

Paper 1 - An investigation into transfer provision for children and young people with Autistic Spectrum Disorders

Paper 2 - The effects of school transfer for children and young people with Autistic Spectrum Disorders, focussing on positive and negative emotions reported by parents, schools and pupils

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Overview of Paper 1 (An investigation into transfer provision for children and young people with Autistic Spectrum Disorders) and Paper 2 (The effects of school transfer for children and young people with Autistic Spectrum Disorders, focussing on ASD characteristics, emotional literacy and anxiety).

The data for these papers was collected as part of a 2-stage study about school transfers for children with Autistic Spectrum Disorders (ASDs). The study has a longitudinal aspect, with data collection points during the last term at the sending school, and the second term at the receiving school. The study covered a county in the South-West of England. Parents and school staff completed questionnaires, pre and post-move, about children moving to the next school in a 2- or 3- tier system. A smaller sample of children took part in pre and post-move interviews which are included in the Paper 2. Response rates were very high for this study, emphasising the importance placed on this topic by respondents.

Information was collected about the provision of specific transfer strategies and perspectives on the whole transfer process for each child and their families which are analysed in Paper 1. A specific focus of the study was the investigation of the emotional effects of the transfers on children with ASDs presented in Paper 2.

Most of the school moves were rated as successful by parents and schools. Effective and open communication between home and school was a main factor in the perception of positive transfers. Although there is a great deal of guidance for transfers for vulnerable children, and strategies for working with ASDs, there was great variation in the extent of individual, tailored transfer strategies for children in different schools. Parents reported high levels of child anxiety pre-move, and although overall this did reduce post-move, for some children it was maintained. The heterogeneity of children with ASDs was emphasised by the variety of triggers to anxiety, and anxious behaviour identified. Despite giving overall success ratings to the move, respondents, especially parents, noted stress and anxiety for their children and themselves. The experience of a school move was found to be generally positive, but with associated situational anxiety, which in some cases contributed to considerable difficulties for children and their families. There was found to be scope for more specific enhanced

transfer planning and strategies for this vulnerable group of children that could reduce difficulties, support inclusion, equitable practice and positive learning from the transfer process.

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Paper 1

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Paper 1 - An investigation into transfer provision for children and young people with Autistic Spectrum Disorders

Abstract

This study represents the wider perspective of a 2-stage study about school transfers, for children with Autistic Spectrum Disorders. The study used a mixed methodology to investigate the experiences of children moving schools, as reported by parents and schools. Pre-move general satisfaction and post-move success ratings were high. Transfer arrangements varied greatly. Many respondents despite being positive overall about the move reported difficulties and frustrations for themselves and the children making the move. Communication between all stakeholders was seen to be a main factor in improving transfers, with an emphasis on the Teaching Assistant role and a whole school ethos towards ASD. Although strategies and guidance are widely available to improve transfer for children, not all pupils with ASDs and their parents, had access to the same level of enhanced transfer arrangements within the county.

Paper 2 - The effects of school transfer for children and young people with Autistic Spectrum Disorders, focussing on positive and negative emotions reported by parents, schools and pupils

Abstract

This paper represents the more focussed perspective of a 2- stage study about school transfers, for children with Autistic Spectrum Disorders, in mainstream education. The study used a mixed methodology to investigate the experiences of children moving schools, as reported by parents and schools, with all participants, and via child interviews with a smaller sample. School transfer (as part of a 2- or 3-tier education system) was identified as a time which can be especially challenging for children with ASDs in mainstream schools. Looking at

the emotional effects of transfer, the study found parents and schools reported high levels of increased anxiety among transferring children with ASDs. Qualitative analysis identified a wide variety of triggers to anxiety, and strategies to reduce anxiety that are being used in school and at home. Positive emotions expressed about the move were also explored. This anxiety reduced post-move for some of the children, but was maintained for some. Parents perceived higher levels of anxiety in their children than schools did throughout the transfer period, despite many rating the move as successful overall. The experience of a school move was found to be a time parents, as well as children, need the information and reassurance of a well-planned transfer, with appropriate strategies in place for their child and effective, open communication between home and schools to reduce the negative emotions that can surround change for children with ASDs, and celebrate the positive.