



Supporting your child through the change to secondary school

Starting secondary school is a significant milestone in a child's life. It marks a passage into adolescence and brings about several significant changes. They will go from being the oldest in school to being the youngest, having to find their way around a large new school with different teachers for different subjects. They will also have to take more responsibility, such as:

- Taking a new and unfamiliar route
- Meet lots of different people, make new friends and find where they 'fit in'
- Planning for each day's timetable
- Making sure they have the right books and equipment
- Doing homework most evenings, which has to fit into their routine alongside other interests

All of this will have to fit into your child's new routine, alongside their other interests and the often daunting prospect of becoming a teenager. It can take time for children to adjust to these new responsibilities. The pressure to 'keep up' academically and socially can feel overwhelming – but there are simple ways you can get ready together and develop skills for coping on an ongoing basis.

Preparing My child

Check in regularly with your child and remind them it's normal to feel both excited and scared, nerves actually prepare us for challenges.

It may take time for them to get settled and they may get things wrong as they get used to a new situation-and that's ok, we learn by our mistakes

Encourage them to talk to an adult in school if they are worried about anything, for example, missed homework deadline or forgetting equipment, it's better to own up than be found out.

If you are worried about your child's mental health and wellbeing: -

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/talking-to-children-about-feelings>

<https://youngminds.org.uk/find-help/for-parents>

<https://mindedforfamilies.org.uk/young-people>

<https://www.place2be.org.uk/>



Preparing myself

The first years of secondary school can be difficult for families, young people may explore their identity by trying new things, taking risks, breaking rules and putting their friends' first. Adolescence is happening!

Keep the lines of communication open, although you may have to be creative, perhaps when cooking or driving so they feel less pressured. Don't push as this could make them less likely to talk. They may choose to confide in a friend, this is normal, don't be offended.

Please remember that your child still relies on you and boundaries are needed to keep them safe. Choose your battles well. Is it worth getting upset over messy bedroom? It's their room and if they want their clothing washed, they have a choice 😊

Look after yourself, self-care can be as simple as having a cup of tea, going for walk and getting enough sleep. All of this helps you to be there for them.

If you are concerned regarding your own mental health and wellbeing: -

<https://www.hertsmindnetwork.org>

<https://www.samaritans.org>

Planning the journey to school

If possible, find at least one other neighboring pupil who is going to the same school so that your child has a travelling companion.

Travel the route to school together a few times so it becomes familiar and use the buses if that is part of the route and what to do in an emergency (safe space, missed bus etc.)

If the Local Education Authority (LEA) provides transport costs, make sure to apply for a bus pass in good time and impress on your child the importance of keeping it in safe place.

Make sure your child always has 'emergency money' (separate from any other money, e.g. lunch money etc.) in case she or he forgets their pass, needs alternative transport or has to phone for help. You could also provide them with a phone card, if they don't already have a mobile phone



Getting ready for secondary school

Once your child has a place at a school, make sure you attend the open day arranged for new pupils. These days are vital to help new pupils settle in.

Shop for uniform and equipment in good time. If this is expensive, it may be possible to get help with the cost. Contact the school or the LEA to find out.

If your child feels nervous, take time to listen and reassure them that all children feel this way before starting secondary school.

Visit your LEA's website for details on assistance such as free school transport or free school meals. If your child is eligible, make sure you apply in good time.

Staying safe at school

You may worry about your child's personal safety at secondary school and it is important to ensure your child knows they can turn to you if they are concerned about anything. Bullying can happen face to face or online (known as cyberbullying), or in any indirect form that makes your child feel uncomfortable. It may happen on or off school premises or on the way to and from school.

Tell your child that bullying in any form is always wrong and that they can tell you or another adult if it happens to them. Children may find it hard to talk about bullying, but there are signs to look out for that may suggest there is a problem. Please visit [Bullying UK](#) to access further advice. In all cases report it to the school immediately.

Stay connected

Once your child is at secondary school, you may feel more isolated and out of touch with other parents and Carers as well as with the school. It may help to:

- check the school's website for details of events and attend as many as you can.
- contact the PTA (Parent Teacher Association)
- talk to your child's form tutor about any problems, it may be useful to get their school email address as calling the tutor during the school day may be an inconvenient time.
- make sure the school is aware of any changes at home, such as parental separation. Where relevant, make sure the school also contacts for the non-resident parent.



Settling into secondary school

The move to secondary school can come as a shock to both parents and children. You may feel your child isn't ready to take the responsibility for what is probably a longer journey to school, perhaps using public transport. They will usually have more books and equipment to carry around and may find it difficult to stay organised. At secondary school, your child will be expected to take greater responsibility for their own organisation. You can help to encourage this at home with the following tips:

Encourage your child to get organised for school the evening before. This can save them (and you!) a lot of undue stress in the morning. Remind them to check their timetable for the following day, pack their bag and lay out their uniform if necessary. Perhaps get a copy of their timetable for your fridge or noticeboard.

Try and resist the temptation to do everything. Your child needs to learn to manage their time efficiently and they won't do it if you get everything ready for them.

At this age, children start to want more privacy when they're getting ready. Consider organising a schedule for the bathroom in the mornings so no-one is made late by waiting.

Your child will probably have several homework tasks to complete each night, and some schools record this in a homework diary. Make a note to yourself to read and sign the diary at least once a week to make sure your child is keeping up with their assignments. In most schools now, this is online and you will be notified and be given login details. It may even be possible to know that your child has been registered as present in the morning and afternoon sessions

Have a calendar on display at home clearly marked with different equipment needed for different days (sports kit, music, projects etc.) Encourage the habit of looking at the schedule the night before and organising schoolbags there and then.

If your child is getting to school on public transport for the first time, find out if any friends live nearby so they can travel together.

Use every opportunity to keep in contact with the school - this may be more difficult now that classes are bigger and your child has many different subject teachers. However, if the school has a website, be sure to check regularly for information updates and news.

Once your child has started school, make time to talk and listen to your child each day to check how things are going. Just giving attention in this way can help your child feel supported and more confident. However, resist the temptation to ask too many questions, especially when a child first gets home from



school and is likely to be tired, hungry and short-tempered from coping with many new people and things. Around the dinner table you could ask “what went well today?”, you could even start the conversation with what you did today.

Think about changes you need to make at home so they have the time, space, privacy and energy for homework

Encourage them to join lunchtime or after-school clubs. They are a great way to make friends. If after half a term they really don't enjoy it, they can drop it.

Pretty soon you will both become accustomed to secondary school life but give your child a few weeks to settle in, ensure you have school contacts for any situation and the schools preferred means of contact.

Further transition resources

<https://youngminds.org.uk/resources/school-resources/find-your-feet-transitioning-to-secondary-school/>

<https://barclayslifeskills.com/educators/lessons/transition-toolkit/>

<http://www.manchesterhealthacademy.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/activities.pdf>