



Transition to secondary school

Moving to secondary school can be stressful for children and parents. We have put some ideas together to help you cope with the different challenges.

What are the main differences between secondary school and my primary school?

Though this depends on what primary school you've been to, there aren't that many differences. In many ways the work that Secondary schools do carries on from the work you did in Primary school. However, you'll be taught by a number of different teachers in different rooms.

Another difference is that secondary school is bigger than your primary school. However, this is also one of its advantages because there are plenty more new friends to make there.

How can you make a good start?

- Be at school on time
- Be in the correct uniform
- Have all the necessary equipment with you.

Other ways to make a good impression:

Teachers think that good manners are important as well as good behavior. Most classrooms contain a list of classroom rules. The world is a much nicer place when we are polite to each other and here are some tips on how you can create a really good impression with your teachers:

- Say please and thank you at the right times;
- Say pardon and not "what" (or just a grunt), if you have not heard or understood something said to them;
- Walk on the left on the corridors and not push past or into other pupils or staff;
- Don't push through doorways when an adult is about to walk through;

- Hold doors open for those coming behind them and not to let them go in other children's or staff's faces.
- When an adult comes into the room, in some schools you are expected to stand up.

Getting around

Before starting in September, you should have visited your new school more than once. Did you find out where some of the different classrooms are and how to get between them? Do you know where to find the assembly hall, toilets, canteen and lockers are? Ask a friend if you are not sure where to go.

Think about which places might be difficult to get around e.g. busy staircases especially when changing lessons. You could think about a different route to avoid the difficult places. Try to leave enough time to find the classrooms.

Make sure you know where the toilets are, and how to use them e.g. how to flush the toilets, where the bins are, how to use hand-driers or paper towels, where to stand to use urinal (if you are a boy), how to use sanitary bins (if you are a girl).

If you can, get a map of the school or draw a simple one. Make sure it makes sense to you and highlight the rooms you will use the most. You could colour code the rooms according to lessons (e.g. maths could be red).

If you can, get hold of a timetable for the new term. You will get one on the first day. Take time to make sure you understand the timetable before starting school – it's easier to do now than to try in the busy times between lessons. Don't worry too much about getting lost because everyone in your year is also new to the school.

Colour code the timetable and the map to match e.g. red for the Maths lesson on the timetable, and red for the Maths room on the map.

If you are getting the bus to and from school, make sure you know where the bus stops are from home and at school. Make sure you know what time the bus goes and leave plenty of time to get to the bus stop.



School uniform

In lots of schools the pupils have a particular way of wearing the uniform that can make a big difference to being accepted by others. E.g. trousers, shoes and school bag of a certain type, certain style of haircut. Find out how you need to wear your uniform from other children who have been to the school. Think about this when getting things for school. E.g. you are only cool in some schools if your school bag has long straps.

Some schools are more strict about what your uniform consists of, and how you are supposed to wear your uniform. E.g. no logo's on clothes, no white bits on black shoes. The stricter school will have let you know by sending you a detailed uniform list.

It is often easier to sit down to get changed because you won't fall over.

If you have difficulty with shoelaces practice on a shoe with 2 different coloured laces. Sometimes the knots come undone because they are not tied tight enough, so a double knot can help keep the lace tied. If tying laces is still difficult, think about wearing shoes with different fastenings or getting elastic shoelaces or laces with a toggle to make life easier. It is not always easy to find larger sized shoes and football boots with Velcro fastening. The OT can advise you on where to find toggles and elastic laces if needed.

When buttoning a shirt, start at the bottom edge so that you get the correct button in the correct hole. To save time you could keep some buttons done up if you can put on and take off the shirt without undoing them all. Sometimes it is more comfortable to leave the top buttons (at your throat) undone, but check if this is allowed.

If you have to wear a tie, practice before hand. If you find it difficult, you can just loosen it and take it over your head, and put it on that way, keeping it tied.

You might want to think about whether you can change difficult fastenings like buttons for Velcro or poppers to make getting changed easier.

Remember to check in the mirror before leaving for school or after getting changed, because you cannot always see errors otherwise.

Getting organised

A school bag with lots of different pockets can help with trying to find things. You can put certain things in certain pockets e.g. pencil case in side pocket. It saves having to rummage in the main compartment to find things. It would be useful if you can find one with an outside compartment for the PE kit or swimming things.

Clear zip wallets with different colour fasteners for each subject can help with finding things. E.g. red wallet with everything needed for Maths in it. Then you only need to get out the red wallet for maths, and then put everything back in it at the end of the lesson.

Colour code the timetable to match the colours of the wallets.

A clear pencil case can help you easily find what pens you need, and you will need one for exams anyway.

Carrying lots of books to and from school can be hard work and can tire you out and cause backache. Have a plan for which books you need to take each day. Work out if there are any you can leave in school. Do you have a locker where you can leave things? Can anyone help if you have to carry a lot?

Have a whiteboard at home with a timetable for the week. Mark on what books are needed for each day as well as extra items (e.g. PE kit, art folder, cooking ingredients) and what homework you need to do each day. Cross things off when you have done them. Keep it up-to-date.



Ask your parents to help check that you have the right things for the right day.

Get things ready the night before so that you don't have to rush in the morning.

Regularly clear out clutter and unnecessary items e.g. bits of uneaten lunch, sticky sweet papers, scraps of paper.

Look around your desk before moving on to the next class room to make sure you have picked everything up e.g. coat, jumper, pencil case etc.

Writing

Make sure you are sitting properly to write. (Desk and chair at the right height for you, feet flat on the floor or supported on a step, bottom at the back of the chair, chair near the table, shoulders relaxed, paper angled slightly)

Use a pen that feels comfortable and has ink that flows well. You might like to try different shapes and thicknesses of pens to see what suits you best. Different types of pen can also affect your writing (e.g. biro, felt tip, gel pen). Keep trying new pens because the companies are making new ones all the time and the shape and strength of your hand changes as you mature.

Use warm up exercises before writing and then during writing when your hand starts to ache.

Try using bullet points – it can be quicker than writing full sentences.

You do not have to use joined-up writing. You can use unjoined writing, joined writing or a mixture of the two. Just try to keep it legible.



If you are struggling to keep up with the amount of writing, talk to your teachers about it. They might be able to help. It may be best to speak to your head of year or the SENCO, depending on who knows you best. Your OT can also speak to the teachers, so make sure you let us know if you are struggling. Some ideas are:

The teacher could print out notes before the lesson, so you don't have to copy from the board. You can then highlight keywords or write notes in the margin during the lesson.

You might be able to download lessons from the school website. You could print them out before the lesson and write notes in the margin.

Tape record lessons to be able to listen to them later.

Ask your teacher if it is ok to type out written work. This can make it easier to produce work and can help you learn keyboard skills. Most secondary schools are fine about homework being done on a computer.

Some new computers have voice recognition software. If you could get access to a computer like this you could talk and the computer can type out the work for you.

If you have a classroom assistant in the class, it may be possible for you to tell her what to write and she can write the answers.

In some schools, if a lesson has a lot of written work, it may be possible to use a word processor (e.g. alpha smart) in the lesson, but it is then necessary to print off the work that has been done because there is limited storage.

Lunchtimes

It can be difficult to make the choice of what to eat, balance a tray, hold on to a school bag and pay for lunch all at the same time. Here are different ideas that could help:

Check if there is a menu in sight when you first start queuing. If there is you can use the queuing time to decide what you want to eat.

If the menu has prices on it you can work out how much it will cost, and put your money ready in a pocket or get your card or finger ready.

If the prices aren't easy to see, you can find out how much school lunches usually cost so you have enough money ready. E.g. £3 ready in a pocket. Some schools use cards or finger prints, as long as you have got enough money in the system.

Try watching the person in front and see what they are doing e.g. taking a tray, pouring a drink, ordering the food.

If you find using a knife and fork difficult / messy then you might want to choose food that you don't need cutlery for: e.g. sandwiches or rolls

Watch to see what happens at the end of lunchtime, whether trays and plates are put on a rack or if plates are left on the table.

If these ideas don't work for you, then it might be easier to take in a packed lunch.

It may be useful to have a packed lunch just in case, if the queues are long, so that you do not spend all break in the queue, or if you are going to a break time club e.g. chess club, or if you want to play football or meet up with friends.

In some schools you can earn privileges e.g. jumping to the front of the lunch queue, if you have done good work or attended well.

Some schools have a smaller canteen that has smaller queues and may be worth investigating

Sports/ PE

Are there some sports you like more than others? E.g. swimming. You might be able to choose your favourite sports more often in secondary.



Some schools have after-school sports clubs where you can try out different things. This can be a good way of making new friends and getting more confident at sport.

If there is a sport you would like to be better at, you might want to practise it in the holidays, so that you feel more confident in the new term. You could go to your local leisure centre and see what they offer in the holidays:

For Anglesey check out: <http://www.anglesey.gov.uk/doc.asp?cat=2216>

For Gwynedd see: <https://www.gwynedd.gov.uk/en/Residents/Leisure-parks-and-events/Leisure-centres/LeisureCentres.aspx>

You might also want to try different outdoor activities. This website gives information of local groups that organise outdoor activities: <http://www.partneriaeth-awyr-agored.co.uk/>

It is important to do as much as you can of different types of physical activities to build up good muscle tone and fitness.

Sometimes people are asked to help with equipment, if they are finding the task very difficult. If you are worried about an activity, speak to your head of year or the SENCO. Your parents can also ask your OT to speak to the teachers if they do not understand your difficulties.

Homework

You may be given a homework diary to help you remember what you need to do each night. Some schools do not use a diary but have homework sent to the phones of children and parents. Write down the homework in the lesson and check that you understand the task. If you have difficulty writing it down in time you could ask the teacher or a friend to do it for you.

If you have forgotten what the homework is, contact a friend from your class (e.g. phone or contact via a messaging service).

Ask your teacher if you can type out some of your work if your writing is untidy. This can also help you practise your keyboard skills.

Some schools may have homework clubs where you can get some help if needed. You could also check homework details with other students.

Use a white board at home to show what homework you need to do each day. Cross things off as you do them.

And finally...

Find out who are the key members of staff, and where to find them if you need them (e.g. head of year, SENCO).

If you know someone else who is already at your new school you can ask them about it. They might also be able to keep an eye out for you when you start.

If you are struggling with anything to do with your motor skills, your parents can always contact us and we can speak to your teachers.

Enjoy your new school!