

Top Tips – to help your child be ready for secondary school

Making the change from primary to secondary school can be a daunting time, both for your child and for you! This guide is for you as a parent to read and share with your child to help you both prepare for the transition.

As a parent there's lots of practical matters you'll need to consider before the start of school and thereafter.

Practical Tips

- Practice how they will get to school, buses, walking, alternative routes and problem solving (what to do if they miss the bus).
- Apply for bus pass if needed.
- Practice road safety and encourage independent skills when out with you so you can be reassured they know how to be safe – for example acceptable boundaries.
- Establish an honest and open relationship with school – if you or your child has any concerns contact your child's new school or current primary school so that issues can be addressed.
- If you consider your child as particularly vulnerable establish a key person in their new school that you can work closely with to help your child.
- Understand that although secondary school is different to primary, your school still cares for your child, if anything concerns you or them get in touch. Schools have an open door policy right the way through to year 11.
- Ensure uniform is correct and appropriate including footwear and hairstyles. Any questions or issues with regards to cost, contact school.
- Attend the Parent Induction Evening. This will tell you everything you need to know about your child starting at the school and how things work, it will also help you and the new teachers get to know each other.
- Read the prospectus including the phone and attendance policy.
- Help your child take responsibility for their belongings before they start at secondary school. Encourage them to use a locker at school to keep belongings safe.
- Help your child facilitate their homework and get in touch with school if it is too difficult.
- Set up your lunch payment account, whether it is a cashless system or your child is on Free School Meals, know how it works and what is available. Talk through the choices with your child.
- Your child will receive a planner – ensure you are familiar with the contents and check it regularly.
- Ensure children conduct themselves safely online and encourage them to concentrate on developing their friendships face to face and resolving differences respectfully.
- Ensure your child has access to their emergency medication and that school have the correct documentation with regards to their health needs.

Do you remember your first day at big school? Were you daunted by how large your new school seemed or maybe you felt a bit lost amongst all those teenagers at breaktime? How about all the new subjects, the fact that you had lots of different teachers and, of course, new school mates to try and make friends with? When preparing your child for secondary school it can help to step back in time and remember all those emotions you felt as you stood in your new school uniform and prepared to make the leap into the great unknown.

Whatever you do, don't dismiss any apprehension your child says they're feeling about starting secondary school. It's important to listen to their worries and have a think about what you can do to help.

Emotional Tips

- Try not to worry – the transition from primary to secondary is daunting for any parent. It can leave you feeling out of the loop and you can feel a loss of control. You no longer drop your child off at school and may not even know their new teachers. Your son or daughter will make new friends and this may also add to your anxiety but try not to worry as your child will pick up on this. See this as an exciting time and the start of your child's adult life.
- Communicate – don't feel you can't speak to the school. Secondary is very different from Primary but they will welcome any correspondence from you and they'll be grateful that they have your support. It'll make you feel better as well. You don't have to wait until parents evening if you've got concerns. Talking to other parents is also very comforting and will offer reassurance and you'll soon realise that you are not the only one experiencing these changes.
- Be patient – your son or daughter is going through lots of changes both physically and emotionally. They might be struggling to see where they fit with their new friendships. They may be short tempered and grumpy but try to keep your cool.
- Listen – try to spend a few minutes a day asking about how their day has been. Ask about what they're learning about and new friend but try not to pry. Let them know they can tell you anything. Have fun together and share stories from your high school days. And even help them with their homework!
- Accept – try to accept where your son or daughter is. You want to be able to change anything by trying for force the issue. Just let them know you support them and are there for them. Encourage their independence and free thinking. Try to provide a stimulating home environment where their opinions on things – such as current affairs or music - are listened to and integrated into adult conversation. Not only will this help your child to develop good social skills but it will give them a strong sense of self and help them to know their own minds. Remind them of the importance of not blindly 'following the herd'.