

Year Six Transition to Secondary School /College

frustrations in a safe environment, free from judgment.

Although it is perfectly normal to have some anxiety when transitioning to secondary school, some responses may require professional support. If you notice that you or your child are exhibiting symptoms such as significant changes in sleep or appetite, frequent crying, panic attacks, obsessive thinking, or social withdrawal, consider seeking support from your G.P or your child's school pastoral team as they may be able to refer you or your child to a CBT or counselling service.

Parents' views of a new school are very important to children. Talking about the school in a positive way will help your child to be positive about it. Negative views are probably best not shared with children.

What major changes might there be for you as a Parent?

It's not just children experiencing a major change! Some of the changes you may be facing include:

- Not taking them to school
- Being unable to help with homework
- Feeling uninvolved
- Not knowing their friends
- Having less control

Some of these suggestions are to do with emotional responses (e.g. feeling uninvolved or worrying that you can't help with homework). The others are facts. You will have less control! As parents/carers, it's a time to hope that everything you have taught your child in the first 11 years of their life can be put into practice so that they can keep themselves safe, resist peer pressure, make good friendships, conform to school expectations and make the most of learning opportunities.

What concerns might there be for you as a Parent?

- Safety
- Learning
- Own sense of loss
- Peer groups
- Puberty!

Many parents/carers experience a sense of loss when their child moves on to secondary school. They often feel redundant, as if they are not needed any more.

This can be reinforced with the onset of puberty when young people tend to take more note of their peers than their parents. They want the approval of their friends, not parents! This is normal, as they seek to find their own identity.

Key staff available to support with Secondary Transfer issues

Each school will have its own team of staff involved in transition and available to support. Here are some examples of the staff that may be involved:

- Form tutor
- Head of Year 7
- Assistant head of Year 7
- SENCo (Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator)
- Pastoral care staff
 - School Counsellor
 - Trained student listeners

Parents should approach the school directly for more information.

Next Steps

- Ensure your child attends Induction Day(s)
- Attend all parents evenings/ meetings
- Share any concerns with relevant staff
- Check school prospectus/ website for key information (e.g. school rule about mobile phones and uniform code – reinforce the importance of sticking to the rules!)
- Plan and practise school journey with your child
- Don't leave buying school uniform to the last minute!
- Use some of the strategies in this tips sheet
- And finally ... Be excited with and for your child as they start this new chapter in their lives.

Family Values
Supporting Families – Supporting Children

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The move from primary school to secondary school means a number of major changes for children. If there has been little preparation for the changes that occur between primary and secondary school, this can lead to the child feeling **anxious and worried** about their new school, which can result in difficulties when it comes to learning and making friends.

This **tip sheet** gives some suggestions to help you support your child through the transition between primary and secondary school and to deal with challenges that you and your child may face in this area.

Family Values
Supporting Families – Supporting Children

Tip sheet

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Intended learning outcomes of this Transition tip sheet are:

- To acknowledge how change can make us feel
- To share some common fears children have about moving to secondary school
- To understand what schools can do to support your child's transition to secondary school
- To discover some ways we can help your child make a successful transition to secondary school
- To know what to do if you are worried about your child's transition

Facts about change

- Change is inevitable and constant
- We all respond differently to change
- Your child will have experienced many changes already in their life – welcome and unwelcome
- How well children cope with change is affected by the attitude of those around them

Major changes that can affect children

- New baby
- Death or serious illness in the family
- Moving house
- Parent leaving the family home
- Moving school

Can you think of any other major changes that your child may have experienced?

A range of feelings

For most children there will be some very positive feelings associated with transition.

The prospect of meeting new people and making new friends can be very exciting, though for some children this will be a source of anxiety. If their best friend is going to a different school there may be even more anxiety.

New teachers and subjects can also be very exciting, along with the prospect of specialist learning environments such as science labs or food technology rooms.

There will hopefully be a great choice of extra-curricular activities at their new school, which will provide an opportunity for them to develop an interest in something new.

Most children look forward to having more freedom as

this will make them feel more grown up. Travelling to school independently may be part of this freedom.

As we know, we all respond differently to change, so what some children are really looking forward to (e.g. more challenging work), others are dreading! They may worry that the work will be too hard, or that they won't make new friends, or that the teachers won't like them.

Even the most confident children will have some anxieties about getting lost and the increase in homework, though some will be up for the challenge and can't wait for more work!

Bullying is likely to be of concern to most children – maybe because of rumours they have heard. All schools by law must have anti-bullying policies and the safety of pupils has been given a much higher priority in the new OFSTED framework.

Other issues

- A close friend moving to a different school will be like a bereavement for some children. It's important for them to feel they can maintain old friendships (even if these later fizzle out). Media technologies can help (texting, Facebook, etc).
- The journey to school may be much longer than at primary school – they may need to use public transport if there is no school bus (ensure they have correct change or a bus pass) and/or a long walk (comfy shoes needed!).
- They may view having older siblings/cousins at the school as positive or negative! If the older sibling has been in trouble they may worry they will be tarred with the same brush. The older sibling may resent them joining school or may have tried to frighten them with stories about certain teachers or what happens to Year 7 pupils.
- SATs results can also be a particular worry for those attending selective schools - feeling under pressure to achieve Level 5 and worrying that they won't.
- If parents/carers are positive about education and school (and particularly the school they are going to) then the child will be more likely to be positive also.
- Puberty – for girls, puberty begins around 10 or 11 years of age and ends around age 16. Boys enter puberty later than girls - usually around 12 years of age - and it lasts until around age 16 or 17. So as you can see, the onset of puberty collides with transition!

Is your child going to their first choice of Secondary school?

If your child is not going to their first choice school, they may be starting their secondary school life with a sense of disappointment or even failure (if their first choice was selective). It's therefore important for parents to be really positive about their school.

How unwelcome change affects us

There can be a range of uncomfortable emotions associated with unwelcome change:

- Moody
- Irritable
- Angry
- Sad
- Anxious
- Afraid

There's a strong link between feelings and behaviours, which is why you may notice your child being less sociable than usual or even regressing to self-soothing behaviours (e.g. thumb sucking) or behaviours they have long since grown out of (e.g. being clingy).

What do schools do to support Transition?

Each school will support transition in their own way but the following activities may take place:

- Primary school lessons focus on transition
- Secondary staff visit primary schools to liaise with teachers (and Special Educational Needs Co-ordinators if needed)
- Secondary staff visit children in primary schools to talk about the new school
- Secondary schools have Induction Day(s)
- Primary staff ensure that all necessary documents and information are passed on in a timely manner
- Secondary staff carefully consider allocation of children to tutor groups. Some schools group children according to ability before they arrive, based on information from primary schools

Helping your child prepare for Transition

- Be available to talk/answer questions. Initiate discussion if they are not talking about it!
- Acknowledge any worries/fears – it's normal!
- Help them to prepare practical things (e.g. uniform, calculator, sports equipment, etc)
- Involve them in decisions (e.g. choosing their school bag)
- Help them to become familiar with their school journey

- Make sure they attend Induction Day(s)
- Make sure they (and you!) attend their primary school Leavers' Assembly/Service
- Make sure your child eats well, gets plenty of exercise and gets enough sleep
- Maintain usual family routines
- Try to keep other changes in your child's life to a minimum
- Talk to other parents whose children are going to the same school
- Encourage them to join clubs once they start
- Encourage them to bring their new friends home (and warmly welcome them!)
- Try to get to know parents/carers of new friends

Some tips to help manage you or your child's worries

Recognise how negative and irrational thinking could be affecting how you or your child is feeling. Some examples of this type of negative thinking could be:

- Fortune telling (Believing we know what's going to happen in the future) - "I'm not going to be able to make any new friends".
- Catastrophising (imagining and believing that the worst thing will happen) - "I'm not going to be able to cope with all the hard work!".
- Black or white thinking (Thinking in absolutes and often with the words never and always) - "I always say the wrong things to people".

When you notice these patterns of thinking, try to restructure your thoughts or encourage your child to restructure their thoughts into beliefs that are rational and based on factual evidence. This is called cognitive restructuring and it can be extremely effective in decreasing anxiety/worry and improving overall mood.

Try to model positive coping behaviours as parents, talk through emotions together and try to implement some coping strategies that everyone could use at home. Some good examples of relaxation and self-care techniques could be mindful breathing, colouring, watching a funny movie, walking outside, and listening to music. If your child sees you engaging in these activities, they are more likely to employ them as well.

Encourage open communication at home. Try to help your child label their emotions and validate their feelings ("It's okay and perfectly normal that you are feeling nervous about starting a new school,") This will provide your child with an opportunity to talk about their