

Moving to secondary school

Supporting your child through the change to secondary school



It may seem like yesterday that your child started primary school, but now secondary is looming. You may worry about choosing the right school, how you can help your child prepare and how to help them get the most out of secondary.

Your child will have to take more responsibility, such as:

- Taking a new and unfamiliar route
- Planning for each day's timetable, making sure they have the right books and equipment
- Doing homework most evenings, which will have to fit into their routine alongside other interests.

It can take time for children to adjust to these new responsibilities, as well as dealing with the prospect of being a teenager.

It's a tricky time and you may need help – that's where Family Lives comes in. This leaflet highlights the main concerns facing families at this time, but for more in-depth help you can contact us in a variety of ways (provided at the end of this leaflet).

Choosing a school

- Ask other parents or your child's primary about their experiences of local secondary schools
- Talk to your child about what they want to know before you visit any schools
- Parents and other kinship carers often report that selecting a school is stressful; it's helpful to visit potential schools with your child when they are in Year 5.

You'll have to select your child's school early in Year 6 – visiting early gives you and your child plenty of time to consider your options

- Make sure you get your child's application form in on time. Some local authorities prefer these sent via the internet – ask at your primary school or local library if you need help
- Don't pin all your hopes on entry into one chosen school. It can be a huge disappointment if your child doesn't get a place. Try to have at least one second choice you're both happy with
- It's possible to appeal against the decision if your child doesn't get their chosen place. Contact your local authority to find out more.

Be prepared

- 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 local education authority to find out
- If your child feels nervous, take time to listen and reassure them that all children feel this way before starting secondary
- Travel the route to school together a few times so it becomes familiar
- Visit your local authority'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.

Homework

The amount of homework set in secondary school can come as a shock. In Year 7, children may be expected to spend between 45-90 minutes per day on it.

Help your child handle homework by:

- Setting aside a place away from the TV for homework
- Helping them find a homework routine that suits them
- Talking to them about the task
- Checking and signing their homework diary regularly
- Encouraging them to use various resources: library/internet/after school homework clubs: whichever they prefer
- Praising them for working hard
- Making sure they get some homework-free time each week
- Not getting stressed out – if you are, your child will be too
- Talking to the school over any homework issue
- For more tips and advice visit our website at: www.familylives.org.uk.

Staying safe

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 frightened in any way.

You may be concerned about:

Bullying: this may be face-to-face or through the internet or mobile phones (cyber-bullying).

It may happen on or off school premises, or on school or public transport.

Tell your child that bullying in any form is always wrong and to 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.

If your child is being bullied through their mobile phone or on the internet it may be even more difficult for you to find out what's going on. There are steps you can take to protect your child's online safety and help you stay up-to-date with what they're doing without making them feel you are 'spying' on them. We have a wealth of information on this and all other types of bullying on our website www.familylives.org.uk – click on 'Bullying'.

Stay connected


Once your child is at secondary school, you may feel more isolated and out of touch with other parents and other kinship 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 Parent Teacher Association
- Talk to your child's form tutor about any problems
- Make sure the school is aware of any changes at home – for example, if parents are living apart, make sure the school also contacts the non-resident parent.




Family problems?

We can help with any aspect of parenting or family life, including starting secondary school


 Free¹ 24-hour, confidential **Parentline** on **0808 800 2222** for advice, information and support on any aspect of parenting and family life

 Or Skype us via our website – **www.familylives.org.uk**

We offer advice and information as well as extended support for complex and difficult issues.

 **Free textphone** for people who are deaf, hard of hearing or speech impaired – **0800 783 6783**²

 Personalised email service at – **parentsupport@familylives.org.uk**³

 **Online advice and information** on all aspects of parenting and family life

Live chat at **www.familylives.org.uk/livechat**

Give and receive support and advice from other parents and adult family members experiencing similar problems – **www.familylives.org.uk**

Advice and information for professionals working with families at – **www.familylives.org.uk/professionals**

 Face-to-face support groups and workshops. Find out what is available in your area at – **www.familylives.org.uk/localsupport**

¹From landlines and most mobile networks. ²Please note, this service is available from 9-5pm Monday to Friday.

³Guaranteed reply within three working days.

