

Top tips for being school ready

The next few months are the perfect time to focus on helping your child feel happy and confident about starting secondary school. These top tips from the Parentkind team, our PTA members and Facebook community of mums and dads will help you get started.



Attend induction days

These aren't just for the kids to get to know each other, they're an opportunity for you to meet other parents in your area (remember kids will be travelling in from far and wide). Ask if there's a social media group or email network you can sign up to. Technology is the key to staying in touch with the school and other parents, so use the induction day to find out what's available.

Shared responsibility

With increased independence comes increased responsibility. Agree what your child will do, like hanging up their uniform, packing their bag and setting up a system for sorting books and equipment. Make sure you keep a close eye and read emails from the school so you know what they should be doing and can offer support if they misunderstand or get into a panic.

Be positive

What you say rubs off on your child, so try to put a positive spin on everything! Even if you found school difficult, or you're not a big fan of homework, focus on the positive experience you want for your child and all the exciting opportunities to come. And make sure they know you're there for support and help when it's needed.



Love the library

Libraries are a great place for studying and doing homework in peace and quiet surrounded by brilliant resources. Take your child to the local library and encourage them to seek out the school library, which is often manned by knowledgeable staff and can be a treasure trove for students.

Homework

You can expect homework right from the start, so it's worth agreeing on a routine up front. Discuss when the best time will be (shortly after they get home tends to work well), and where they should do it. It's a big adjustment and, of course, kids need time to wind down and enjoy their new friendships and family time, but making homework a priority shows you think school work is important.



Bedtime reading

With the teenage years now in clear sight, it's a good time to dig out the child development books! These are a few from our reading list: 'Get out of my life, but first take me and Alex into town' Tony Wolf and Suzanne Franks, 'Blame my brain, the amazing teenage brain revealed' Nicola Morgan, 'How to raise an adult' Julie Lythcott-Haims.

Be present (but not at the bus stop!)

Your child is about to become much more independent, so it's important they know you're there when they need you. There's a fine balance between letting them go and keeping them safe. Ask questions about their day like "what have you done today that you're proud of?" or "was there anything you struggled with today?" Family meals and downtime are great for keeping the communication going.



Read everything

Read all the information the school provides so you know what equipment your child is expected to have when they start (think uniform, PE kit, stationery and technology). The home/school agreement explains the responsibilities of both school and parents and what's expected of the pupils.

Build resilience

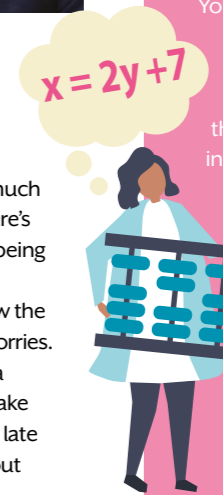
Being a little kid in a big school can be scary for some children, so make sure your child is ready to cope with new situations and able to bounce back if things go wrong. Kids are keen to fit in and it takes confidence to stay true to themselves. Encourage them to play to their strengths and develop their interests and talents.

New friendships

Starting at a new and bigger school is a great opportunity to make new friends. If your child is nervous about fitting in, reassure them that everyone is in the same boat and suggest they join some clubs – that way they'll have something in common and it'll be easier to strike up a conversation.

Brush up your knowledge

Your child may be studying subjects you struggled with at school, or that are completely new to you. While they'll be doing their homework independently, you may feel you want to understand a little more about what they're learning. If it's maths you need to brush up on, check out the family resources on the National Numeracy website or look out for evening classes on offer locally.



Who's who?

Bigger schools mean more teachers and more teaching styles to adjust to. See if there's a list of teachers available (with photos) that you can familiarise yourself and your child with. And if you have friends with children already at the school, get your kids together so they can give them the scoop on what school life is really like.

Get organised

Now is the time to help boost your child's organisational skills. Teach them how to set a routine, talk about things like 'to do' lists, packing bags the night before and checking they've done all their homework.

"The best thing I ever did was buy two of the easily lost things – locker keys, ties, trainers and jumpers."

Right time, right place

Your child's new school is likely be much bigger than they're used to, plus there's the added complication of lessons being in different classrooms. Look at the school map together, talk about how the school is laid out and discuss any worries. Let them know you understand it's a challenge but reassure them and make sure they know what to do if they're late or get lost. And remember, the try-out days really help them with this.