

Impact of Covid

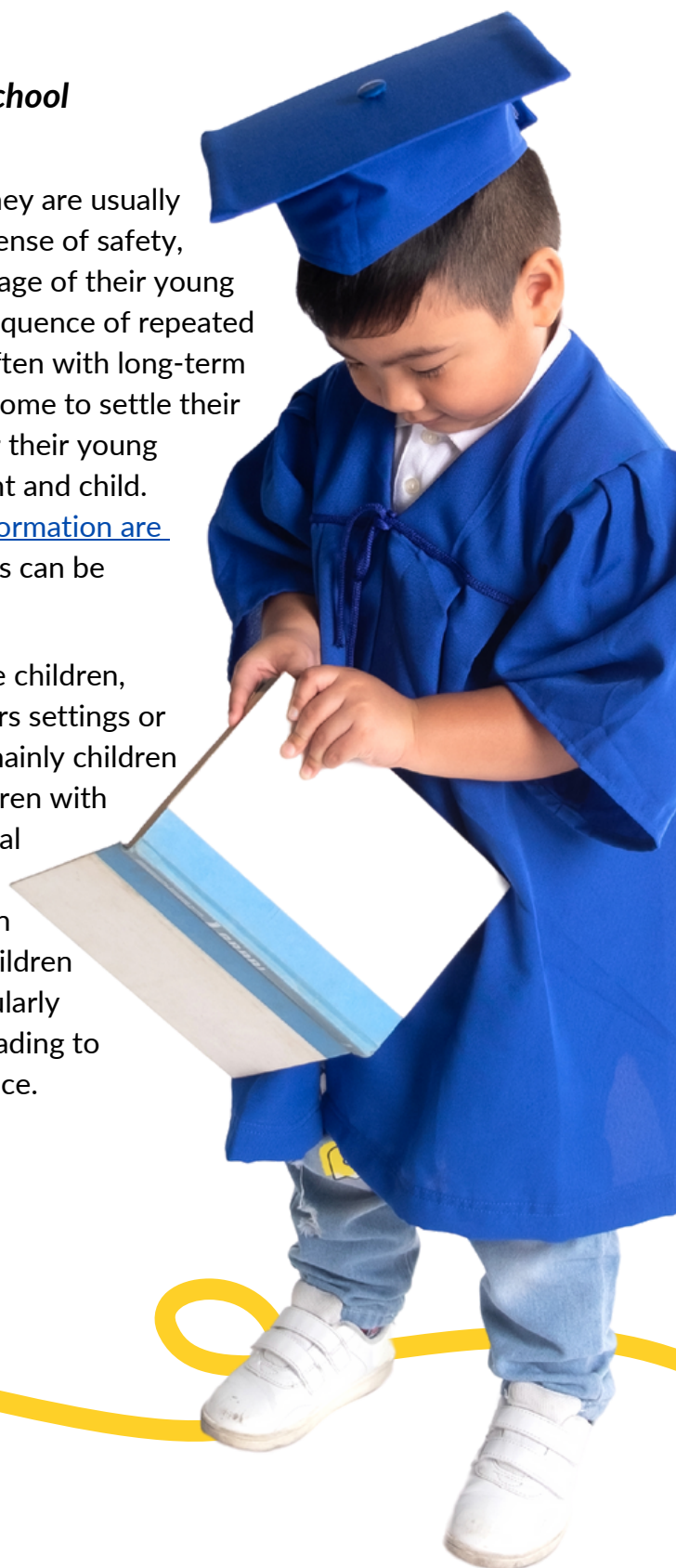
Common Challenges

Impact on Transition to Early Years Education or School

During the pandemic

Transitions are important moments in a child's life, and they are usually well supported, marked and planned. It gives children a sense of safety, reduces anxieties and increases confidence in the next stage of their young lives. Such transitions were severely disrupted as a consequence of repeated lockdowns and subsequent risk averseness of settings, often with long-term changes in practice. Where parents were previously welcome to settle their child in an early years setting, they now had to hand over their young child at the door which is often distressing for both parent and child. It also means that informal opportunities to [exchange information are lost](#) and that the relationship between setting and parents can be negatively affected.

While provisions were made to allow the most vulnerable children, including those experiencing poverty, to attend early years settings or school, the uptake of this offer was low. Instead, it was mainly children of key workers who attended settings. Parents with children with special educational needs or disability (SEND) or additional support needs (ASN) reported that their children were not offered places and that this had a particular impact on family stress levels and their ability to support all their children appropriately. Similarly, a disrupted transition was particularly challenging for children with additional support needs, leading to continuing high rates of school refusals and low attendance.



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Ongoing impact

Transition activities help build confidence and familiarity with new settings and people. Missing out on this can impact attitudes to new settings and learning itself. The focus on catching up on learning may further have contributed to children's feelings of low self-esteem, lower confidence levels and a degree of overwhelm.

There is evidence that the likelihood of children starting school with developmental delays has increased since the pandemic. [Kindred2 research](#) shows that according to teacher assessment, only half of children who started school in 2022 were reported as having 'school ready' skills, such as being able to independently dress, eat and toilet, hold a pencil and recognise letters and numbers, follow simple instructions and having basic social skills.

This is likely to divert resources from education settings, but also impact on the enjoyment of school for children.

Parents also reported in the same survey that lockdown had a particularly negative impact on the social and emotional development of their children, followed by the impact on communication and language development. They also reported that there continued to be a reduction in opportunities for children and parents to socialise post-lockdown, which had negative consequences for the school readiness skills of their children.

