

Moving up to secondary school

A helpful guide for parents - what to expect,
preparing your child, and support available





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Jason Benjamin



Velma Williams

Camden Parent Council foreword

Dear Camden Parent,

Welcome to the new Moving on to Secondary School booklet. This booklet has been produced to help you, as the move to secondary school can be quite an anxious time for both child and parent. Many families have a lot of the same concerns surrounding this transition and we hope that you can use this booklet to address these issues and seek further advice if necessary.

Velma and myself are Camden parents who volunteer for the Camden Parent Council. We think this booklet is very informative and we hope you find it useful with your child's secondary transfer.

Velma's son is also starting secondary school this September and below is some of her and her son's concerns surrounding this change.

We have included information on where in this booklet you can find help on how to deal with these concerns.

As a parent, what are your main concerns about your son moving on to secondary school?

- I worry about being able to help him with his homework if he has any queries or cannot grasp what he has been taught about a particular subject in school. (See 'homework' in section 2 – page 19)
- Being kept informed by the school if there are any problems with his learning or learning abilities. (See 'keeping in touch with the school' in section 2 – page 11)
- Hoping that he is able to keep himself safe from potential harm in case of bullying and also during his journey to and from school. (See 'bullying' in section 5 – page 33)
- Being an active parent in his school. (See 'parental involvement' in section 1 - page 13)

What are your child's main concerns about changing schools?

- The amount of homework he will get. (See 'homework' in section 2 - page 19)
- Rules and guidelines to learn for his new school. (See 'getting prepared' in section 1 – page 5)
- Getting up earlier to go to school. (See 'getting into good habits' in section 2 – page 7)

We wish you and your child every happiness and success with his or her secondary education.

Jason Benjamin and Velma Williams
Camden Parent Council representatives

section one

Is your child ready for secondary school?



Starting secondary school is a big step for your child. They will be moving from being the oldest in a small school to the youngest in a much bigger school. Some children will be moving with friends and classmates from primary school; others may not know anyone in their new school. For all children, there will be a lot to take in and to learn, particularly in the first few weeks.

Secondary schools are organised differently to primary schools, but your child will quickly get used to it. There are lots of ways to help and support your child as they settle into year seven and throughout their time at school. You do not need to be an expert in what your child is learning - being interested is the first and most important step.

Parents may find the teenage years can be turbulent as young people find their own identity. The move to secondary school comes at the same time as your child is becoming more independent, with more arguments and conflict. You might be anxious about the risks that teenagers face.

If you are concerned or going through a difficult time, there are people and organisations you can talk to (see section 6 for more info).

Getting prepared

Make sure your child has all the right uniform and equipment:

- **Uniform.** Please check with your child's new school to find out what is required.
- **A school bag.** Some schools have lockers, others don't, so the bag needs to be comfortable and able to carry A4 folders.
- **Pencil case,** with a suitable pen, pencils, ruler and rubber.
- **An Oyster card.** Children aged 11 to 15 can get an Oyster photocard to travel free on buses and trams. Please check tfl.gov.uk for details on how to get child fares on the Tube, DLR, London Overground and National Rail.
- **School lunch.** Packed lunch or the school cafeteria? How does the cafeteria work? Does it use swipe-cards? If so, how do you put money on it? Check what



Many parents feel anxious when their child starts school, but try not to let it show.

happens if your child is entitled to free school meals and tell the school if your child has any special diet.

- **Check the rules** on earrings, jewellery, hair and mobile phones. Some schools don't allow mobiles at all; others allow children to bring them, but ask that they are turned off or handed in at the beginning of the day and collected after school. Talk through the school's rules with your child.
- **Try out the journey.** Secondary school is usually further away than the primary school so your child might like to practise the journey with you before term starts. Are there any other children living nearby who could travel with them?
- **Before and after school.** Do you need to make arrangements for your child at the beginning and the end of the school day? The school cafeteria and library will be open quite early in the morning, and most days there will be after-school activities at school. Will your child be coming home by themselves and have a key to the house? Will there be anyone at home? If not, are you and your child happy with that or is

there someone nearby who could keep an eye out, and be there if your child needs anything?

How are you feeling?

Many parents feel anxious when their child starts school, but try not to let it show. Remember that schools work really hard to help your child settle in. Parents can feel conflicting emotions when their child starts secondary school: they can feel proud that their child is growing up and at the same time feel sad that their primary school days are over.

How is your child feeling?

Your child is likely to feel a bit nervous. 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.

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. Your child may also be worried about the work, or making new friends and

these feelings may last for a time until they begin to find their feet. During this time, they need reassurance. But don't fuss. They might feel nervous but they also want to show you that they are growing up and able to be more independent.

In the first few weeks, your child might be tired and irritable as they learn to cope with the changes. Be patient – they probably just need time to adjust to secondary school.

Getting into good habits

Encourage your child to pack their bag the night before, to avoid a morning scramble.

Have you agreed a bedtime that you and they are happy with and that they will stick to? They will be tired in the early weeks and need to get plenty of sleep. It's a good idea to get their bedtime routine going before term starts.

Make sure their timetable is somewhere easy to check like on a noticeboard or the fridge.

That way you can see which days they need to take sports kit or other equipment into school.

Get them into the habit of thinking "pass, lunch money, phone, keys" before they go out of the front door (whichever applies).

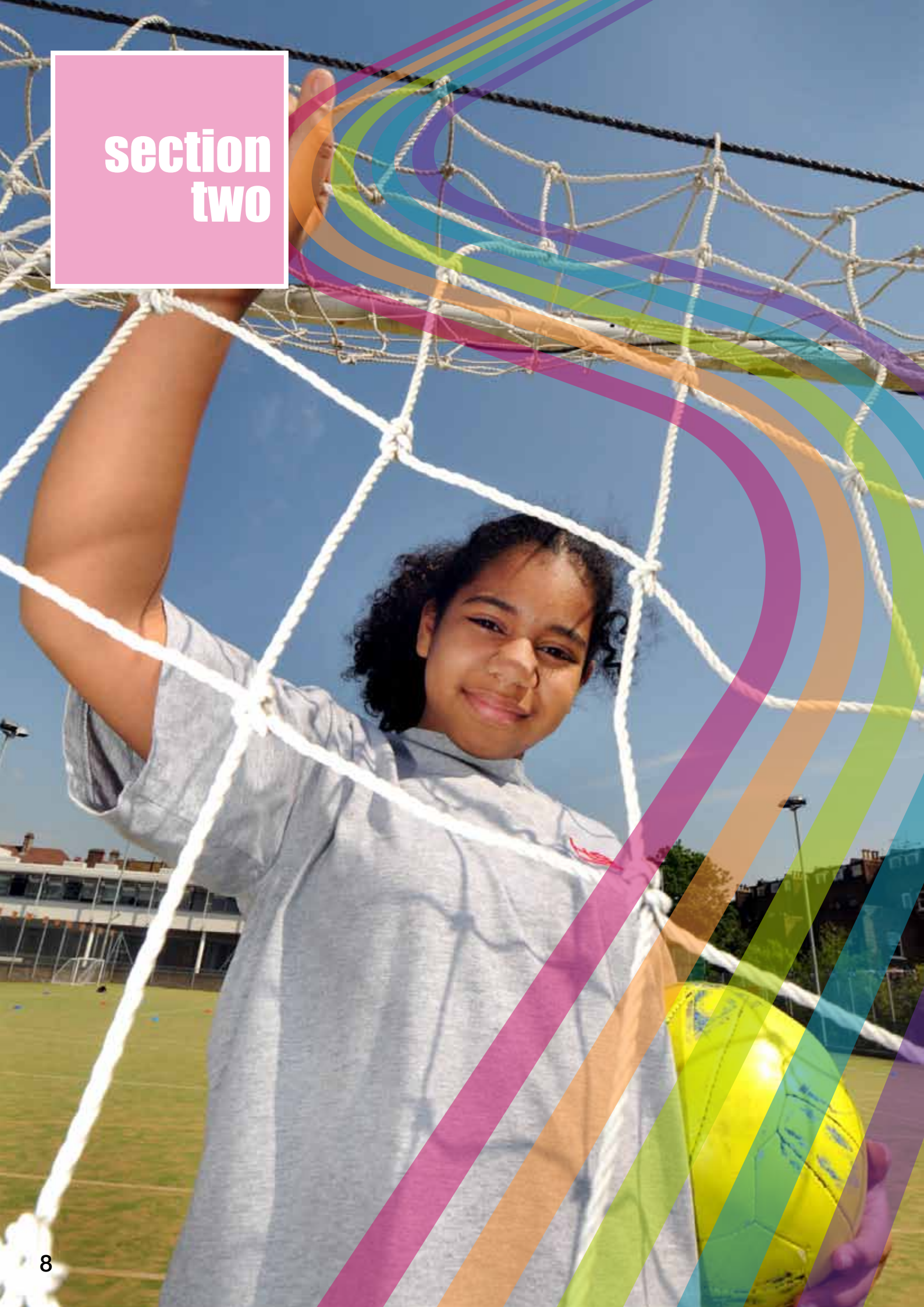
Make sure your child has emergency money in case they forget their pass or have to phone for help. But don't let them carry too much cash around.

Get into the communication habit. If they decide to go to a friend's house after school or stay at school for any reason, get them into the habit of phoning to let you know where they are.

Help them become more responsible. They all need looking after in the first few weeks, but as they begin to settle in, they need to take responsibility for their bag, their homework and getting themselves up in the morning. The more you encourage them now the easier it will be later.



section two



At school; how school works



Who's who in secondary school?

Headteacher and deputy heads

The headteacher runs the school, helped by the deputy heads and assistant heads. It is common for the deputy and assistant heads to each be responsible for a particular part of school life, such as the curriculum (e.g. maths and English) or pastoral care (health and attendance). Deputy heads may also teach.

School office

The first port of call if you want to contact a teacher. The school office will take your message and pass it on. They may be able to tell you the best time to ring the teachers or form tutor.

Form tutor

Your child will be a member of a form group with a form tutor. The tutor gets to know your child well and is usually the first point of contact for the child or the parent.

Teaching assistants

Teaching assistants work with individuals, groups and in classes. They help all children and especially children who need some extra support with learning.

Head of year seven

The head of year or pastoral team leader has overall responsibility for the progress and welfare of that year group and you can contact them if you are worried about your child. Many heads of year make their school mobile phone number available to parents so they can be contacted easily.

Learning mentor

Learning mentors work with students to remove barriers to learning. They work with students, parents and teachers to improve achievement and wellbeing.

Bilingual community worker

Bilingual community workers help parents and families of children who

have English as an additional language. They can translate and sort out problems, and help parents be involved in their children's education.

Educational psychologist

Educational psychologists are specialist teachers who come into schools to help children who are having difficulties with their learning in school. They work with children, teachers and families.

Parent support staff in schools

Most secondary schools have a member of staff who can help any parent or family in the school. For example they can help with housing or money problems; or problems at home like making sure children go to bed, and get up on time. Although they are based in schools they are often employed by a voluntary organisation.

Parent and carer counselling service

A free confidential counselling service for all parents and carers of children in Camden schools and children's centres. See page 37 for more details, phone 020 7974 6500 or email pccs@camden.gov.uk

School nurse

All our secondary schools have a link school nurse. They can give you and your child information about all health matters, and can refer your child to outside help. Many run drop-in sessions for pupils at lunchtime.

Safer schools officer

All Camden's secondary schools have a safer schools officer, who is a police officer based at the school to offer advice and to help ensure children's safety. Your child will see them walking around the school, in the playground and in the dinner hall, where they are happy to talk.

Connexions personal advisor

All Camden secondary schools have a Connexions personal advisor to help young people aged 13 to 19 to make decisions about their next steps in education and training, careers and employment.

Special educational needs and disabilities co-ordinator

Parents can contact the special educational needs and disabilities co-ordinator (SENDCO) in their school if they have any worries. These staff are responsible for making sure children with SEND receive the help they need.

Each school has a written policy that explains how it helps children with SEND. If your child has additional needs, or you suspect they may have, please inform your child's tutor.

You can find further information on camden.gov.uk/sen

Parent partnership service

The parent partnership service provides independent support and advice to parents whose children have a special educational need and disability. Phone 020 7974 6264 or email victor.baldock@camden.gov.uk

Extended services co-ordinator; out of school learning co-ordinator

Most schools will have a member of staff who is responsible for the extra-curricular clubs and activities at lunchtimes, after school and in the holidays. The school may publish a programme of activities each term so your child can choose what they want to take part in. There may be a charge for some of the after-school activities so check the information or ask the co-ordinator. Your child may also be able to start learning a musical instrument but there is likely to be a charge for this.

Remind your child to let you know when they are staying after school for a club so you don't get worried.



Does your child have English as an additional language (EAL)?

All Camden schools have an ethnic minority achievement co-ordinator and some have refugee co-ordinators whose responsibilities include:

- Identification and assessment of the needs of newly-arrived EAL and refugee pupils.
- Providing English language support and responding to their broad range of needs.

If your child is newly-arrived with little English please contact the school's EMA or refugee co-ordinator for advice and help.

Keeping in touch with the school

When your child was at primary school, you probably went to the playground, popped into the school office and were able to have a quick chat with your child's teacher and other parents. This regular and informal contact with the school helps parents and teachers have a good relationship.

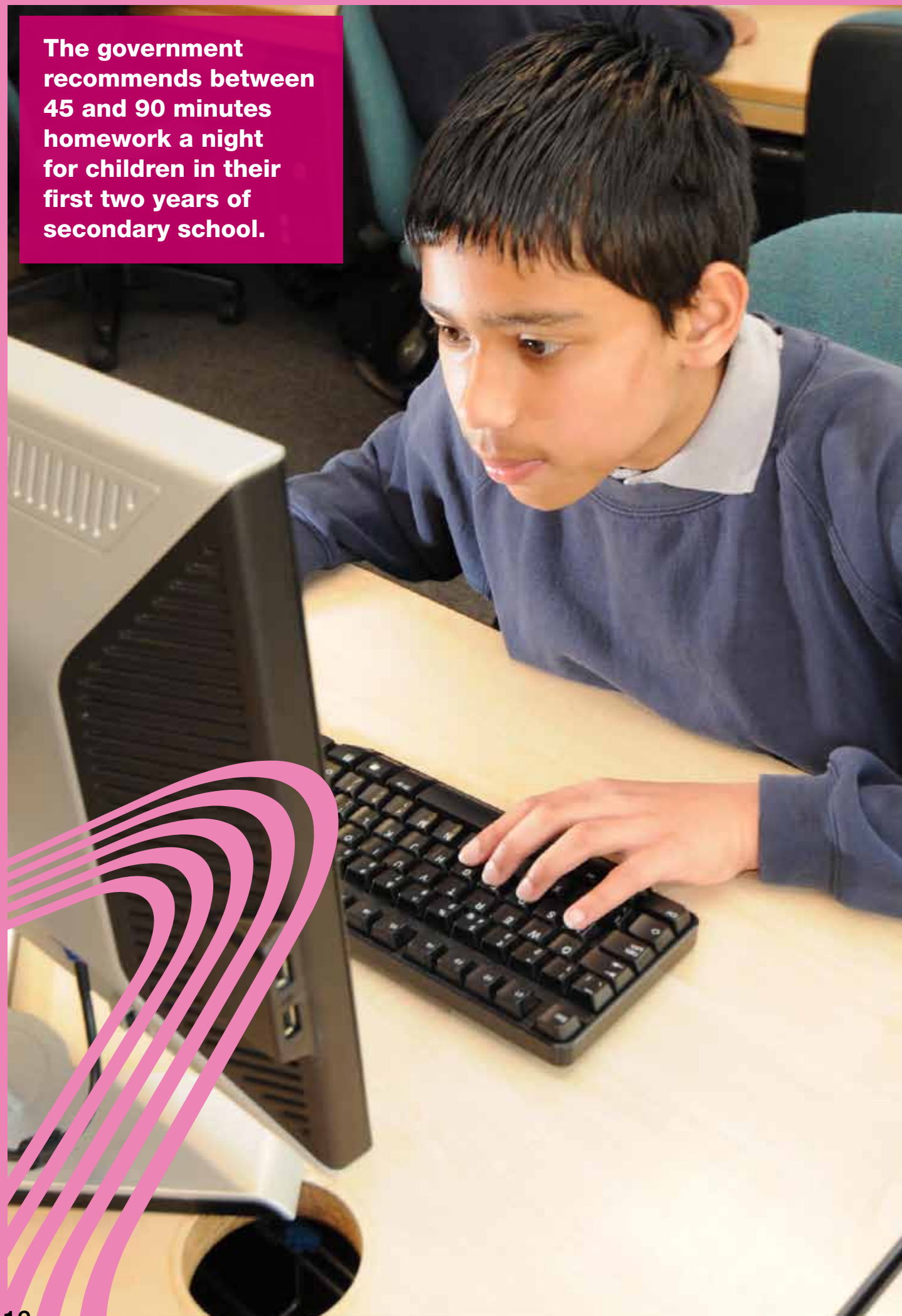
In secondary school, it is just as important to have a good relationship and keep up communication, but it can be much harder for parents. The school is often further away, your child has many more teachers, and every teacher has many more children to teach. Those informal chats disappear. Don't be discouraged. Secondary schools are very keen for you to know what is going on and encourage you to contact the school if you need to. The more you are aware of what is happening at school, the more motivated your child will be.

Tips for keeping in touch with how your child is getting on

Secondary schools organise meetings for parents before their children start. Make sure you go. You will be able to put teachers' names to faces, meet other parents and find out lots of things about how the school works.

Right from the beginning, ask your child about school and encourage them to talk about their

The government recommends between 45 and 90 minutes homework a night for children in their first two years of secondary school.



day. It will really help you and your child if you make time to chat. With their permission, go through their work in their bag, show interest and see how they are doing.

Make sure you see any letters coming home with your child from school – they often stay at the bottom of the child's bag, and you can miss important information. Ask them regularly if they have anything to give you.

Does the school produce a regular newsletter? It's a great way of keeping you informed. Many schools also have websites with information on schools activities and events, as well as the curriculum.

Make a note of the name of your child's form tutor, phone number at school and email address if they have one.

Use the homework diary or planner. You should sign the planner each day or each week to confirm that your child has done their homework. If you need information or have any concerns, write a note in the planner to the form tutor, and the tutor should reply.

All secondary, special and most primary schools use the London Managed Learning Environment, an online environment, to support learning and to share information with parents and guardians. Ask your child's school for details on how to use this and the school's own website.

Parental involvement

Opportunities to get involved in your child's school.

Pupil reports and parents' consultation evenings

Pupil reports and parents' evenings play an important part in making sure you are kept up to date with your child's progress. Parents' consultation evenings are a chance for you to discuss how your child is doing in class and in school generally with their teachers, and to decide how best to work together to

support your child's achievement in school. Your child's latest school report should help you to identify issues you want to discuss. It will contain information on your child's progress and achievement in their subjects, together with their attendance, behaviour and any special needs they may have. However, these aren't the only ways to keep informed. Remember that talking to your children about school can benefit them. If there is anything you want to discuss with your child's tutor or subject teachers, most will be happy to arrange a time to do so.

Home-school partnership agreements; pastoral support plans

These agreements help to make clear what you and your child's school can expect from each other, setting out:

- the school's responsibilities, aims and values;
- parents' and carers' responsibilities in supporting the school; and
- what the school expects of its pupils.

Helping out at school

Some schools offer parents the opportunity to help out in the classroom, with after-school activities, school events or trips.

Pupils can benefit from the support offered by an extra adult, and helping out can be a good way to find out more about what your child is doing at school.

Depending on what exactly you will be doing and how regularly you intend to help out, the school may ask your permission to carry out a criminal records check. Some schools may offer you the opportunity to train as a volunteer and get qualifications which can lead to paid work in schools.

Parent-teacher associations

Parent-teacher associations (PTAs) are groups made up of parents, teachers and sometimes others within the school community. They provide a range of opportunities for you to get



involved in school life, many of which don't take up too much of your time.

Different PTAs focus on different activities, but many organise:

- opportunities to consult parents about school issues and get feedback from them when developing school policies;
- meetings and discussion sessions to share information with parents about educational issues;
- social events for parents to get to know each other, particularly for new year seven parents to meet parents with older children;
- fundraising for extra items or services to improve facilities for pupils.

Ask your child's tutor or class teacher about getting involved in your local PTA or parents' group. If your school doesn't have a PTA, the National Confederation of Parent Teacher Associations website has advice on setting one up.

Parent Councils

Parent Councils enable you to meet other parents, discuss issues and submit ideas to your child's school. By participating you can have a say on decisions taken by the school and have an influence on your child's learning.

Parent Councils can be less formal and require a lesser commitment than being a member of the governing body, and all schools are encouraged to consider setting one up.

Camden Council has a Parent Council which is a boroughwide group for all parents to find out about services and to influence decisions that affect you and your family. For more information please contact Barbara Ludlow, parent participation and development co-ordinator, on 020 7974 7249 or email parentcouncil@camden.gov.uk

Some schools may combine elements of a PTA and a Parent Council into one group.

Governors and parent governor representatives

Becoming a school governor

Schools are run by governing bodies which work with the headteacher and senior staff to ensure that pupils receive a good education.

What do school governors do?

Governing bodies bring community involvement and perspectives from everyday life to the running of our schools. The day to day management of the school is the responsibility of the headteacher, but governing bodies provide strategic direction. They have important responsibilities such as overseeing the school budget, monitoring the curriculum, appointing senior staff and promoting high standards of achievement and school discipline.

Governing bodies are made up of representatives from the school staff, the

Council, parents, the local community and, in some circumstances, members of churches and other interest groups.

Community governors are appointed by the governing body to represent the community.

Parent governors are voted onto the governing body by other parents and are usually (but not always) parents of children who attend the school.

Staff governors are elected by teachers and other staff within the school.

Local authority governors are appointed by the Council and may be representatives of political parties.

Foundation governors are appointed by the organisation that set up the school to represent their interests.

What does being a school governor involve?

The amount of time involved for each governor depends on the school. You are likely to attend on average six governing body meetings a year (usually two per term) and you will need to set aside some time for preparation and follow up. Most meetings are after school or in the early evening.

Being a governor is a serious commitment, but it also offers great rewards such as:

- the satisfaction of knowing that children will benefit from your efforts;
- an opportunity to develop new skills and to strengthen existing ones;
- gaining an understanding of key areas such as finance, personnel and strategic planning for schools; and
- meeting people from different backgrounds with a common interest and purpose.

If you are working you may be entitled to reasonable time off work to carry out your duties as a governor.

What makes a good school governor?

All types of people can become school governors. No special qualifications are required. The most important qualities are the desire to make a difference to children's education and:

- time to get involved;
- the ability to work in a team;
- a willingness to challenge assumptions; and
- a community focus.

How do I apply?

Please ask your school for more information on how to apply to be a school governor.

Making your views known

You can contact your child's school for an informal discussion about any aspect of their education.

Schools are expected to seek the views of parents as part of their self-evaluation process.

Schools are inspected by the government body Ofsted. The school will notify you when an inspection is coming up, and you will have the chance to pass on your views about your child's school to the inspectors.

Calling all dads

A father's involvement during his child's secondary school years can have a significant positive outcome. The first years of school can be difficult for a child, but fathers can help their child adjust. When fathers give their children attention, warmth and affection it helps them adjust to new experiences, emotions and getting along with others.

Camden is committed to supporting fathers in Camden. For more information about activities and services see section 6.

Attendance at school

Going to school every day is really important for children – for their education and their friendships. Children who miss school regularly find it difficult to keep up with school work, and can start to fall behind.

Just think – if a child misses two weeks of school each year, or one day every fortnight, they will have missed out on almost a whole year by the time they finish school.

So you must make sure that your child attends school every day, unless they are not well. If your child has to visit a doctor or dentist, try to make an appointment after school or during the holidays. It is important that your child comes to school on time every day. They must be there for morning registration.

What to do if your child has to miss a day at school

If your child is ill, contact the school on the first morning of your child's illness. Staff will be worried if they do not hear from you.

If you do need to take your child out of school for any reason, discuss it with the school beforehand, and as soon as possible.

Always work with the school to minimise any effect on your child's education. If your child is going to be away for a few days the teacher may be able to give them some work to do.

Can I take my child on holiday in term-time?

Camden strongly encourages parents to take holidays when schools are closed. Schools do not have to agree to holidays during term-time. They may do so, but only under exceptional circumstances. Many people think that there is a legal right to take children out of school but this is not true.

You should talk to the headteacher about any request before you make any booking even if it is for just one day, for example for a long weekend.

Only schools can authorise these absences - if they do not do so and you still take your child out of school or you return late following a school holiday you may face an automatic fine of £100 from Camden Council. Pupils who are 'ill' either side of school holidays will be expected to provide medical proof that they were genuinely unwell.

Having problems with your child's attendance? Ask for help

Schools, Camden Council and the government take attendance very seriously. The law says that parents are committing an offence if they fail to ensure their child's regular attendance at school. Most schools have an attendance target of 95% or more.

The Council will issue a penalty notice and fine of £100 if parents take their children out of school without authorisation. Failure to pay a penalty notice will lead to prosecution, which could result in a fine of up to £2,500, a jail sentence of up to three months or a community sentence. In serious cases the Council can proceed straight to prosecution.

Sometimes parents find it difficult to get their children to school every day. This can be for many reasons – perhaps because a child isn't happy at school, or because life is just so complicated. Whatever the reason, talk as soon as possible to the head of year, who



Many people think that there is a legal right to take children out of school for holidays but this is not true.

may be able to help sort out the problem.

Most secondary schools have an education welfare officer or an attendance officer based in the school who can help with problems that might stop your child going to school. You can contact them via the school's main telephone number.

Learning

What is my child learning? How is it organised?

As in primary school, the national curriculum sets out your child's learning. It includes the knowledge and skills that every pupil should learn and also sets standards to measure how well children are doing in each subject.

The curriculum is broken down into different key stages shown in this table. When your child goes to secondary school they will start in key stage three.

Age	Stage	Year
11 to 12	Key stage three	Year seven
12 to 13	Key stage three	Year eight
13 to 14	Key stage three	Year nine
14 to 15	Key stage four	Year 10
15 to 16	Key stage four	Year 11

From 2015 all young people in England and Wales have to stay in education or training until 18. This will therefore apply to all children starting secondary school in September 2010. Post-16 education and training is offered in school sixth forms, colleges of further education, work-based learning providers and apprenticeships with employers. All students receive careers education and guidance to help them choose their courses after year 11.

Subjects taught in key stage three

All schools in Camden have to teach all these subjects from years seven to nine:

- Information and communication technology (ICT)
- Music
- Geography
- Physical education
- Design and technology
- Art and design
- Science
- Religious education
- Maths
- Modern foreign languages
- Citizenship
- English
- Personal, social, health and economic education
- History.



Subjects taught in key stage four

Schools will help you and your child decide what they want to study in key stage four. A child has more choice about what subjects they take in key stage four (years 10 to 11) onwards when they start their GCSEs and other courses. Some subjects are still compulsory for all schools, some are optional.

Compulsory subjects

- English
- Mathematics
- Science
- Information and communication technology
- Physical education
- Citizenship
- Religious education
- Careers education.

Your child's school may also choose to make other subjects compulsory. These might include a modern language, an arts course or personal, social, health and economic education.

Optional subjects

There are other subjects that your child can choose. These might include history, geography, art, music, design and technology, a language, business studies, health and social care, leisure and tourism.

The government's booklet about the secondary school curriculum, called The Learning Journey, has information about each subject and how children are tested. You can download it from parentscentre.gov.uk

Levels and tests in key stage four

At the end of key stage four, in year 11, most pupils will sit GCSE exams. All students will take English, maths and science. Some will take all GCSEs, others will take a mixture of GCSE and other qualifications, such as BTECs or GNVQs. Your child's school will give you information about the different options and tests at the end of year nine, when your child has to choose their options for years 10 and 11.

The Camden 14 to 19 Partnership

Students can choose from a wide range of courses, including:

- GCSEs and A-levels
- Diplomas
- Young apprenticeships and apprenticeships
- Foundation learning.

The Camden 14 to 19 partnership includes all Camden's secondary schools, Westminster Kingsway College, and work-based learning providers, and works together to ensure a broad and balanced range of options for all 14 to 19 year-olds.

Connexions

Connexions is a service for 13 to 19 year-olds, giving information and guidance on careers, employment and training. If your child is thinking about what next after 16, and would like to get some information or to chat things over with an adviser, get in touch with Connexions. Every school in Camden has a Connexions personal advisor based at the school.

You can get information, advice, guidance and support from the Connexions personal adviser as well as gain access to a range of other services. You can find us at the centres listed on page 43. Please phone to make an appointment before visiting.

Homework

Parents want to know what their child is learning at school and to be able to help them learn at home. Homework at secondary school is very different from primary school and your support for homework is even more important. Do you feel you cannot help your child in the same way? You might feel more in the dark about what your child is learning, or particularly later on, that you can't help with some subjects. If you want to find out more about what your child is learning, or how you can help them, ask their form tutor.

The government recommends between 45 and 90 minutes a night for children in their first two years of secondary school, covering several subjects. This is considerably more than at primary school and it can make the school day feel very long and tiring. Children need to get used to a new homework routine, as well as the new routine at school, and this is where you can really help.

Homework hints for you and your child

Don't worry

Most secondary schools will understand that your child will take time to get used to the workload, and will not overwhelm them with homework in the first few weeks.

Take homework seriously

It's easy to let children skip pieces of homework, particularly if they are tired in those early days. But it won't help your child if you give them the idea that homework doesn't matter. So, give lots of praise when they do their homework on time and try hard. Negotiate with your child a time that suits you both. Help out by going through the subject together – make it fun.

Getting into a routine

Take time and effort to help your child establish a routine that suits them and you. Getting it right in year seven will set them up well for the next few years. Give them lots of encouragement and praise for keeping to it.

When?

What is the best time to do homework? Straight away when they come home from school, or do they like to relax first for an hour? Talk to your child about what works best. It's probably a good idea to have it all done before your evening meal so they can relax, watch TV, talk to you and friends before going to bed. When they are doing homework, suggest that they take a break after 30 to 45 minutes.

Where?

Where should they do their homework? If you can, find a quiet space for your child to do their homework. You can do this even if your children don't have separate bedrooms or space for a desk.

Here are some tips to help:

- Have a time when all your children do their homework in the living room or round the kitchen table - and make sure the TV is off.
- If your child does their homework in the living room, make sure that the other children are doing something quiet. But don't be worried if your child wants to play music while working - many young people find it helps them think.
- If your children share a bedroom, have one child do their homework from 4pm to 5.30pm and the other from 7pm to 8.30pm and make sure that the other children leave the bedroom. You can get them to share any room like this.
- If you have more than one child who will need to use your computer or laptop, agree on time slots for each child. Give the youngest child the earliest time slot first.
- Perhaps organise a fun trip related to the topic your child is learning at school, e.g. visit a gallery or museum.

To help or not to help?

If your child asks for help, that's fine. It doesn't mean that they won't learn how to do it themselves. Talk to them about how to plan and what to do first. Encourage them to try, even if they are finding it hard. Help them think about different places to find the information they need: books, the internet, newspapers. Don't forget libraries - many libraries have computers with internet access as well as books.

Some children like to do their homework with a friend.

Homework clubs

Your child may find it easier to concentrate and more enjoyable going to a homework club. Homework clubs can also help to

avoid arguments at home about space and computers. Many schools and some public libraries and community centres have after-school homework clubs, with resources and computers that young people can use.

Dealing with homework problems

After a few weeks, your child should have got used to their homework routine. Most children will do it most of the time and the most important thing you can do is relax, and remember to encourage and praise them. But it's worth keeping an eye out for warning signs that problems might be developing.

Is your child getting fed up with a particular piece of homework or particular subject?

Listen and find out why they are upset. Is it because they don't understand a particular piece of homework? Is it one subject that seems to cause them problems? What would they like from you? They may just want you to listen to them and say it's okay, or they may want help working out what to do. It might be a good idea to suggest a break and to come back to it later. If things don't get better after a few weeks, you may have to talk to their form tutor.

Is your child doing too little?

Do you think that your child is spending too little time on their homework, doing the minimum or less? Have they had detentions for late homework? Check in their homework diary each night and talk to them about what they have done. They may not realise more is required, particularly in subjects like English or history or geography which can need essay-style answers. Check how much time they spend on their homework over a fortnight, and if you are still worried, you may want to speak to their form tutor.

Is your child doing too much?

Sometimes, it may seem that your child is putting in too many hours doing their homework. Keep an eye out that they are



not going over and over their homework trying to make it perfect. They really shouldn't be spending more than one and a half hours. If your child is regularly spending a lot more time than that, you need to have a word with them, and perhaps the teacher. Is it because they do not understand something, or are they worried that it isn't good enough? Better to get to the bottom of a possible problem in the early days.

Are there lots of arguments about getting started?

Sometimes it can feel that you are spending all your time trying to get your child to do their homework. Has homework turned into a battle? Why? Take a step back. Make sure you know what homework is expected, explain to your child that you expect them to do the homework at a certain time and that there will be consequences if they don't. Then let them

take the responsibility. Perhaps your child just needs to set their own routine without you breathing down their neck.

No life outside homework

Don't let other after-school activities and friends fall by the wayside. Homework is important, but so are the rest of their lives. In those early weeks and months, making new friends, getting settled and exploring the after-school activities is just as important.

More homework ideas and tips

There are a lot of websites offering ideas and practice on homework, exams and revision. Try:

- bbc.co.uk/schools/parents/work
- parentscentre.gov.uk
- educationandlearning/whatchildrenlearn
- learningathomeoutsideschool/homework

section three



Living with a teenager



Moving to secondary school is only one of many changes that will be happening to your child in the next few years that can make the early teenage years a challenging time. Your child grows up very fast in these next few years, and your relationship with them will change.

Physical changes

Children start puberty at different times: some will have started at primary school, but most will start in the next year or so. Many children go through puberty with no problems or anxieties, but many will be anxious about the changes in their bodies and emotions, and need to be prepared beforehand.

It's good to talk, but there are also many good books and leaflets around about puberty. You can find further information and tools at youngpeopleinfocus.org.uk

Emotional rollercoaster

Has your delightful and chatty child turned into a silent and snappy

pre-teen? Just at the time when you want to know everything about their life in the new school they stop talking. They will probably want to spend more time alone. It will seem that they only want to spend time with their friends and when you try to talk, you will be told to go away.

But young teenagers still swing from silence and grumpiness to wanting cuddles and hugs and to be treated as a child, and it's hard to know when they want what. It's just a sign that they feel uncertain about themselves, their physical changes and the strong emotional swings. Keep talking with them, give them space and privacy and make it clear that you are always willing to talk about anything that's worrying them.

Independence and negotiation

Children starting year seven are likely to be getting to and from school on their own, or with friends. They also go out further on their own, perhaps to the cinema, shopping or sports. Now is the time to negotiate some rules about independence and safety.



If you talk openly and honestly with your child it will help them to make informed, safe choices.

- Agree when they should phone you. Some ideas are: if they decide to go to a friend's house after school; if they change their plans; when they arrive at their destination. The important thing is to make an agreement and make sure they and you stick to it.
- Make an agreement about bedtime. A lot of children have TVs and computers in their bedroom, and can end up going to bed really late, even during the school week. If your child doesn't get enough sleep, they will find it difficult to concentrate at school.
- Organise and agree when they will do their homework.
- What about going out during the school week? If your child wants to go out on a school night, check that they have done their homework and agree a reasonable time for them to come home.
- What about more control over their money? Do they have pocket money or an allowance? Agree what it should cover and make them responsible for it.
- What is your view on them trying alcohol and cigarettes? In the next few years, they are very likely to be offered them – now is the time to talk with them, to make sure they have the information they need, that

they are aware of the hazards and that they know your views.

- Finally, as children grow up, the parent has to step back. Letting go and allowing them to spread their wings, and still being there for them is one of the hardest and most important acts of love a parent can show for a child.

For more help and advice please see section 6.

How are you coping?

For most of the time, most parents can cope with everything that their teenager can throw at them. But sometimes, we all need a helping hand. It might just be asking someone for information; it might be being able to talk to someone at the end of the phone. Occasionally, parents need more help to cope with a particularly difficult problem.

Asking for advice and help doesn't mean that you have failed. There is a huge amount of information and advice available on everything from sleeping, to eating to behaviour to coping. You can find information from your school, on the web, in leaflets, at the end of a phone or face to face, whatever suits you best. See section 6 for more information.

You and your family have a right to expect good services to support you as your child grows up, not just when there are problems. So don't feel that you don't have a right to ask - you do. Camden has a strong commitment to do all it can to make its services family-friendly, and to help parents raise their children confidently and positively.

Tips for getting on with your teenager

Be interested

Show an interest in what they are learning at school but don't be surprised or upset if they don't say much. It's enough to show that you think school is important.

Eat together at least once a week

Sitting around the table without the distraction of the TV is a crucial time to listen to what is going on in your child's life.

Have fun together

Is there anything you might enjoy doing together? Going to a film, museum, evening class or learning something new together.

Keep fit together

Is there any physical activity you would all like to do as a family? It could be anything from swimming to Frisbee, from walking to dancing or jogging.

Teenagers taking risks

As your teenager grows up, you will probably be worried about the things they might get up to. Some teenagers might experiment with drink, smoking, drugs or sexual relationships, testing their limits and yours in what is acceptable behaviour.

In secondary schools, pupils have an opportunity to talk about these issues in personal, social, health and economic

education lessons. These classes help them to make good judgements, develop self-confidence and learn about taking responsibility for their own health and safety. The kinds of issues covered in PSHEE are:

- Sex and relationship education, including teaching about HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted infections. Parents have the right to withdraw pupils from part or all of SRE, except for those elements that are included in national curriculum science.
- Drug education, including alcohol and smoking education.
- Health, emotional health and wellbeing, including bullying.
- Identity and society, including keeping safe.
- Financial capability.
- Work-related learning, including careers education.
- Discussions covering a range of moral and ethical issues.
- Visits from outside agencies, like the local police and drugs agencies to talk about the issues facing them.

As a parent or carer, you play a key role in your child's learning about sex and relationships. It's important to talk to your children about sex and relationships and find out what they are learning in school, and to talk about your views but also to listen to your child's views and listen to their questions.

Don't panic, you do not have to explain everything in detail, often a simple explanation will suffice and you can add to this as your child gets older.

If you talk openly and honestly with your child it will help them to make informed, safe choices when it comes to sex and relationships. It's important for parents to discuss the different types of relationships and reinforce the idea that someone who loves you will not pressure you.

For more advice on how to talk to your child about puberty, sex and relationships please

contact the Family Planning Association at fpa.org.uk or 0845 122 8690, Monday to Friday.

Some children may go beyond what might be considered normal risk-taking behaviour and find themselves in difficulties. If you are worried your child is in danger, or in serious problems, there are people to talk to. See section 6 of this booklet.

You can also phone Parentline Plus on 0800 800 2222 for help and support.

At what age can they...

As they get older, teenagers have more and more legal rights – and responsibilities.

Working

The law is a little complicated. Fourteen is the minimum age children can work (part-time only), and there are strict rules about how many hours 14 and 15 year-olds are allowed to work. See childrenslegalcentre.com for detailed information.

Driving

A 16 year-old can get a provisional licence for a moped. From 17, a young person can get a provisional licence for a car or motorbike.

Money

A child can have a bank account from birth, with the parents able to operate it. From 13, most banks offer cashpoint cards, and over 16s can get a chequebook. No one under 18 can have an overdraft or credit card. For information on benefit entitlement please visit direct.gov.uk

Sex

The age of consent for heterosexual and homosexual relationships is 16. Young people over 16 can get contraception from the doctor without their parents' consent. Doctors and other health professionals can also give under 16s contraceptive advice if they think that the young person is mature enough to understand. They do not have to inform the young person's parents.

Alcohol

The law says that under-16s can go in a pub if they are with an adult, but cannot have any alcoholic drinks. But pubs can have certain licensing regulations that allow them to ban anyone under 16. Young people aged 16 or 17 can drink beer, wine or cider with a meal if it is bought by an adult and they are accompanied by an adult.

At 18, young people can drink in a pub. It is illegal for anyone under 18 to buy alcohol in a pub, off-licence, shop or elsewhere. And in most cases, it is against the law for anyone to buy alcohol for someone under 18 to drink in a pub or a public place.

Knives and guns

Carrying a knife or similar object in a public place, including schools, is an offence. Shops must not sell knives to children under 18. Headteachers can search pupils and their possessions if they have reasonable grounds to believe the pupil has a knife.

No one under 17 is allowed to have an air rifle.

Sitting around the table without the distraction of the TV is a crucial time to listen to what is going on in your child's life.



section four



Out of school activities



Activities for teenagers outside school hours

Camden offers a huge range of things to do for 11 to 18 year-olds. Some activities are based in school, others in the community. Encourage your teenager to make the most of the many opportunities – they may find something that they love. And if parents work, it is reassuring to know that their child is involved in a club or activity after school or during school holidays. Please visit camden.gov.uk/outofschoollearning for lots of information.

After-school clubs and activities

All secondary schools offer a wide range of after-school clubs, which may change each term. After-school clubs offer all sorts of activities like arts, sports and ICT as well as homework, revision and catch up or boosters in specific subjects. These clubs can help your child meet other children outside their own class, as well as learning new skills. Some schools publish a timetable of after-school clubs at the beginning of each

term or put it in the school newsletter. It's worth encouraging your child to sign up.

Some schools offer summer schools for year six pupils before they start in year seven so they can get to know each other and the school and get involved in a variety of activities. They may also offer holiday sports weeks or courses for children from primary school to help them get used to being in secondary school.

To find out more about what is on offer ask your child's form tutor, head of year or the school's extended schools co-ordinator.

Things to do in Camden

There are many out of school activities available for young people throughout Camden offered by the Council, supplementary schools and local community centres. Your child can take part in a range of positive activities in many of Camden's play and youth projects, ranging from arts and crafts, drama, dance, music, health and lifestyle workshops to day trips and residential trips, both during term time and on holidays. Activities



are planned with children and young people and are designed to enhance their personal and social development. All youth projects offer accredited programmes such as Duke of Edinburgh Awards (DofE Awards), Arts Awards, AQA unit awards and ASDAN.

If your child is interested in taking part in DofE, they can do so through their school from the age of 14 or through Camden DofE Open Award Centre. For more details call 020 7974 5074.

If your child is interested in getting involved in voluntary work or would like to be part of the Camden youth forums or youth council, they can do so through youth projects or by calling the integrated youth support service (IYSS) on 020 7974 7253.

COO-L (choice and opportunities online) project

If you are in school years nine to 11 and live in Camden you could qualify for a bursary of £15 a month to spend on activities. Young people with learning difficulties, disabilities and looked-after young people also qualify.

Activities range from sports and music to theatre trips or courses, such as drama tuition, climbing wall, martial arts and many more - have a look at our website COO-L.com for more details on activities.

The COO-L (choice and opportunities online) project means you can claim the equivalent of £180 for a year. The credit is available if you are in school years nine to 11 and up to 1,200 places are available for the next year as part of the project. We want schools, parents, youth groups and young people to get in touch and ensure local teenagers don't miss out.

How does it work?

Once you have registered, you can use the COO-L.com website to book activities in or outside the borough, with parental consent. You can book activities online and check how much credit is left in your account each month. We will send you a confirmation email and text message to say your booking has been accepted. A reminder email and text message will be sent one or two days before you are due to attend your activity.

If you don't spend the £15 total, the amount will be carried over up to a maximum of £80.

Camden COO-L is run by the Council's integrated youth support services.

Find out more

To register or for more details visit COO-L.com or contact David Ingham and Jeffrey Rock on freephone 0800 599 9575 or email coo-l@camden.gov.uk

Your child can take part in a range of activities in many of Camden's play and youth projects.

During the holidays...

There are usually lots of events for young people during the holidays. In the summer holiday, Camden offers a very wide range of activities, like sports, ICT, film-making, music, drama, as well as helping children develop their study skills and interest in different subjects.

For teenagers, there is the Camden Summer University (CSU), offering up to 100 courses during the summer holidays. Call CSU on 020 7281 2908 or visit cmdn.co.uk/summer

You can find out about lots of different events and activities for young people on our young people's website: cmdn.co.uk

This site also offers online booking for Camden's summer university courses. The site will give you and your child lots of ideas but, as it is aimed at young people aged 13 and up, make sure you check the age range each activity is available to. For events and activities you can do as a family, check out: camden.gov.uk/whatson

For more information please contact Camden family information service.
Telephone: 020 7974 1679
e: fis@camden.gov.uk
w: camden.gov.uk

section five



Problems and difficulties



Behaviour at school

Schools have high expectations of children's behaviour. Each secondary school has its own rules on behaviour, but they all share a commitment to respect, good manners and children's safety and security. Your child will be expected to take themselves and their behaviour seriously and show respect and good manners to staff and their fellow students.

All schools have a pastoral care system. That usually means that a senior member of staff is responsible for a team looking after the personal and emotional needs of students. Staff will contact parents if they have concerns about a child and talk to them about ways to help. The pastoral care team also has links to help outside school, for example to counselling services.

Bullying

Many parents worry about bullying in secondary school. Everyone in Camden is working hard to make the borough a 'bully-free zone'. Our schools work with families, the Council, the police and the local

community to tackle bullying. All Camden schools have anti-bullying policies. You can ask to see a copy of the policy when your child starts school.

What is bullying?

Bullying is when someone repeatedly and deliberately hurts another person or makes them unhappy over a period of time. People can be bullied for almost any reason. Whatever the reason, bullying is never acceptable and nobody should have to deal with it on their own.

There are lots of ways that bullies can make life miserable for the people they pick on.

Physical: Hitting, kicking, spitting, slapping, stealing or demanding money, threatening violence or damaging property.

Verbal: Name-calling, insults, making racist, sexist, homophobic or sexual remarks, making offensive (or silent) phone calls.

Indirect: 'Blanking' or freezing someone out, spreading gossip, graffiti.

Help your child to find ways of feeling good about themselves and to learn to sort out differences without using violence or aggression.



Signs of bullying

Be alert! Is your child...

- getting miserable on Sunday nights?
- often hungry (is their lunch being taken?)
- often without money although they left home with some?
- walking far out of their way to get to or from school?
- not sleeping?
- coming home with belongings lost or damaged?
- coming home with unexplained injuries?
- no longer seeing friends?
- becoming quiet, withdrawn, snappy or aggressive?

These are signs that something is wrong. Parents and carers are often unaware their child is being bullied. Many children, particularly as they get older, choose not to tell adults they are being bullied.

Cyber-bullying

Most parents know about 'happy slapping' but bullying can also mean getting threatening text messages, abusive or silent calls or upsetting pictures. One in five children say that they have experienced this kind of bullying.

Pass on this advice to your child:

- Never reply to an abusive text – it will just encourage the bullies.
- Don't reply to a missed call if you don't know the number. If it's genuine they can leave a message or call back.
- Don't give out any information about yourself when replying to a call or message.
- If you don't recognise the caller ID, or it comes up as unknown or withheld, let it go to voicemail.
- Keep abusive texts or pictures. These are an important record if the police need to be called.
- Only give your mobile number to family and close friends and tell your friends not to pass it around.
- You can always switch off your phone.

Tell an adult if you are worried or scared.

If the bullying carries on, you could change your mobile number. Some phone companies will let you change your number free of charge. Check with your company.

Ten tips if your child is being bullied

- Listen carefully to your child and talk calmly through some possible ways to deal with the problem. Make it clear that your child does not deserve to be bullied.
- Don't delay; contact the school immediately. Talk to your child's tutor about how to sort out the problem, and how both you and the school can support your child. If the problem does not improve ask to see the head of year to discuss it further or the headteacher.
- Talk to your child about safe ways in which they can deal with a bullying situation (i.e. talking to friends, a parent, teachers, mentors, other relatives).
- Don't suggest fighting back. This generally only makes the problem worse.
- Keep a written record of everything that is happening (time, place, names and any witnesses) and the action you have

taken. If your child is injured as a result of bullying, keep a doctor's record or photograph of the injury. If belongings are damaged, a photograph is helpful.

- If your child is being bullied outside school, inform the school immediately.
- Ask to see the school's anti-bullying policy.
- If all else fails, you may want to speak to a member of the school's governing body or write to the chair of governors.
- Don't take matters into your own hands by confronting the bully or their parents directly.
- If you want more advice, support or information, contact the individuals or organisations in section 6 of this booklet.

If you are worried your child is involved in bullying

- Ask your child for their side of the story and why they are bullying.
- Make clear to your child that you think bullying is unacceptable.
- Contact the school immediately. Discuss with your child's teacher ways to help your child to change his or her behaviour.
- Set realistic and firm guidelines to help your child to control and change his or her behaviour. Address what might be causing your child to be angry or distressed at home or with friends.
- Help your child to find ways of feeling good about themselves and to learn to sort out differences without using violence or aggression, or hurting others.
- If the situation is serious you may want to get help for your child. Ask the school to get in touch with an educational psychologist or education welfare officer. You may wish to speak to your GP.
- Use the list in section 6 to find out where you can get additional help, advice or support.



If things go wrong

Most children settle into secondary school within a few weeks. It is natural for them (and you) to feel anxious during the first few weeks, but as they find their way around and begin to make new friends, they can begin to relax and enjoy the new challenges.

Some children, however, find it much tougher. If they still seem to be struggling after the first few weeks, it's worth putting some time and effort into helping them get used to their new school.

Keep talking to your child about how they're getting on, and just as importantly, take time to listen, even if it takes a while for them to talk to you. Don't forget that they might be

feeling worried and lonely but finding it hard to talk to you.

Remind them that they are not the only one finding life hard. Even children who may appear very confident can feel as nervous as anyone else.

Be positive. Encourage your child to think of something good that happened at school, and make sure that after-school time is enjoyable.

Is your child being bullied? Look in our section on bullying for more information and advice. Don't panic and assume the worst. Most children have a happy and fulfilled time at school, even if it's a bit of a struggle at first.

Trouble at school

For a few children, things continue to go wrong at secondary school. These children may not have got used to secondary school from the beginning, or problems may develop slowly over time. If things show no sign of improving, or if the school has contacted you with concerns about your child, you can get help and advice from the school and other services.

Some of the help you can get

Schools are linked to many specialist support workers such as psychologists, counsellors and social workers who work with children and parents, as well as teachers. They are experts in how children develop and learn. If your child is having difficulty with their learning and behaviour at school, or if you are finding life at home difficult, they can help. If you want to find out more speak to your child's head of year.

- Parent support advisers and home-school liaison officers are employed by the school to work with parents to improve their child's attendance, and help to get parents and the school talking to each other.
- Learning mentors are based at the school to help pupils with their education and behaviour. The mentors might be in the learning support unit, or in the pupil's usual class.
- Some parents find it helpful to attend a parenting workshop or course. If you want to find some support for yourself ring the Camden family information service on 020 7974 1679. You can also phone Parentline Plus on 0808 800 2222 for advice.

Serious problems in and out of school

Most young people and their parents get through the teenage years without having serious problems. But a few teenagers do find these years difficult, relationships can deteriorate, problems can seem too big to sort out and extreme solutions might seem

like the only answer. Check out section 6 of this booklet. It lists organisations that offer advice and help for parents with children who are having problems.

Depression and mental health problems

Many young people may feel sad or low occasionally and for some, this turns into depression. It can be triggered by a number of things: parents divorcing, falling out or losing friends, moving home, not doing well at school, worries about sex and relationships or sexual identity, worries about their appearance.

You can also request a meeting with the secondary school's SENDCO teacher to discuss the problem. If necessary the SENDCO may make a referral to Camden CAMHS (the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service). Camden CAMHS consists of a number of services in Camden for children, young people, their families and carers who are experiencing emotional, behavioural and mental health problems.

As a parent, it can be hard knowing how to help your depressed child. Mental health experts suggest:

- It's really important to get help for your teenager.
- Listen to your child, and try to give them understanding and support - don't dismiss their feelings as just something teenagers go through.
- Find someone for you to talk to. Young Minds, for example, is a charity that gives information, advice and help about young people's mental health and runs a helpline for parents. They have produced some very good factsheets on depression, eating disorders, anxiety and other mental health problems affecting young people. Go to youngminds.org.uk

The Parent and Carer Counselling Service (PCCS) is a free confidential counselling service for all parents and carers of children

in Camden schools and children's centres. Twelve weekly sessions of 1-1 counselling are offered in a private room in your child's school or children's centre during term-time. Counselling sessions are a confidential space to talk and think about worries or changes in any area of your life and move towards finding solutions. Parents and carers self-refer for counselling using the application form in our leaflet or by contacting the PCCS co-ordinator on 0207 974 6500 or email: pccs@camden.gov.uk

Eating disorders

These include anorexia, bulimia and binge eating disorders. Teenage girls are at the greatest risk but eating disorders affect boys too. The child is likely to be secretive about it, so parents may miss many of the signs. They may not share their feelings about their body with you. They may also exercise, vomit and take laxatives secretly. Understanding an eating disorder and having the information about where you can go to find out more is a good first step towards beating an eating disorder. For more information, contact Beat (formerly the Eating Disorders Association); details are in section 6.

Exclusions

Schools must have policies, procedures and staff training in place that promote good behaviour and prevent poor behaviour. These behaviour policies must be widely publicised so that pupils, all school staff and parents are aware of the standards of behaviour expected of pupils and the range of sanctions that can be imposed.

The school's behaviour policy should be available on the their website or provided in a school induction pack.

The school has the power to exclude pupils, either for a fixed period or permanently, but this should be a last resort. If your child is in danger of exclusion, the school will want to talk with

you about trying other options first. If you want more information about what happens when things go wrong at school contact ACE (the Advisory Centre for Education). ACE provides free information and a dedicated phone line for Camden families on exclusions, admissions, bullying and special needs.

Antisocial behaviour

Antisocial behaviour can mean different things to different people. What a teenager might think of as a prank, other adults might view differently. It's worth keeping an eye open – don't forget that children can feel pressurised into taking part in antisocial behaviour by their friends. If you are worried that your child might be getting involved, talk to them and help them see what consequences there might be. If you want to talk about it confidentially you could ring Parentline Plus on 0808 800 2222.

The police can return to their homes children under 16 who are out unsupervised in public places after 9pm, even if no offence has been committed. A few young people get ASBOs (antisocial behaviour orders) to protect their communities and to try to change their behaviour.

Running away

Teenagers might threaten to run away; a few might leave for a few hours and a very small number do run away or go missing from home. No matter how difficult a parent's relationship with his or her child might be, running away or going missing is extremely distressing for everyone, and can be very dangerous for a vulnerable young person. If you are worried that your child might run away, get help straight away. Parentline Plus can help you talk through difficulties in your relationship that might be contributing. If your child has run away, phone the police immediately.

Even if your child hasn't run away, you may be having arguments about them letting you

know where they are, or not coming home when they promised. Teenagers want and value their independence and don't want to feel that they are not trusted. But parents need to know that their child is safe. It's worth establishing a few ground rules early on:

- During the school week, if they change their routine, for example, go to a friend's house or the park, they should phone or text you to let you know.
- Agree a time for coming home at weekends.
- If arrangements change, they should contact you.

Sexual health, drugs and alcohol

Sex and relationships

Talking to your child about sex and relationships can be quite daunting. Here are some tips on how to approach this topic with your child:

- Don't panic – you do not have to explain everything in detail. Often a simple explanation will suffice and you can add to this as your child gets older.
- If you talk openly and honestly with your child it will help them to make informed, safe choices when it comes to sex and relationships.
- It's important for parents to discuss the different types of relationships and reinforce the idea that someone who loves you will not pressure you.

If you would like more information on any element of the topic i.e. puberty, growing up, sex and relationships please contact the Family Planning Association: fpa.org.uk or 0845 122 8690, Mon-Fri.

Drugs and alcohol

Teenage years are a time of great change for children and this can cause anxiety to many parents. If parents have any concerns about alcohol, drugs or sexual

behaviour, we would advise them to discuss this with their child's teacher in the first instance. The teacher may well recommend that a practitioner from FWD, the local young people's drug and alcohol service be contacted for informal and confidential advice. Alternatively, parents can contact FWD themselves on 020 7974 4701 and be assured of a confidential service from experienced practitioners.

Making a complaint

Parents want their children to be happy and successful at school, and all schools in Camden want children attending to enjoy their time there and to do well. But sometimes things can go wrong, when parents' concerns continue and differences of opinion develop. These can usually be sorted out quickly by speaking to the right person at the school, and it is less disruptive to the child to resolve differences quickly.

Very occasionally parents wish to make a complaint. In law, school governors have the responsibility to deal with complaints about the school, and every school must have a complaints policy, which should be available from the school office.

Camden has produced a booklet called 'parents complaints about schools – the three step process' which sets out a clear, step-by-step guide for parents on how to make a complaint. If you would like a copy of the document or for any other general advice you can contact:

The Camden Complaints Unit
Room 322, Camden Town Hall
Judd Street
London WC1H 9JE
020 7974 5644
camden.gov.uk/complaints



section six

Helpful information and contacts

Special educational needs and disabilities

Parents can contact the special educational needs and disabilities co-ordinator (SENDCO) in their school if they have any worries. The SENDCO is responsible for making sure that children with SEND receive the help they need.

Each school has a written policy that explains how it helps children with special educational needs. You can find further information on camden.gov.uk/sen or 020 7974 4530.

The parent partnership service provides independent support and advice to parents whose children have SEND. Call 020 7974 6264.

Education psychology service

Every school has the support of an educational psychologist who is a specialist on how children and young people develop and learn. They may be asked to help when pupils show difficulties in learning or behaviour.

An educational psychologist will work with a child only if the parents agree. Parents themselves may ask for their help through the school or directly through the Camden education psychology service on 020 7974 6500.

Education welfare service

Education welfare officers work with schools and families to ensure that children attend school and to offer help and advice where appropriate. You can make an appointment through your child's school or directly through the service at the Crowndale Centre, 218 Eversholt Street, London NW1 1BD. Call 020 7974 7362.

Primary and secondary school records

Schools maintain a progress report on each child and these are available for parents to see. Arrangements are usually made for parents to discuss the record each year with their child's teachers. When children transfer to secondary school, the record is passed on to the new school.

Bus passes for children aged under 18 living in a London borough and in full time education are now issued free of charge.

Free school meals

Cooked school meals are available for a standard charge. Even if you received free school meals in primary school, you must make a new application at your secondary school. Only families on Income Support, Income Based Jobseekers Allowance, Pension Credits, Employment Support Allowance (income related), asylum seekers in receipt of vouchers or an identity card and those in receipt of Child Tax Credits only with an annual income of less than £16,040 qualify for free school meals.

Please note: if you receive Working Tax Credits then you are not eligible for free school meals. Further details and application forms can be obtained from the secondary school that your child attends. Camden Council is responsible for considering the eligibility of any student attending one of its maintained schools, regardless of the student's home borough. The school processes applications. Camden residents attending schools in other boroughs should apply to that local authority for free school meals.

Help with home to school transport

Bus passes for children aged under 18 living in a London borough and in full time education are now issued free of charge by Transport for London. To obtain one you should contact 020 7222 5600. If you choose to send your child to a school further away when there is a school nearer your home with a place, you must pay the travel costs if any. If you think your child might have a serious medical, social or other reason why they would need transport to and from school, you

should ask for your case to be given special consideration. If you think your child might have a right to free travel, or if you would like a copy of the policy, you should telephone the pupil support team on 020 7974 1684.

Other financial support

Parents should note that due to financial circumstances, Camden Council is now unable to provide clothing grants for school pupils or 16 to 19 maintenance grants for either school pupils or college students. However, those students aged 16 to 19 may be eligible for an Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA). Please contact the school or telephone 08081 016 219 for more details. The Reeves Foundation is a charity that will consider applications for help with school uniform costs. Please telephone 020 7726 4230 for more information.

Books

Camden Council provides all books required for the curriculum at secondary schools.

Useful contacts for information and advice

Camden family information service

Not sure who to contact about services in Camden? If you cannot find the help you need within these pages then why not ask the family information service. They have lots of information about childcare, support for families, parenting, health, recreation and leisure, training and employment and other family related matters.
020 7974 1679; camden.gov.uk/fis

Adult learning

Beginner level courses for parents and other adults.
Family and Community Learning
020 7974 2148
e: adultlearning@camden.gov.uk
w: camden.gov.uk/whatson

Advisory Centre for Education (ACE)

1c Aberdeen Studios
22–24 Highbury Grove
N5 2DQ
t. 0808 800 5793

Barnardo's

Works directly with children, young people and their families
w: barnados.org.uk
t. 020 8550 8822

Bullying UK

Website with advice and information for parents and pupils on bullying
w: bullying.co.uk

Camden Council

w: camden.gov.uk

The Camden choice advice service

Providing independent impartial advice on applying for school places
Crowndale Centre
218 Eversholt Street
NW1 1BD
t. 020 7974 4548
e: choice.adviser@camden.gov.uk

ChildLine

A national helpline for children and young people, it also publishes information, leaflets and advice about many issues, including bullying.
w: childline.org.uk
t. 0800 1111

Connexions offices in Camden

Connexions Camden Parkway
78 Parkway
NW1 7AN
t. 020 7482 3996

South Camden Youth Access Point

82-84 Cromer Street
WC1H 8DG
t. 7974 8257

West Euston One Stop Shop

Corner of Hampstead Road and Robert Street
NW1 3ED
t. 020 7388 8303 or 020 7388 6007

Gospel Oak Youth and Connexions Access Point

44 Ashdown Crescent
Queen's Crescent
NW5 4QE
t: 020 7974 7105
w: Connexions-direct.com is full of information, not just about education, training and jobs, but also other issues that concern young people, like health, relationships, money and housing. The website also offers online advisers, and has a helpline 080 800 13 219 that young people can call.

Contact a Family

The only UK-wide charity providing advice, information and support to the parents of all disabled children.
w: cafamily.org.uk
t. 0808 808 3555

Department for Education

Sanctuary Buildings
Great Smith Street
SW1P 3BT
Tel: 0870 000 2288
w: education.gov.uk
direct.gov.uk
This government website provides a huge range of information on issues relating to education, support for families, money, health and employment rights.

Families in Focus

Families in Focus
t. 020 7974 1960 / 1982 / 2332
e: veronica.watt@camden.gov.uk

Local Government Ombudsman

10th floor
Millbank Tower
SW1P 4QP
t. 020 7217 4620
0870 0012468

Ofsted

Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
WC2B 6SE
t. 08456 40 40 45
w: ofsted.gov.uk

One Parent Families / Gingerbread

Offers advice and information to lone parents
oneparentfamilies.org.uk
t. 0800 018 5026
w: parentscentre.gov.uk contains advice for
parents on matters relating to schools

Parentline Plus

Are you feeling stressed and need to talk to
someone?
You can call Parentlineplus on their free
national 24 hour helpline.
t: 0808 800 2222
w: parentlineplus.org.uk

Parent and carer counselling service

A free confidential counselling service for all
parents and carers of children in Camden
schools and children's centres.
t. 020 7974 6500
e: pccs@camden.gov.uk

Parent partnership service

The parent partnership service provides
independent support and advice to parents
whose children have a special educational
need and disability.
t: 020 7974 6264
e: victor.baldock@camden.gov.uk

Parent Council

Helps parents to have their say about local
services.
t. 020 7974 7249
e: parentcouncil@camden.gov.uk

Parents website

Visit the Camden Parents website for
information about jobs, events and services:
w: camden-parents.ning.com

The Richard Reeve's Foundation

An educational charity that helps
individuals and families on low incomes.
2 Cloth Court
EC1A 7LS
t. 020 7726 4230
e: enquiries@richardreevesfoundation.org.uk

Supplementary schools

For more information please request a
copy of Camden's supplementary schools
directory from:
Workneh Dechasa - senior refugee and
community adviser
t. 020 7974 7319
e: workneh.dechasa@camden.gov.uk

School places

w: camden.gov.uk/admissions

Schools in Camden

w: camden.gov.uk/schools

Young Minds

This service is for parents who are worried
about their children's mental health, ranging
from behavioural problems to depression,
self-injury and mental health problems.
t. 0800 018 2138
w: youngminds.org.uk

Thank you to the London Borough of Islington
and Cambridge Education @ Islington for allowing
us to use some of their text in this booklet.

If you would like this brochure in large print, Braille,
audiotape or another language please call 020 7974 6649.

School choice advisor

Children, schools and families

Camden Council

218 Eversholt Street

London NW1 1BD

Tel: 020 7974 4548

Email: choice.advice@camden.gov.uk

Website: camden.gov.uk/choiceadvice

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