



# The Marlborough Science Academy



Dear Parents/Carers,

As the end of this academic term is drawing to a close and Taster Day to Marlborough is not far off (Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> July 9am -2:30pm).

I wanted to send through some excellent resources provided for parents and their children to aid them through this next stage of moving across to Secondary school.

Please take the time to go through this with your child and complete useful activities over the summer holidays to assist the transition to Marlborough and to offer reassurances, strategies, and tools to support them with this next part of their educational journey.

Please do read and prepare yourself for transition by looking at BBC Bitesize who have put together lots of information and videos about starting Secondary School. The series offers practical advice and emotional support for students and parents/carers to help take the stress out of taking the next big step.

[https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/tags/zh4wy9q/starting-secondary-school/1?utm\\_campaign=1505932\\_June%2017th%20BBC%20TDE%20email&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_source=The%20Day](https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/tags/zh4wy9q/starting-secondary-school/1?utm_campaign=1505932_June%2017th%20BBC%20TDE%20email&utm_medium=email&utm_source=The%20Day)

I look forward to seeing all the students on Taster Day (14/07/22).

Kind Regards,

Myrian Pounnas

Director of Learning & Transition KS3





**Anna Freud**  
National Centre for  
Children and Families

# Supporting children's transition to secondary school

*Guidance for parents and carers*

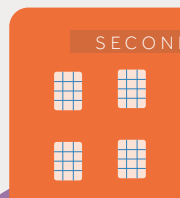


## Preparing for secondary school

The transition from primary to secondary school is exciting for children and marks a new phase in their lives. Children recognise it as part of growing up and are aware that their lives are about to change in an important way. Like any change, it can also bring uncertainty.

Most children will manage the transition to secondary school successfully. However, there may be ups and downs. It's easy for children to slip from feeling happy and confident one minute, to feeling nervous or anxious and back again as they find their feet.

As a parent or carer there is much you can do to help your child through the transition period with careful and sensitive preparation.



## Adapting to change



The move from primary to secondary school comes at a time of great change for children. As well as adapting to their new school environment and developing new relationships, they are dealing with the physical and psychological changes that the start of adolescence brings.

All children are different and the move to a new school, or even moving to a new part of a school, may affect each of them in distinct and sometimes unexpected ways. Some respond well to change, and will feel ready for the move, while others will need more reassurance and preparation. Sometimes children who have enjoyed primary school and are expected to make a smooth transition may unexpectedly struggle with the change.

Most children adapt to secondary school well. However, if your child struggles with their new environment, it can be stressful not only to them, but for you as parents and carers, too. It's important to take this into account as you help your child prepare for secondary school.

Even without the disruption caused by a pandemic the move to secondary school is full of unknowns. But coronavirus has caused additional disruption. Schools may not have been able to put the usual preparations for transitions in place.



## Why is transition difficult for some children and young people?

Transition can be challenging for a number of reasons. For example, some children may worry about making new friends. Others may have concerns around organisation and understanding new systems – being in a larger environment, knowing that they have different lessons in different classrooms, or having more homework to do. Children in primary school are generally used to having one teacher most of the time. Changing to having multiple teachers, who will have high expectations and additional classroom rules may feel daunting, especially if they have formed close bonds with their primary school teachers.



## What can parents and carers do to support children and young people through transition?

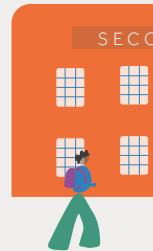
As a parent or carer, you will probably have walked your child to their primary school and come to know other parents. You might have had the chance to chat to your child's teacher at pick up to discuss any concerns you or they have. Secondary school is different for parents and carers as well as children. School staff recognise this, and many include thorough inductions for families, introducing them to pastoral care and the systems and support the school provides. Taking advantage of this can be helpful in getting to know your way around secondary school.



## What does successful transition look like?

How can you tell whether your child is settling in well at secondary school? Research shows that the signs of a successful transition are as follows:

- developing new friendships and maintaining good self-esteem and confidence;
- showing an increasing interest in school and school work;
- getting used to their new routines and school organisation with ease;
- experiencing continuity in learning.



## Helping your child through transition

We have summarised four ways to support your child through their transition. They are:

- encouraging them to explore their feelings;
- helping them connect to their school;
- building friendships and relationships;
- empowering them by building their confidence and independence.

## Exploring

The most valuable thing you can do to support your child is encourage them to explore their thoughts and to know that they can talk openly about their feelings, both positive and negative. Conversations can help pave the way to talking about your child's emotions as they prepare for their new school.

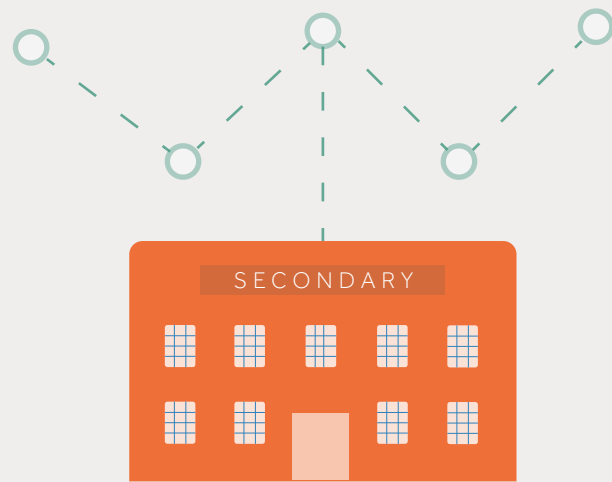
- Make sure you mark the end of your child's primary school experience. Saying proper goodbyes to friends, teachers and other school staff is important. Talk about any favourite memories from primary school and recognise all the things they will miss.
- Keep talking openly to your child to ask any questions they might have, and explore any worries and/or possible misunderstandings about starting a new school.
- Discuss with your child what they are looking forward to, and whether they are worried about anything. It can be helpful to think about how you felt when you were preparing for secondary school and share this with your child - children always like to hear stories about their parents' or carers' childhood. Were you excited about meeting new people and learning new subjects? How did you settle in? Your experiences may give you clues about how your child is feeling.
- Find out what your child's primary school has been doing to support the transition with year 6's. Continue the conversation at home with your child or encourage conversations with older siblings, older cousins or anyone the child feels comfortable with.



## Connecting

Feeling connected with their new school is important and will help your child settle in.

- Help your child begin to connect with their new school. Look at the school website with your child and take part in any induction events, in person or virtual. Many schools have recorded video content for year 6/7 pupils and it can be helpful for children to watch this to help them feel comfortable.
- Take the opportunity to meet any key members of staff and get to know how best to communicate with the school. It may be beneficial for you and your child to identify a teacher or other trusted adult at the school (for example a Form Tutor or Head of Year), who can be a first point of contact for any worries.
- Help your child plan out their journey to school. It may be their first time traveling to school alone and so practicing the journey can be an important part of preparing them.
- If your child is struggling with their new school (after a few weeks), get in touch with the school to discuss your concerns.



## Building friendships and relationships

Whether your child is going to a school where a lot of their friends are going, or they are going to a school where they do not know anyone it's important to start talking about friendships.

- Help your child think about how to approach meeting new people and starting conversations. Remind them that all children in their year are in the same situation. You might want to do some role plays to practice this at home.
- It can be helpful to encourage children to join some extracurricular activities at their new school as another way of meeting like-minded young people.
- If possible, plan activities over the summer holidays which allow your children to meet up with others.



## Empowering your child

Building your child's independence and confidence will help them with the transition.

- Empower and support them to take steps towards independence however big or small, as well as taking on small responsibilities in the home to build up their confidence and independence in preparation for this new and exciting phase of their life.
- Give your child lots of praise where you can and notice the things that they are doing well.

The greatest source of strength for any child going through change is knowing that they can fall back on the love and support of their parents and carers. Providing stability and security is what you do best, and this gives children the confidence to explore and test their new environment and seek out new experiences. It means that transition can be an exciting and positive experience and that if there are any wobbles on the way, they can come to you for reassurance and help.

Remember, too, that you don't have to have all the answers and that you don't have to do this on your own. Your school is there to help and between you, school staff and your child you have all the skills and resources you need to help your child make a successful transition.



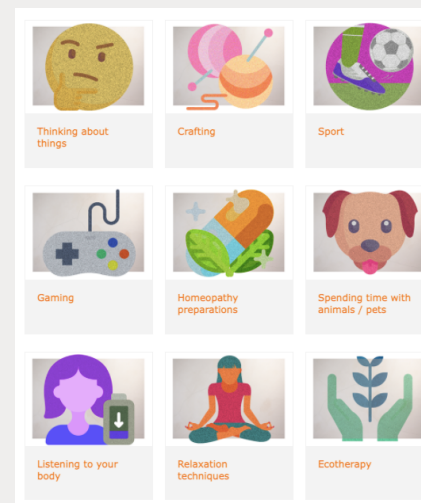
## Use our supportive resources

### ***Moving up!***

Our Moving Up! [animation](#) and accompanying resources have been developed to support pupils to feel less anxious about the move to secondary school, to open up discussions about potential worries, and to help find solutions during periods of change.



This resource is suitable for pupils who are preparing to transition to secondary school, and pupils who have recently started Year 7. Although designed to be used in a school setting, the animation can also be used at home, and the materials can be adapted if helpful.



### ***Self-care***

It is also important to highlight the importance of self-care to children and young people, and the need to look after our own mental health.

There are a number of self-care strategies for young people to try out on our [website](#), as well as other supportive resources for you on our [parents and carers pages](#).

## **Mentally Healthy Schools**

Our Mentally Healthy Schools site has compiled quality-assured resources aimed at supporting parents and carers with their child's transition.

You can find these resources [here](#).



## **Schools in Mind**

Schools in Mind is a free network for education professionals which shares practical, academic and clinical expertise about mental health and wellbeing in schools and FE colleges.

The network aims to translate research into practice by providing evidence-based, accessible information and resources that can be used to embed good mental health across the whole school community.

[Join our free Schools in Mind network today.](#)

## **References**

1. Gray SL, Saville K, Jones E, Perryman J. Moving Up: Secondary School Transition Processes during the COVID-19 Pandemic for Schools.; 2021.
2. Jindal-Snape D, Hannah EFS, Cantali D, Barlow W, MacGillivray S. Systematic literature review of primary-secondary transitions: International research. Rev Educ. Published online 2020. doi:10.1002/rev3.3197
3. Evangelou M, Taggart B, Sylva K, Melhuish E, Sammons P, Siraj-Blatchford I. Effective Pre-School, Primary and Secondary Education 3-14 Project: What Makes a Successful Transition from Primary to Secondary School? DCSF Publ. Published online 2008.

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National Centre for  
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# Did you know?



Resilience is the ability to overcome adversity, 'bounce back' during difficult times and get back to feeling good. It is about having the capacity to adapt to difficult circumstances, and using tools and resources available to do so.

The Institute of Health Equity suggests that resilient individuals, families and communities are more able to deal with difficulties and adversities than those with less resilience. Building resilience is fundamental to teenagers becoming happy and functioning adults. Young people who are not resilient will be more likely to respond to stress by developing anxiety and depression.

Evidence suggests that promoting resilience can help young people sustain good relationships, develop personal life skills, overcome challenges, cope in difficult situations and help them to achieve their potential. Human brains develop and change more during the teenage years than most other times in their life. This means that this is a time when there is huge potential for the development of new skills and capabilities.



# What can you do?

Help your child navigate their ups and downs by encouraging them to carry out resilient behaviours. You can be a building block in helping them build healthy habits, such as looking after their mental health, getting enough sleep, doing exercise, eating healthy food, hobbies, socialising or relaxing. Watch this video on YouTube to understand why resilience is important to young people's health, that can be found [here](#).

Staying connected with different people in our lives is the basis for building resilience. Help your child to understand who is in their support network when they face difficult

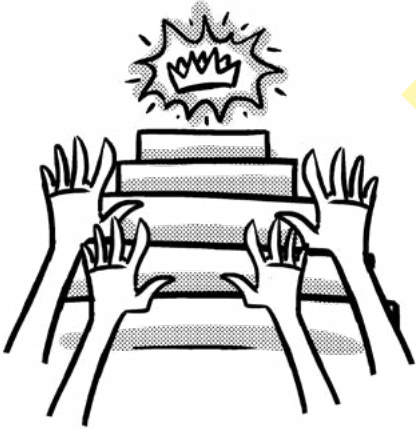
situations. This may be a grandparent, friend, teacher, sibling or sports coach etc.

Encourage your child to make time to build relationships, speak to friends, have fun, take part in hobbies and connect with others regularly.

Encourage your child to build resilience by stepping out of their comfort zone and taking on new opportunities, challenges and goals. This will help them to develop self-respect, be organised, promote positive thinking and to build confidence to deal with different situations.



# What you need to know



Most of us have a strange relationship with failure as adults, but young people can also find the idea or feeling of failing really difficult to handle. Sometimes their thoughts can become a pattern that holds them back from being able to move forward. You may have heard these kinds of thoughts already:

- No one in my family is any good at maths.
- My sister is the one who is intelligent, not me.
- I can't do creative things.
- I'm not really any good at anything.
- I never understand things.

At secondary school, sometimes these thoughts can become more prominent as they are in bigger year groups and are working out who they are. Young people can often adopt something called a 'fixed mindset', made famous by the work of Carol Dweck. This is when people put limits on what they can and can't do, believing that intelligence, amongst other things, is fixed. The opposite is a 'growth mindset' and is one of the biggest secrets to success.



# What can you do?

Your child will be exploring all kinds of different things at secondary school, including studying subjects they haven't had much exposure to so far in primary school. It is easy for them to give up at the first challenge or to assume "I can't do this". At home, it is good to start to slowly change that narrative.

Here are some pointers that may be helpful to use when talking with them:

- Ability can change with practice. Your talents, gifts and skills can be developed.
- It makes sense to have a go at anything. Putting effort in is the only way to get better at things.
- Mistakes happen, they are nothing to be ashamed of

and they show you exactly what you don't know so that you can work on improving your skills.

- Feedback is good – you can't improve without it!
- You should welcome new challenges; trying is how you learn. If you don't get it right first time, try again and again and again.
- Discuss with your child how they have achieved goals before. Ask them to think about what they did and what they could learn about how to achieve success.



*(Material adapted from 'You Are Awesome' by Matthew Syed)*

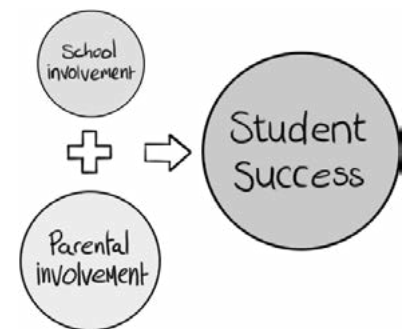
## Did you know?



Healthy habits are essential to living a long and happy life, and they are important to instil in children from a young age. If you help your child to form these habits now, you will be giving them the tools to navigate any obstacles they may face as they grow into adulthood.

Research highlights that the late teenage years have been identified as the peak age for exposure to health risks with lifelong implications. The report, by the Association for Young People's Health (AYPH), revealed teenagers eat eight times the recommended sugar allowance and almost half have tooth decay. This worrying research also found out that most smokers start by the age of 25.

Research reveals that there is a strong link between healthy habits and pupil achievement. Poor health habits add up to poor grades, and research suggests that healthy habits and good health-related decisions can lead to improved academic performance. For instance, research has shown that students who eat breakfast exhibit improved concentration when compared to their peers who skip it.



## What can you do?

Cultivate healthy habits by being a role model to your child. Try to exhibit good habits, offer health advice and build fun healthy activities into your family life. Examples include being active as a family, having evening and sleep routines, providing a water bottle to encourage hydration, or making family meals together.

Good nutrition can help improve concentration, so pay attention to the food you buy for your family. Provide a healthy balanced diet of meals which include fresh vegetables, fruit, proteins, good fats and whole grains.

Encourage your child to snack on low sugar foods and drinks, which you could make together.



Help and encourage your child to get enough sleep, live a physically active life and feel good about themselves. Work with them to map out their week to include healthy habits such as exercise, relaxation and seeing friends. Set some healthy lifestyle goals together, and keep each other motivated to stay on track.

# What you need to know



Many young people feel a mixture of excitement, fear and nerves as they go to secondary school, probably more so this year because Year 6 has been disrupted due to COVID-19 and social distancing measures. Secondary schools are very well aware of how big this transition is and, even with the restrictions, will do all they can to help your child, and you, settle into a new routine.

Matthew Burton's book 'Go Big', is written for young people who are about to make this change and is written to help them navigate some of their fears. This may be helpful for them to read alongside the lessons from Be Awesome, Go Big. There are also some things you can do as parents to help them too.

# What can you do?

1. Help talk them through some of the changes – they move around the school to their next teacher, have different lessons and have lots more people to communicate with. They are also able to be more independent than perhaps they have been used to.
2. Getting ready becomes their responsibility – get them to pack their bag the night before, check their equipment, make sure they have their planner signed



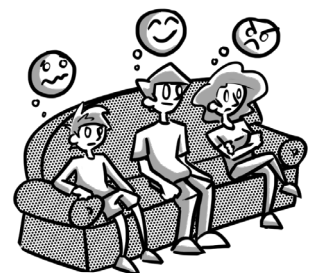
(or whatever system your school uses to communicate with parents). Make sure they know which is their PE lesson day. This will pay off in the future if you start now!

3. Create a space for them to work quietly at home – they will get homework and will need to be able to complete it and concentrate without distractions. Often it is easier



if they get this completed when they come home, before they get into social time and then don't want to do it!

4. Get to know their form tutor – this is the person who will see them the most. Contact them if you need to and if you are concerned, always let them know. They will see your child every day in most cases and so they are a great point of contact.
5. Keep encouraging a growth mindset: make sure they understand they won't be good at everything YET – things take time and practice and they should not give up. As a culture, we are often used to seeing supposed 'overnight success' without seeing the hours of effort that went into that success. This is worth reminding them about when they start to say negative things.



## Did you know?



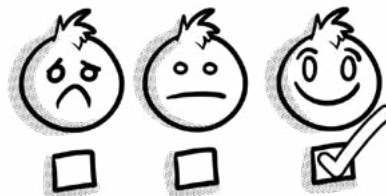
Research highlights that children who kept the same friend during the transition period between primary to secondary school tend to do better. Supporting and encouraging friendships during the transition period and beyond may help pupils to improve attainment and behaviour.

Research also shows that the transition to secondary school can potentially be as difficult for parents as it is for their children.

The move to secondary school brings lots of change, such as different classrooms, different teachers for each subject, bigger buildings, new travel arrangements, unfamiliar environments and mixing with new pupils. Studies suggest that when pupils are supported well, it increases attendance, academic progress, school engagement, confidence and self-esteem, and decreases symptoms of anxiety. This is good news as you can help with this, and your secondary school staff will be keen to help make this transition as smooth as possible, even in the current situation with COVID-19.

Research also suggests that pupils' concerns about transition to secondary school generally involve issues such as:

- Losing old friends.
- The size of their new school and getting lost.
- Rules, discipline and detention.
- Finding their way around.



## What can you do?

- New experiences, coupled with your feelings about leaving your child in a new place, can be a stressful time in a family's life. It is normal and acceptable to feel anxious as a parent/carers, but it is important not to pass these feelings on to your child. Support your child and encourage them to keep in touch with their group of friends.
- Talk about up and coming change with your child and approach transitions in a positive and exciting way. Help your child express their feelings, worries and

emotions about the change and acknowledge their feelings.

- Watch the video from Young Minds on YouTube and discuss its content. It reassures children that they're not alone when it comes to their worries about secondary school, that there are ways to cope with change and there are people to talk to when things get difficult. This can be found [here](#).

