

## Overview

This booklet is a resource to give you some information about:

- What transition means
- When it can be difficult
- How parents can help
- Practical tips for starting Year 7
- Where to get more information

## Transition to Secondary School

### *What does 'transition' mean?*

The dictionary definition is that it's the process of changing from one state to another. Everyone experiences important times of transition in their lives. As adults, times of transition such as bereavement, divorce or moving house are recognised as being amongst the most stressful times that a person can face. Although moving to secondary school is seen as a normal 'rite of passage', it's important to keep in mind that all periods of change in a person's life can cause feelings of stress, anxiety and bring up emotions that children may need support identifying and navigating.



## More than one change

Any 'ending' in life brings with it feelings of sadness, no matter how much you might be looking forward to what comes next! For children who have experienced other endings, such as the loss of a family member, parents separating, or moving house, these feelings of sadness can lump together into a ball of grief that is difficult for them to unravel alone. They may associate this grief with starting secondary school, making their transition more difficult. It's important to make schools aware so that support can be put in place if needed. It's also important to seek some support in helping your child unravel their ball of grief. Most important are regular chats with your child, where you can reassure them that 'big changes' are always difficult to deal with and so their 'big feelings', which can be overwhelming, are perfectly normal.

## When change is always difficult

For children who are neuro-atypical (for example, those who have ASD), have learning difficulties, or who are very sensitive, change can always be a challenge. Adolescence in itself is a time of change! With physical, hormonal and emotional changes already happening, a new school can feel overwhelming. Schools usually have extra support in place to help with transition for these children, such as extra visits to the secondary school. There are lots of things you can do at home too, outlined on the next page 'tips for parents', and in resources from the 'more information' box on the last page.



When It's Difficult



## Top Tips for Parents

- 1. Encourage lists!** Lists of equipment they'll need, things they need to remember, things they need to find out. Then show them how once they've identified the things that are stressors, they can work through and tick them off one at a time. Get uniform and equipment ready as early as possible in the holidays.
- 2. Empower them.** Show them how to find answers to some of their questions by exploring the school website with them; walk them through the journey to school in the holidays so that it's familiar; get them to practise unpacking and packing equipment into their bags – they need to be quick at the end of lessons!
- 3. Question the questions.** If their worries are lots of 'what ifs...' that don't have answers you can find out, question those 'what ifs'! What if they do get lost? What will they do? Having ideas about how to respond to situations will lessen the worry and give them confidence.
- 4. Keep boundaries in place.** Suddenly our babies seem very grown up when they move to secondary school. It's important to remember that six weeks does not turn them into a teenager though! No-matter how 'grown up' they may start acting, they still need the boundaries of regular meals times, limited phone time and bedtimes. Keeping these things the same will limit the impact of other changes.
- 5. Share.** Don't mix up their experience with yours, but listen to how they feel and give them examples of when you've felt a similar way. This allows you to show them that their feelings are normal, that you are listening and taking them seriously. It also lets you give them words to label the feelings, and explain what you did to deal with tricky times.

## Top Tips for Young People

- 1. The 'getting lost' worry.** *This is probably the most common worry. Remember that everyone will be in the same boat! A lot of schools give out maps to new pupils, but you can always ask someone too and you will get used to the size of the school a lot quicker than you expect!*
- 2. Practise!** *Knowing how to get where you're going at the start of the day, do a tie, and pack your bag up quickly at the end of a lesson are little things that can make a big difference to how confident you feel. Practise these things before you start*
- 3. Lists.** *Make sure that you are organised. You will have different lessons each day and need different equipment for different lessons. Have a list of what you need and always pack your bag the night before. If you feel worried about things, keep a little notebook where you can write your worries down, rather than holding them in your head. Then, you can talk them through with a parent or teacher.*
- 4. See friends if you can.** *Try and see people who will be going to your secondary school during the school holidays. Arrange to meet at the park or ask a parent if you can invite someone round. If you can, arrange to meet up and travel to school together on the first day.*
- 5. Clubs.** *Most schools have lots of lunchtime clubs and some after school activities where you can do what you're interested in and make new friends. As well as lesson teachers, you will have a form tutor, who will register you in the morning and give you information about things like clubs that are running.*



## More Resources:

Young Minds:

<https://youngminds.org.uk/ind-help-for-parents/parents-guide-to-support-a-z/parents-guide-to-support-school-anxiety/>

Mental Health Foundation:

<https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/learning-disabilities/our-work/employment-education/moving-on-to-secondary-school/>

BBC Bitesize:

<https://www.bbc.com/bitesize/articles/zf2dqhv>

## About Dragonfly

We champion the belief that to thrive, emotional wellbeing is just as important as physical health. We advocate that helping young people to manage their emotions is as important as teaching them to read and write.

We work with young people, their families, their educators and employers by helping to tackle emotional wellbeing issues, so that they're able to fully engage with all aspects of their life.

Just like the dragonfly, we believe children have the power and capability to hone their resilience in the face of change, growing and maturing into adults who can accept who they are, deal with setbacks and confidently handle their emotions.



**DRAGONFLY**  
Impact Education   
*Empowering Young Lives*

