneen Autism Support Officer for Children and Young People in Torfaen, or the Educational Psychologist for your school. A request for involvement from the ASD Support Officer is included in the appendices.

Transition Checklist Year 5

Spring Term	Date achieved
Primary Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO): to provide parents with relevant leaflets on transition and role of Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) Support Officer. SENCO to contact multi-agencies to organise assessments to feed into Year 5 Annual Review	
SENCO to arrange a date with agencies for a review in the Summer Term.	

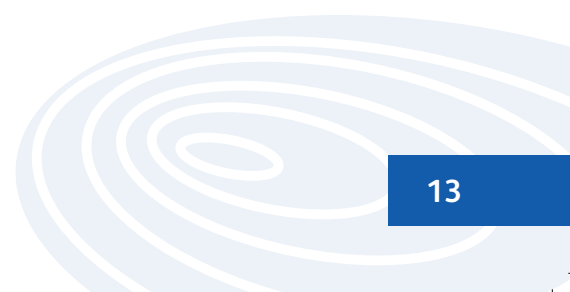
Summer Term	Date achieved
SENCO/Teaching Assistant (TA) to obtain pupil's view on their progress and transition concerns	
SENCO to arrange a meeting with parents to discuss preference schools	
If pupil is able allow them to share views for 5 – 10 minutes at beginning of Annual Review	
School to undertake Annual Review if child has statement; or school meeting if child is on the Special Educational Needs (SEN) Register	
Invite SENCO from Secondary School to review / meeting	
SENCO to assess independent skills of child to be identified within the Individual Education Plan (IEP)	

Transition Checklist Year 6

Autumn Term	Date achieved
SENCOs of both schools liaise to arrange a visit for parents to visit secondary placement at end of day	
SENCO/TA/class teacher to meet with parents to go over action plan to support needs of child.	
Identified person to ask pupil to make a list of 3 things they are looking forward to and 3 they are worried about regarding the transition (these can be addressed in Year 6)	
SENCO to brief head of year 7 and secondary SENCO regarding expectations of first contact	
Head of Year 7 and SENCO visit pupil in Year 6	
Primary SENCO to liaise with Secondary SENCO following visit and provide feedback	
Primary SENCO to decide on staff training to support the transition. e.g. role of TA during visits, teacher for transition activities	
SENCO to list key dates available for staff meetings INSET training days suitable dates for visits / meetings dates for running a transfer group	

Spring Term	Date achieved
Primary SENCO to Invite all relevant agencies and secondary SENCO to Year 6 Review	
Primary SENCO to contact Secondary SENCO at Easter to jointly complete an extended school action plus support plan.	
Child to take photos of school staff, obtain a map of the building with support of TA	
Secondary Staff (SENCO and Head of Year 7) to visit primary school and give example samples of timetables, school plans and discuss induction information relevant to the school.	

Summer Term	Date achieved
ASD Support Officer, TA, teacher and SENCO to work with pupil and family to develop their own individual communication passport.	
Secondary School to provide final timetable before start of Summer holiday	
Primary Class Teacher to complete student summary form and send it to secondary SENCO at end of the term.	
Make sure parents have confirmed transport arrangements and that the child knows what these are	
Secondary SENCO to make sure pupil meets heads of departments and form teacher (if known). Pupil can hand over the completed communication passport to their form teacher.	
SENCOs liaise to raise staff awareness of pupil's needs and deliver training packages	
Primary and Secondary SENCOs prepare behaviour plans, social stories, information sheet ready for September.	
Primary staff to Introduce changes gradually – discuss transition with pupil.	



Transition Checklist Year 7

Autumn Term	Date achieved
Secondary SENCO to identify a 'safe haven' for child to go to during particular difficult times if necessary.	
SENCO to ensure all staff have met the pupil and have copies of relevant information.	
SENCO/TA/Form teacher to familiarise pupil with routines etc. e.g. Lunchtimes, assemblies (use Social Stories to support if applicable)	
Form teacher/class teachers to identify suitable pupils for group work for each lesson.	
All teachers to introduce learning strategies that will enable the pupil to: Take notes Complete homework Organise resources Cope with demanding situations Ask for help Understand and follow instructions	
Close monitoring by form teacher, Year Head, LSA and SENCO for first term.	
SENCO to consider setting up a buddy or the use of a buddy system / circle or friends	
TA/SENCO to provide pupil with a 'time-out card' and a clear explanation of its use, if necessary.	
Form teacher/TA/SENCO to ensure pupil knows where to wait for the bus	
Form teacher to provide pupil with credit card sized timetable (laminated) to go in their pocket.	
ASD Support Officer to meet with student, school to discuss first half of the term and concerns (if any)	
Form teacher to liaise with subject teachers to discuss concerns (if any)	
Head of Year to be available for first half of the term to address parents' concerns (if any)	

References

DfES (2001) SEN Toolkit, Nottingham, DfES

Disability Discrimination Act 2006

Gray, C (2000) The New Social Story Book, Arlington TX: Future Horizons

Jackson, N. (2002) Standing Up Falling Down, Sage, London.

National Autistic Society (2006) Inclusion in the Primary Classroom NAS

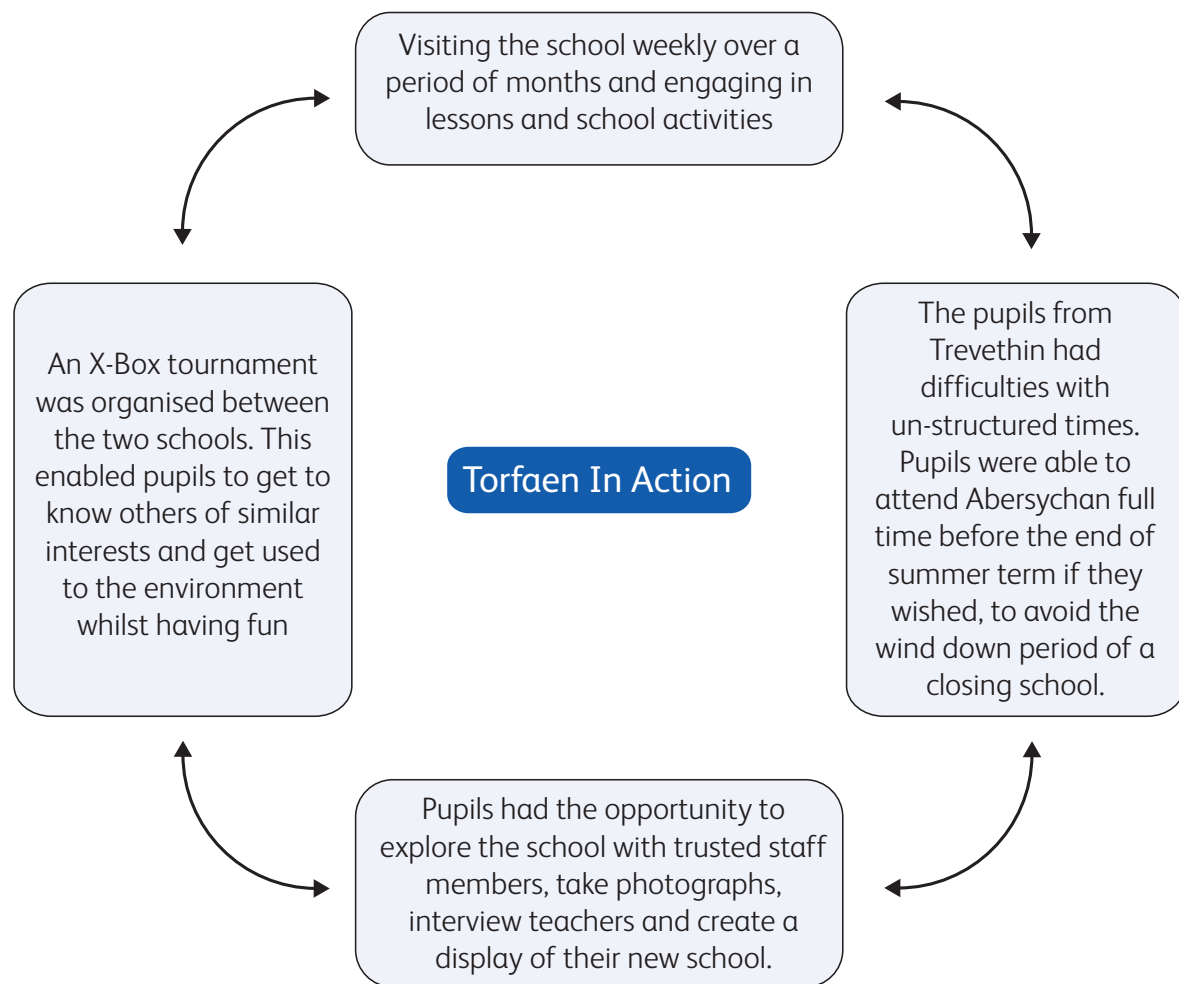
National Autistic Society (2006) Inclusion in the Secondary Classroom, NAS

Welsh Assembly Government (2003) Inclusive Education Consultation Document

Appendix A

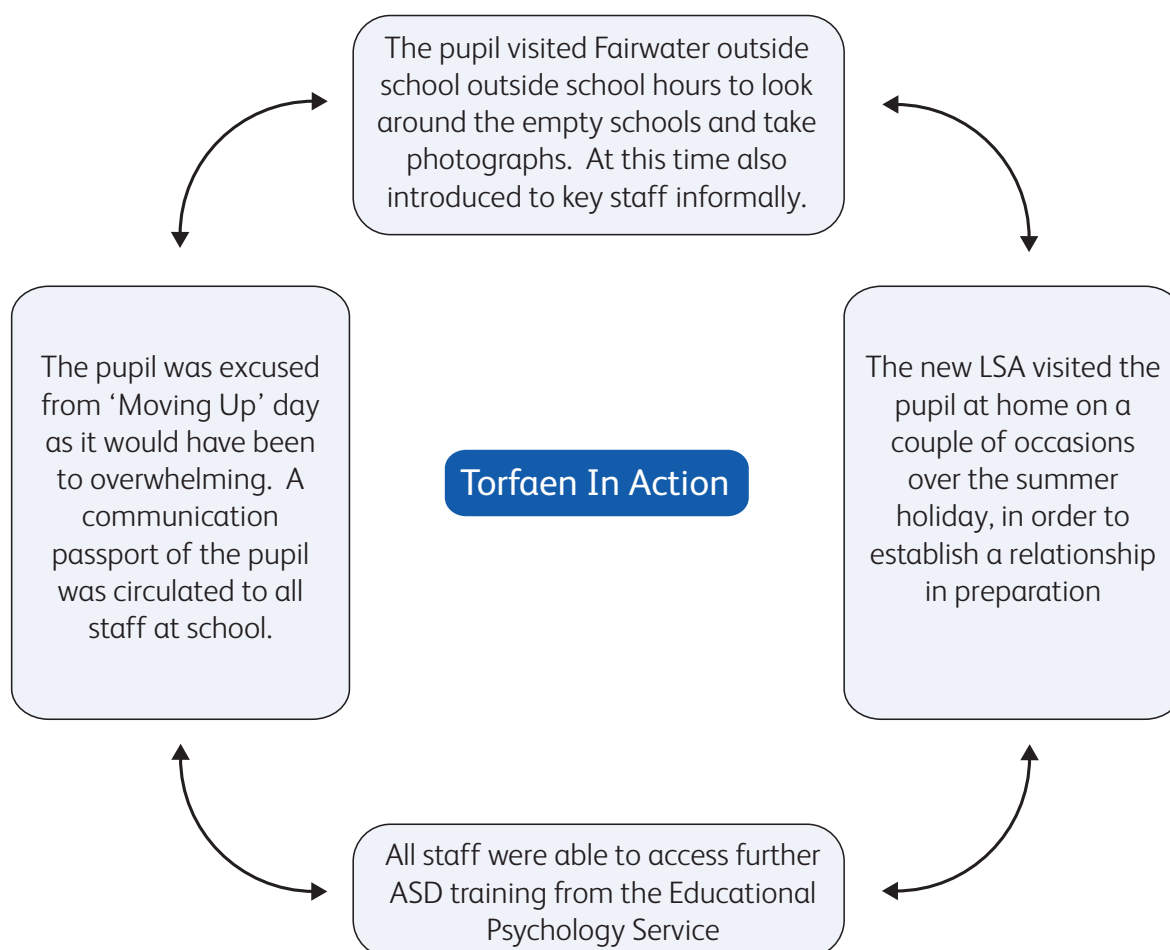
An Example of a Transition in Torfaen

When Trevethin Community School closed in 2007 many pupils transferred to Abersychan School. Staff at Trevethin and Abersychan Schools worked together to support pupils with an ASD in preparation for their new school in these ways:



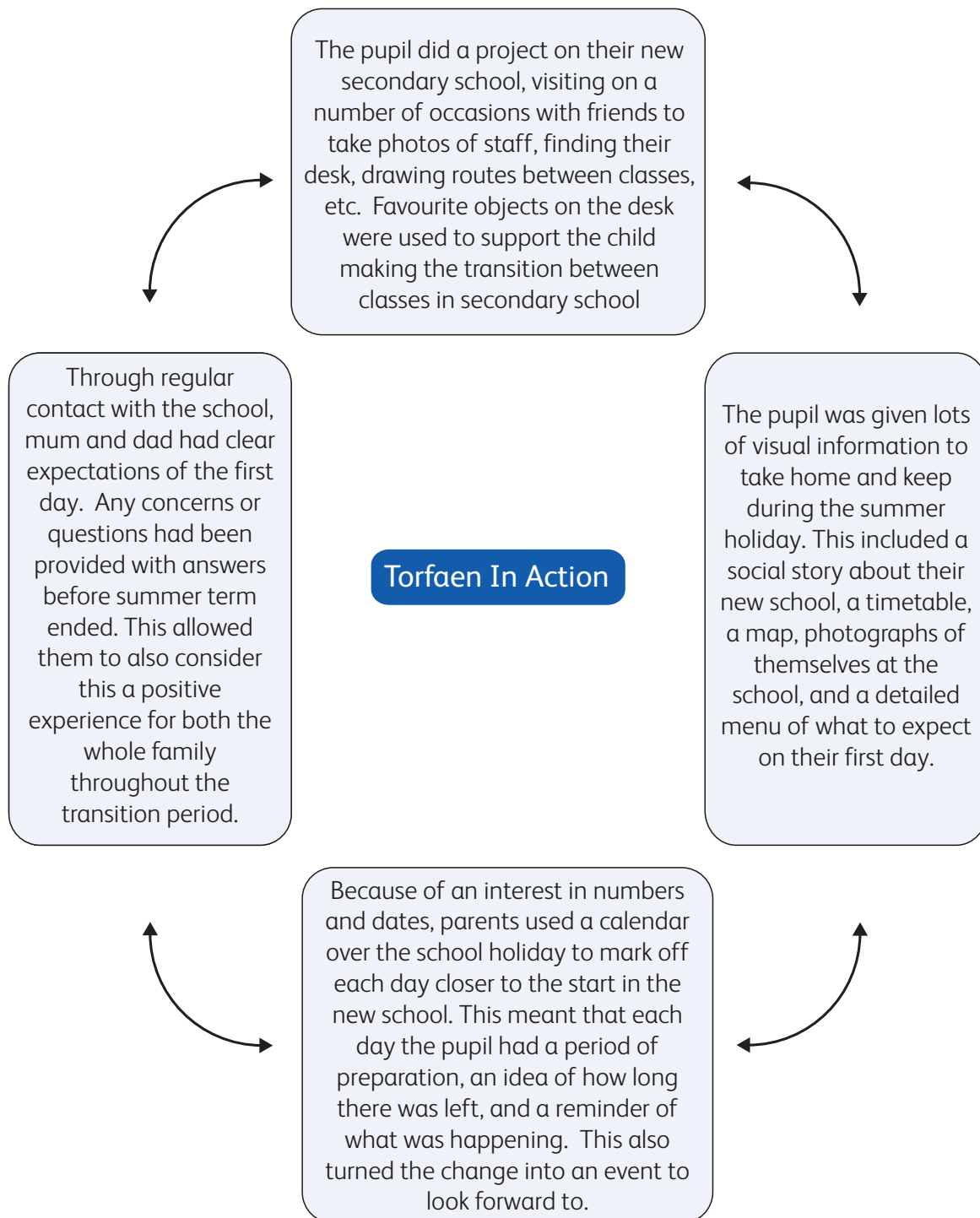
An example of school supporting the transition

Staff at Fairwater High School supported a pupil with ASD joining the mainstream in Year 7 to make a successful transition from Primary to Secondary. This involved a careful assessment and a great deal of partnership working with parents, primary school and Educational Psychology, in order to identify an individualised package of transition.



Preparing for transition at home

Here is an example of a successful transition that benefited from information received by the parents that allowed them to support their child at home in preparing for a move between primary and secondary.



Appendix B

Examples of social stories

What does a teacher know?

- My teacher knows all about children – like me!
- My teacher knows how to lead,
- My teacher knows all about “what comes next...”
- My teacher knows how to read.
- My teacher knows all about colours and shapes,
- My teacher knows numbers, too.
- It’s important to listen when my teacher talks,
- Because my teacher knows what we will do.

Carol Gray (2002) My Social Stories Book, Jessica Kingsley Publishers
ISBN 1 84310 716 3

Assembly Time – How do I know when to speak?


- In assembly, Mrs Smith and Mr Sells stand in front and talk to all the children.
- It is polite to listen to everything they say.
- It is not polite to interrupt by shouting out, or by speaking when they are speaking.
- When Mrs Smith or Mr Sells are speaking, they will hold up a red cardboard hand. When they are holding up the red hand, it is their turn to speak and nobody else's.
- When they hold up a green hand, this means other people can have a turn to speak.
- Any child or adult can speak when the green hand is held up, so long as they say their name.
- Mrs Smith and Mr Sells like it when children take turns to speak.
- When there are lots of people in the hall, taking turns is important.
- Mrs Smith and Mrs Sells cannot hear what people are saying if the children do not take turns.
- I will try to listen carefully in assembly.
- I will try to keep quiet when the red hand is held up.
- I will try to remember to put up my hand to see if I can have a turn to speak when the green hand is up.

Carol Smith (2003) Writing and Developing Social Stories, Speech Mark Publishing Ltd.
ISBN 0 86388 432 6.

Appendix C

Request for involvement from ASD Support Officer

The Form below should be completed by all Support Officers when assessing a child. It is available in electronic format to download and print as necessary.



TORFAEN COUNTY BOROUGH
BWRDEISTREF SIROL TORFAEN

ASD Children and Young People Support

Education, TCBC, Civic Centre, Pontypool, NP4 6YB
Tel: 01495 766967 Fax: 01495 766904

Personal Details Form

To be completed before involvement of the ASD Support Officer with young people and their families

Name of Young Person:	
Name of Early Years/School Provision	
Home Address:	Looked After Child? <input type="checkbox"/> Y <input type="checkbox"/> N
.....	Is the child already known to the LEA? <input type="checkbox"/> Y <input type="checkbox"/> N
.....	
Date of Birth <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/>	Gender <input type="checkbox"/> M <input type="checkbox"/> F
	In Full Time Education: <input type="checkbox"/> Y <input type="checkbox"/> N
Diagnosis:	Date of Diagnosis: <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/>

Names of other professionals/support agencies involved:

What do you think are the key needs of this child and family?

Please ask parents/carers to complete the following box, with your assistance. This is necessary before involvement from the ASD Support Officer can begin.

Parent or Carer Permission for ASD Support Officer Involvement.

Members of the relevant profession have discussed the involvement of the ASD Support Officer with me.

I give permission for an ASD Support Officer consultation about my child
..... (Name) *and for the ASD Support Officer to see my child in class or individually.*

Names and titles of parent(s)/carer(s):

.....

Contact telephone number(s):

My child's main language at home is:

My child's ethnicity is:

Any additional information or views that you wish to be recorded:
.....
.....
.....

Parent/Carer Signature(s):

Date:

Name of Individual completing Personal Details Form:

Contact details:

.....

Date:









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www.torfaen.gov.uk/education

Designed by:
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Torfaen County Borough Council
November 2009