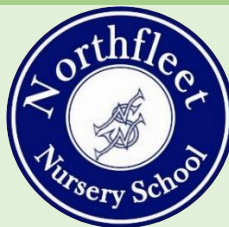


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Big Steps for Small Children: Navigating Transitions at Northfleet Nursery School

*At Northfleet Nursery School, we believe transitions are more than just logistical shifts—they're emotional journeys for our little learners. Whether it's moving from home to nursery, between classes, or preparing for school, each transition is a **"big step for small children."** So how do we make these steps feel safe, supported, and successful?*

Why Transitions Matter?

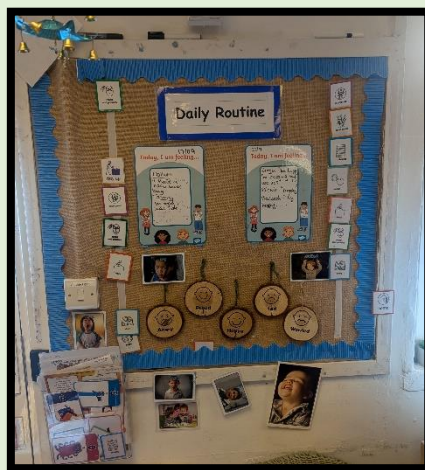
Transitions can be emotionally intense. Children face new environments, unfamiliar routines, and different adults and peers. These changes can spark excitement—but also anxiety. That's why we embed **Personal, Social and Emotional Development (PSED)** strategies into our transition planning, drawing on the EEF's Early Years Evidence Store.

What do we do at Northfleet Nursery?

Key Person Approach

- Each child is paired with a consistent adult who builds a trusting relationship with them and their family. This connection helps children feel secure during transitions. Practitioners use the EEF's "Teaching Awareness of Emotions and Feelings" approach to support children in naming and managing their emotions.

Predictable Routines



- We use visual timetables and transition songs to help children anticipate what's coming next. These tools reduce anxiety and foster independence. For example, our "tidy-up time" chant signals the end of play and the start of group time—making transitions smooth and fun.

Welcome Spaces



- Our environments are designed to be warm and inviting. During transitions, we create “soft landing zones” with familiar toys and calming activities. This helps children settle in and feel at home, especially when moving between rooms or joining a new group.

Family Partnerships

- We involve families in transition planning. Whether it’s a home visit before a child starts nursery or a shared transition diary, we ensure parents are part of the journey. This aligns with the EEF’s emphasis on professional conversations and shared understanding.

Real-Life Examples: Tizzy’s Transition

- Tizzy, a three-year-old with speech delay, struggled with moving from one classroom to the other during work time. Using the EEF’s “Promoting Self-Care” approach, we introduced a visual checklist for her morning routine. Her key person practiced it with her daily, and within weeks, Tizzy was confidently navigating her new space—choosing activities, joining group time, and even helping others settle in.

Practitioner Tips

- **Reflect as a team:** Use the EEF's Professional Development Conversation Cycle to review your current transition practices.
- **Plan with purpose:** Identify which PSED strategies are most relevant for your cohort.
- **Embed, don't add:** Transitions should be part of your everyday practice—not an extra task.

Impact:

- **Increased emotional resilience:** Children show greater confidence and independence during transitions.
- **Improved family engagement:** Parents report feeling more involved and reassured.
- **Stronger practitioner confidence:** Staff feel equipped with practical strategies and a shared language for supporting transitions.
- **Positive peer relationships:** Children are more empathetic and inclusive, often helping others settle in.
- **Improved outcomes:** Children's improved Leuven Scale scores and internal data reflected term on term gains for all our children.

At Northfleet Nursery School, we're committed to evolving our transition practices. Next steps include:

- **Embedding transition strategies into our Inclusion Framework** using KC the Inclusion Caterpillar.
- **Creating transition toolkits** for families and practitioners, co-designed with input from children.
- **Piloting peer buddy systems** where older nursery children support younger peers during room transitions.
- **Sharing our journey** through the Kent and Beyond Early Years Stronger Practice Hub to inspire other settings.



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