

# Top 10 tips for transition to secondary school

## 1 Be informed

Make sure your child has the information they need to feel reassured about how things work in their secondary school. For example, the canteen system, lockers, maps of the school, etc. Find out about extracurricular activities offered at the school in line with your child's current interests.

## 2 Become familiar

Visits or virtual tours of the new school can help children feel more familiar with the environment they will be in. Similarly, meeting teachers or seeing photos of staff can also help.

## 3 Early contact

Talk to your child's current primary teacher early on about your child's anxieties around transition to secondary school. Also inform their secondary school and keep communicating with the school once your child has started.

## 4 Practise

Take the route to school together several times before they start school to increase your child's confidence in travelling alone. Encourage your child to take responsibility for their belongings and practise getting their bag ready for school.

## 5 Connect

Make contact with other children and parents who are going to the same secondary school as your child. Your child's primary school may be able to help facilitate this.

## 6 Mindfulness

If your child is feeling anxious, encourage your them to stay in the present by listing things they can see, hear, smell, touch and taste. Encourage your child to take deep breaths and concentrate on their breathing. You could try some mindfulness exercises – consider using an app such as Headspace for Kids.

## 7 Worry box

Your child can write each worry down and post it in the box out of sight. Leave the worries in there for a week or so to see if they were worth worrying about (if not they can be torn up). Alternatively, designate a specific 'worry time' for around 10 or 20 minutes, (but not too close to bedtime), so worries can be saved up for that time. This gives the message that we are in control of the worries and not vice versa.

## 8 Communicate

Talk to your child, listen to their fears regarding their transition and respect their feelings. Maintain a place of safety and reflection – snuggle time, bike ride or whatever your child enjoys, where they feel safe to share their concerns with you.

## 9 Key adult

Consider asking your child's new school for a key adult that your child can have regular check-ins with once they start school.

## 10 Routines

Ensure good bedtime routines are established well before term starts. Try to leave enough time in the mornings to get ready as a calm start to the day can help with anxiety.



# All schools should provide:

(According to Ofsted and DfE guidance)

## School environment

- **A positive and respectful school culture** in which staff know and care about pupils.
- **Pupils feel safe:** bullying, discrimination and peer-on-peer abuse – online or offline – are not accepted and are dealt with quickly, consistently and effectively whenever they occur.
- **Inclusive:** meets the needs of all pupils, irrespective of age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation.



## Developing students

- **Awareness of mental wellbeing:** through the curriculum and reinforced through school activities and ethos.
- **Developing confidence, resilience and knowledge** so students can manage the normal stress of life effectively and keep themselves mentally healthy.



## Promoting

- **Welfare of pupils:** preventing impairment of children's health or development, and taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes.
- **Mental health:** schools should consider appointing a designated lead for mental health.
- **Inclusion:** making 'reasonable adjustments' to make sure disabled students are not discriminated against.



## ? Questions to ask schools

- What is your anti-bullying policy?
- How do you support students' well-being and mental health in school?
- How do the pastoral staff support students?
- Do you have a designated teacher for mental health?
- How do you promote an inclusive environment?
- How do you support students to become resilient?
- What reasonable adjustments have you made for students with additional needs?

## Bristol Educational Psychology Service

Based on tips from these websites:

- [schoolrefuserfamilies.wordpress.com](http://schoolrefuserfamilies.wordpress.com)
- [www.mentalhealth.org.uk](http://www.mentalhealth.org.uk)
- [www.bps.org.uk](http://www.bps.org.uk)
- [youngminds.org.uk](http://youngminds.org.uk)
- [Educational Psychology Reach-Out](http://EducationalPsychologyReach-Out)



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