

Starting secondary school in September

# Tips for Parents

Supporting your child with their transition from Year 6 to Year 7



Merton's transition working group and the Virtual Behaviour Service have written this guide for Merton parents based on our work with pupils, families and schools in the borough

[www.merton.gov.uk](http://www.merton.gov.uk)



## Talking about secondary school

- Many parents and carers feel anxious when their child starts school. Try not to let it show. Remember that schools work hard to help your child settle in. You may feel conflicting emotions: proud that your child is growing up and sad that their primary school days are over. This is normal.
- In the beginning they might worry about practical things, like getting lost and having to cope with a locker. This should go in a few days, as they learn the new routine and layout of the school, explain that this will get easier as they become more familiar.
- They may also worry about the work, or making new friends. Discuss their fears and give reassurances. The work will get easier as they understand it more and new friendships may take a little time to develop.
- Ask friends and siblings to talk with your child about their new school. Who else do you know who is moving to the same school that your child could spend time with before their transition?
- Speak with your child about the expectations of secondary school and remind them of these expectations.
- Talk to key adults who may be able to support you with supporting your child, such as SENCOs, headteachers, school office.
- Ask the primary school to ensure someone from the secondary school is attending any important meetings in the summer term.

## Preparation

- Look at the school website to find out useful information to share with your child.
- Practise buying food and drink in a café. Find out how the canteen and payment system at the school work to talk this through with your child.
- Plan the route to school and do a few trial runs. Do you need to sort out a bus pass?
- Make sure to make time to eat breakfast – it provides fuel for the day.
- Does the school use a planner or diary? Spend time with your child looking at the planner to support their understanding of how to use it.
- If you have a map of the new school, have a look at it with your child to familiarise them with the layout.
- Find out about the uniform and order in plenty of time. Be aware of school policies on things like jewellery, piercings and mobile phones.
- Make the most of the transition day – support your child with identifying questions they would like to ask.
- Promote a good bedtime routine. Young people still need lots of sleep.

## Organisation

- Practise packing up all the things they'll need to take to school. Get your child into the habit of packing their bag the night before.
- Encourage your child to start taking responsibility for themselves – getting their bag ready, doing homework, and getting themselves up in morning. Some young people may initially need more support with this than others.
- Help your child with organisation – create a homework timetable, colour code the timetable so it is easy to identify which lessons they have on each day, support them with gathering resources the night before such as PE kit. You may need to continue helping with this until they can cope with this more independently.
- Make lists with your child of the equipment they will need for different lessons and day to day. This may include pencil cases, work books, PE kit, bus pass, emergency money and sanitary products.
- Find out from the secondary school and talk with your children about what they should do if they have their period at school. Who should they go to if they do not have their own supplies on that day? Contact the school to discuss this further if you find there are any issues and need support.

## Anxiety

- How is your child feeling? Rather than saying "there's nothing to worry about", it's more helpful to tell your child that feeling nervous is natural, and that everyone gets nervous when facing new situations.
- Remember to communicate with your child and discuss their concerns openly. Mealtimes can be a good place to discuss what has happened during the day and find out how they are feeling in a relaxed way. Remember to be interested not pushy.
- Many children, and their parents, worry about getting detentions at secondary school. Reassure them that if they do receive a detention, this is not a reflection of how well they are doing but an sign that something needs to change. This may be that they need more support with their organisation or their learning.
- You and your child may be concerned about bullying at secondary school. This in fact happens very rarely but it is useful to have spoken with your child about what they should do if they feel they or someone else may be being bullied. Have a clear idea of what bullying is yourself so you can support them with understanding and identifying bullying.
- Transition to secondary school is a time of great change which may cause anxiety. It may be useful to provide your child with a notebook where they can write down any worries or concerns. Being able to write them down may prevent their anxiety from escalating in the moment, such as late at night, when they are not able to do anything about that worry. They can then reflect on their thoughts at a time that is more appropriate.

# Useful websites

- Starting secondary school - BBC Bitesize
- Supporting children's transition to secondary school | Childrens mental health and wellbeing in schools | Anna Freud Centre
- How Parents Can Help With Secondary School Transition | YoungMinds
- SecondarySchool\_TransitionBooklet\_Compass.pdf (compass-uk.org)
- Preparing for the move | Parentkind
- Internet-Matters-Booklet-Moving-Up-To-Secondary-School.pdf (internetmatters.org)
- Teaching Your Child about Internet & Online Safety | NSPCC
- Advice for parents and carers (anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk)

