

# Secondary Success!

## A survival guide for parents starting secondary school

Your child is going to secondary school. Well done on getting this far! We spoke to parents, children and school staff and got some helpful tips to help prepare children for the move up.

### Tips for feeling good

- Your child may be feeling insecure so be reassuring, give lots of praise.
- Establish a routine and check that they are eating and sleeping well. Changing schools can be very stressful and tiring. They need all the support they can get.
- Find out about fun activities outside of school such as Martial Arts, Music, Drama, Cadets, Guides, Scouts to help children develop new skills and relationships. It helps put school life and friendships in perspective.
- Before term, review with your child where they do well and where they may have difficulties, so they feel focused and realistic about their work.
- If they feel intimidated or lonely at first, suggest they offer to eat lunch with or go on a break with another child.

### Preparing for school

- Ask the school about lunches, term dates, uniform guidelines (including hairstyles, jewellery) after school activities, equipment needed, school policy brochures, etc.

- Check about school transport.

- Help children organise themselves. Together make a checklist of equipment and books needed for classes, names of teachers and timetables. If your family is split and your children divide their time between two households, ensure they have a replica checklist at both homes.

- The new school may seem large and frightening at first. Go along on open days and get a plan of the school to go through with your child.

- Remember that your child will have lots of new books and files - you may have to buy a new school bag.

- Remind your child to bring money, phone card and make sure they know how to contact you or the emergency services.

### Forming friendships

- Reassure your child that friendships take time and effort and that sometimes friendships don't work out.

- Tell your son or daughter they are welcome to invite friends over. It may be a good idea to do this before the new term starts so that there are some familiar faces on the first day.

- Meet new parents - who knows, you may make friends, find out more about school, local goings on and share lifts home.

- Don't pester children with your concerns. They will be putting pressure on themselves, so try to be supportive and relaxed.

- If your child has difficulty finishing homework, inform the school.



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## **Bullying**

If you think there's a problem, ask your child. Listen and explain that you are not angry with them. Take their concerns seriously.

- Stay calm. Phone the school to arrange an appointment.
- The first point of reference should be the class teacher or Head of Year. The appointment will most likely be outside of teaching hours.
- Make sure that your child knows what's happening and is involved as much as possible.
- Keep notes of the incidents.
- Take a calm friend who can act as note-taker and supporter. Tell the school that you would like to work with them to solve the problem but ensure that anything agreed will be acceptable to you and to your child.
- Ask how the school deals with these matters and how long they will need to deal with the problem effectively. Arrange a follow-up appointment to review the situation.

## **Follow-up**

- Join the Westfield Home Link and get involved. Help out after school, on sports day, at After School Clubs or charity events. The school will be delighted to have extra support.
- Go to school events whenever possible - even if your child is only the back of a horse in the school pantomime; it's very important for them.
- Celebrate your child's successes by making a poster, taking a photo, putting it in your family diary, letting them choose dinner or stay out a bit later - something special.

## **Liaise with the school**

- If your child is going through a difficult time such as divorce, bereavement or any family or medical problems, tell the Form teacher so they will know to act gently and to be particularly supportive.
- Tell the school of any medication, and when it needs to be taken. Your child may need to carry a card or bracelet detailing medication.
- If there are problems, make an appointment to discuss them with the subject teacher. Don't wait for Parents' Evening. Ask what extra support you can give at home.

## **And finally...**

- Most of all, remember that you and your child should enjoy secondary school. It will sometimes feel scary often stressful but mainly, it should be fun. It's a time for learning about subjects and relationships. Enjoy it and help your child to too!

