




# GETTING READY FOR SECONDARY SCHOOL

A GUIDE FOR STUDENTS & FAMILIES

*Success* for All

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This booklet is for students and parents to read and share



# How can I help as a parent?

Moving from primary to secondary school is an exciting and significant event in the life of your child. It is an important milestone which, for many parents and teachers, marks a change in expectations regarding crucial life-skills such as independent working and self-organisation.

When a child starts at secondary school, they are expected to cope with a whole variety of new experiences and changes, many of which demand skills and abilities that they have not had to use before. The problem is that these skills do not spontaneously develop in children in the summer before they begin secondary school – like reading and writing, they have to be taught – and our children need support in developing them.

Most parents would like to help reassure their children, prepare them for these changes and support them in developing the skills they need, but feel they lack the information or expertise to do so. For many of us, our own experience of secondary school is all we have to go on.

The top two worries that Year 6 children express, (see 'Top 10' worry list), are social concerns. Although common, most children report that they are no longer worried about these after just one or two weeks of school!

If your child expresses these worries it is useful to tell them this and to emphasise that everyone else will also be feeling anxious. As there will be many more children in Year 7 than Year 6, everyone has a good choice of friends, and even children who move up with several children from their class tend to make new friends at secondary school. Talk to your child's Year 6 teacher if these worries become great – they will be able to arrange for your child to meet some other students who will be starting (or already at the school) and perhaps a 'buddy' for the first two or three weeks.

The remaining worries are nearly all to do with the new organisational demands that they know will be placed upon them. Luckily, these are the areas in which we can help them most.

The aim of this booklet is to provide you with the information you need to help your child to achieve independence, while supporting them in getting there. To achieve the balance of doing too much or too little for your child is hard – a useful rule of thumb is:


**'Never do anything regularly for your child that they are capable of doing for themselves.'**

The booklet clearly outlines exactly what your child needs to be able to do to succeed at secondary school, ('Key tasks for Students'), and provides as many practical tips and ideas as we could cram in to help you to help them develop the skills for success, ('Tips for Parents').

The suggestions in the booklet are practical, down to earth and have all been used by real parents with real, busy lives. You do not need to be an 'expert' or devote your life to your child's schooling to help your child to get it right!

Time spent early on in establishing habits of work and independence is an investment that will save endless time, battles and heartache in the long run. The habits and routines that children develop in Year 7 are those that will stay with them throughout their secondary schooling and often throughout their working lives – it's worth the effort of getting it right to start with (so much easier than putting things right when they've gone wrong). If you can help your child to do this, you will really be making a difference.

# Children's top 10 worries about starting Secondary School

- Being bullied
  - Not making friends
  - Getting lost
  - Homework
  - Not being able to do the work
  - Getting to school and back (especially if there's a bus journey)
  - Not having the right books and equipment
  - Not knowing what to do if there's a problem
  - Not getting on with the teachers
  - Getting into trouble
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## So what is different about Secondary School?

Children often have to travel further; some are making their way to and from school independently for the first time, travelling by bus.

They may have to wear a shirt, tie and blazer for the first time and have a whole list of new rules and regulations to remember.

Instead of one teacher, who has often known them since their early years, they will be taught by nine or ten different teachers and have to get to know a whole range of adults in different roles within school.

The site will be much bigger than they are used to and children will have to find their way around, moving from classroom to classroom between lessons and carrying their belongings with them.

They will have to use and interpret a complex timetable, in addition to writing things down in their school notebook.

For the first time, children may be fully responsible for ensuring that they have the correct books and equipment for different lessons during the day, their lunch, bus pass, PE equipment etc.

Children will often be given full responsibility for recording homework, completing it by the correct day and giving it in on time.

There will be new lessons (eg. Technology, Humanities) and new variations on familiar ones like Science in a laboratory, for example.

Teaching and learning styles may be very different. Children may be expected to write more frequently and for longer and they may be expected to select appropriate reference books from the library or use the internet to select references.

Break and lunch times will be organised differently with less adult supervision and children having a lot more independence in terms of getting back to lessons on time, buying their own snacks and lunches etc.

***In general, students are expected to be more independent, self-reliant and self-organised...a welcome development for many students but a challenge for some.***

# **SECTION: Getting There and Back**

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## Key Tasks for Students

- Getting up on time.
- Getting dressed, washed and ready to walk out of the door with everything they need.
- Leaving the house to get to the bus stop or to school on time.
- Being in the right place at the right time at the end of school.
- Going straight home.
- Knowing what to do if delayed for any reason.

# Tips for Parents

## Before your child starts

- Time the journey to school or bus stop.
- Be sure your child is clear about what time they are expected to be home and what to do if they are held up for any reason.
- Make sure they know / have your contact numbers.
- Buy an alarm clock and make sure your child knows how it works.  
Test run it before the first day at school.
- Work out with your child what time they will need to get up to get to school on time. Work backwards from the time they need to be at school. Include all the things they will need to do.
- Agree a routine for the mornings and after school. Will they shower / bath in the morning or the evening? Will they get their school bag ready the night before or in the morning? Who will make the packed lunch and when?
- Agree a bedtime for school days with your child that will ensure they get enough sleep.
- Have a couple of practice runs....set your child the challenge of getting up at the correct time and getting ready.
- Does anything need changing?

## Tips for Parents

### When they start

- If possible, be around for your child for the first few days / weeks and 'supervise.' Praise and encourage independence but be ready to offer a helping hand.
- Keep to your side of the bargain – if you have arranged to leave their lunch on top of the fridge, make sure it is there!
- Go through the routine regularly with your child – if necessary provide a tick-list to help them.
- Insist on the routine being kept to – it will save you hours in the long run!

# **SECTION: Uniform Matters**

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## Key Tasks for Students

- Knowing the school rules regarding uniform, including jewellery and make-up.
- Making sure uniform is ready to put on the evening before, including shoes and underwear!
- Making sure a full PE kit is taken to school on the days it is needed.

# Tips for Parents

## Before your child starts

- Check the uniform requirements including rules regarding make-up and jewellery, (see school website for details – [www.buckinghamsschool.org](http://www.buckinghamsschool.org)).
- Ring the school if you think you may be entitled to financial support for buying school uniform.
- “Nearly new” uniform: Children can be very sensitive about wearing ‘hand me downs’, but this will usually wear off after a while as they become more confident.
- Name everything, even shoes – you would not believe what children lose! A marker pen is as good as labels.
- If possible, have spares of essentials at home – it prevents panic when things get mislaid at 8.00am...and they do!

## Tips for Parents

### When they start

- Encourage your child to hang up their uniform straight away after school.
- Decide on responsibilities – who irons the shirts, when / who puts them away etc?
- If your child is very disorganised, check items one by one, or give them a checklist to use for the first few weeks until the routine is embedded.
- Encourage your child to put everything out (including shoes, socks / tights and underwear) the night before.
- Have a system for making sure that clothes are clean and ready – the earlier children start to take responsibility, the better, but whoever does it, both parties need to know ‘the system’.
- If you have a timetable displayed for your child, a good idea is to colour the days when your child has PE, so that they can see quickly and easily each day if they need to take their PE bag.

# **SECTION: The New timetable being in the right place at the right time**

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## Key Tasks for Students

- Knowing what lessons take place on a particular day.
- Knowing where the classroom for each lesson is.
- Knowing who the teacher is.
- Understanding the timetable.
- Getting to lessons on time – especially after breaks.

# Tips for Parents

## Before your child starts

- Study the school map with your child – talk about how it is laid out / organised (usually in ‘subject blocks’).
- Reassure your child they will quickly get to know their way around (most have mastered it within a couple of weeks) and that they move around as a group to start with. Teachers are very understanding about children getting lost to begin with and usually help is at hand if it is needed.
- Have a look at a sample timetable – we have shown a sample Year 7 timetable in the Guide for Year 7 Students booklet which is included in the pack given to your child when the Transition Team visit your child’s primary school. Timetables can look complicated. Break it down and talk about ‘how it works’ if necessary, (the room numbers / teacher initials etc).

## Tips for Parents

### When they start

- Get a copy of your child's timetable (it will usually be written in their notebook in the first week). Keep this on display so that you and your child can refer to it.
- Encourage your child to learn what lessons they have on which days so that they can become independent.
- Make sure your child knows what to do if they are late or get lost.

# **SECTION: Organising Books and Equipment**

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## Key Tasks for Students

- Having a good system for keeping books and equipment.
- Knowing what lessons there are on a particular day.
- Knowing what equipment is needed for each lesson (refer to the Essential Stationery Equipment Sheet (shown in the Getting Ready for Secondary School booklet).
- Using your notebook to write down important notes and messages and to refer to as a reminder.
- Having a bag packed with everything needed for that day.

# Tips for Parents

## Before your child starts

- Help your child organise their living space so that they have a place for everything to do with school. Try to make sure they have access to a desk, good light and storage space for their school books.
- Equip them with the tools they will need at home (it's a good idea to keep two sets of everything – one for school and one home so that losing a pen at school does not stop them doing their homework). A useful home 'tool kit' consists of: pencils, pens, eraser, sharpener, coloured pencils, felt pens, ruler, maths equipment (protractor, compass, set-square and calculator), sellotape and a glue stick.
- A box-file or stacking system is useful – each file can be labelled with the subject and all the books, worksheets etc. can be kept ready to pull out and put in the school bag when required.
- A labelled A4 plastic or card folder to take to school for each subject is useful – students are given lots of worksheets which they are not used to organising. Folders can hold all worksheets, books etc.
- An additional A4 plastic or card folder for finished homework is useful – they can check it each lesson to see if there is homework to be given in.

## Tips for Parents

### When they start

- Establish a routine for 'emptying the bag'. The subject folders or books are replaced in the "filing system".
- Any subjects for which homework is required are placed in the 'homework to be done' in-tray. Do this with your child to begin with if necessary, then gradually let them take over. Even when your child has 'got it', do spot checks every so often.
- Encourage your child to glue any worksheets / odd bits of paper into their books if possible each night – otherwise, the sheer volume of 'bits of paper' becomes impossible. If they do not have their books, use plastic or card wallets to organise them.
- When homework is completed (see section on Homework) supervise the 'packing of the bag,' the night before it is due, to make sure they include it.
- The displayed timetable can be used as a checklist for subject folders, equipment needed and homework due, at the start of each day.
- Encourage your child to check their notebook for any reminders or notes each night. It's usually worth double checking.
- If you know your child has Food Technology ('cooking' to you and me) on a certain day, check at the beginning of the week if they need ingredients – searching through cupboards on the morning ten minutes before the bus leaves is not recommended!

# SECTION: Homework

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## Key Tasks for Students

- Check you have a Google Classroom login when you start school – you can check this with your teacher.
- Writing down your homework in lessons; write exactly what you have to do. If none is set, write this down with the reason why, eg. supply teacher.
- Recording when it has to be done for.
- Asking, if you are not sure what the task means and checking with the teacher if you are not sure what books you will need etc.
- Making sure you bring home everything you need to do the homework.
- When you get home, use your notebook to remind you of what you have to do.
- Working by yourself to complete tasks, spending the correct amount of time. Doing the best you can without someone standing over you!
- Asking for help if it is difficult, or if you don't understand something.
- Taking your completed homework to school on the correct day. Remembering to give it in!

**Try to do homework on the night it is set – not the night before it is due in (you may have several pieces of homework all due on the same day)!**

# Tips for Parents

## When they start

- Stick to your agreed routine whenever possible.
- Try to ensure that homework is done on the night it is set to prevent 'build-up.'
- Spend time with your child in the first few weeks, establishing the routine.
- Much of the homework will be set using online platforms such as Dr Frost and Seneca Learning, however, there are times when your child will have "paper-based" homework set. Encourage your child to unpack their bag in an organised way, placing "paper-based" homework to be done in their tray, along with a list of any online tasks they have been set. Check they have everything they need to complete their homework (ask them to tell you what they will need, to encourage independence).
- Recognise how hard it is to work unsupervised. Help your child structure and use their time fully – provide a clock or timer and agree tasks that should be done in each eg. half-hour period. Try to be available to do 'progress checks' – have they completed the task in the set time? Otherwise leave them to it – don't establish a pattern of always doing homework with them – it's unsustainable and they won't learn to work independently.
- Make sure your child always writes the date and title, and clearly labels it as homework (either in their book or on a worksheet or computer print out).
- Point out the rewards of working in this way – homework doesn't drag on all night, it feels good to have completed tasks etc.
- Don't let children struggle on for longer than the recommended time – if they have done half an hour and only answered half the questions, let them stop. (If they are worried about the consequences, write a note on the homework, confirming

## Tips for Parents

### **Excuses for not being able to do homework....**

- We didn't get any
- I don't need to do that, we did it in class
- We had a supply teacher
- It doesn't have to be in for ages
- I left it at school
- My teacher has got my book – they took them in
- My friend is borrowing my book
- I did it on the computer and the computer wouldn't print it out / I forgot to save it / can't remember what file I saved it in....
- I'm going to do it with my friend on the bus / at break
- I need to do it in the library – I'll do it at lunchtime
- I've lost my notebook

# **SECTION: E-Safety – Keeping Safe Online**

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## Useful Tips for Keeping Safe Online

- Don't post any personal information online such as your home address, email address or mobile number.
- Think carefully before posting pictures or videos of yourself. Once you've put a picture of yourself online, most people can see it and may be able to download it – it's not just yours anymore.
- Keep your privacy settings as high as possible.
- Never give out your passwords.
- Don't befriend people you don't know.
- Don't meet up with people you've met online. Speak to your parent or carer about people suggesting you do.
- Remember that not everyone online is who they say they are.
- Think carefully about what you say before you post something online.
- Respect other people's views. Even if you don't agree with someone else's views, doesn't mean you need to be rude.
- If you see something online that makes you feel uncomfortable, unsafe or worried: leave the website, turn off your computer if you want to and tell a trusted adult immediately.
- For further help staying safe online, visit:  
<http://www.safetynetkids.org.uk/personal-safety/staying-safe-online/>

The school has a separate section for e-Safety. This can be found on our website under 'School Life' and also under 'Safeguarding'.



“ When we say Success for All,  
we really do mean All. ”

Mr A McGinnes, Headteacher