

Final Top Tips to Prepare For Your First Week at School

Parents – How can you help your child prepare for secondary school?

1) Plan and run through the journey to school, this might even include locking up the house before they leave if there is a chance she/he will be the last one to leave! I suggest doing this in stages.

- The whole journey with an adult.
- The whole journey with the adult in the background, 10 paces behind just for security – if using public transport, pay separately to give the child the experience.
- An adult at the start, at a halfway point and then the final destination.
- An adult at the start and the end.

• It is also worth doing this journey backwards too, so travelling from school to home as well as home to school. You would be surprised how many children I have worked with over the years who can get themselves to school but struggle with the return journey as it hasn't been practised!

2) Help with timekeeping. Set little challenges.

- “I want you downstairs at 11.30am, then 1pm etc.” Helping with being in the right place at the right time.
- “You have 30 mins to complete/partake in an activity” (make this something they love to do), then you have to stop and move onto something new. This helps the children get used to being in the middle of an activity they love (replacing break time) and having to stop to move onto another activity (lessons)
- Time the journey to school. Ask the child to work out what time they need to leave the house, and then have them work out what time they need to wake up. This will help them be a little more aware of how long everyday activities take.

• In my experience, many pupils have always taken time for granted as they have never been in control of it themselves. By giving them the opportunity to take control early, this will help them with one of the many things children have fed back to me, was a new activity that they struggled with as it isn't something that had been considered by the adults in their lives previously.

3) Give children the opportunity to make choices, but to make them fast! This will help, mostly, when it comes to lunchtimes. Many primary schools have systems where the meals for the week are decided before school even starts and the pupils collect what they have ordered. By the time they are at secondary

school they will not only have to choose their food there and then, they may possibly need to even decide where to buy the food from and where to eat it, all of this in a much shorter lunchtime than they are used to!

4) One thing we all fail to consider when it comes the changing schools is that making new friends is hard! Even for those children who are moving along with several current/old classmates, there will be a period of time when they don't know anyone. 'You'll soon make new friends' is a phrase that, as parents, rolls of our tongue easily. Do we ever stop to think *how* to make a new friend though? Can we all honestly say that in a room full of strangers, we would have the skills to walk up to someone new and just make conversation? As the adults in a child's life we must help them through this difficult phase. Here are a couple of ways we can help children to make the first move.

- Show them how it's done. Role play works here, you did this all the time when they were little! You can do it again. Remind them to talk about themselves but also ask questions about the other person. Listening is as important as talking when meeting new people.
- If out in public, shopping, on public transport, at the library, in a cafe etc. Ask the child to be the one to do the talking. Let them deal with the shopkeeper when buying goods etc. We have spent years training children not to talk to strangers, now we need to show them *how* to talk to the appropriate ones!

Pupils- How can you prepare yourselves for secondary school?

- 1) Before you practise the journey with your adult (and if that is not even possible) plan it in your head. Once you think you have got it planned, explain it to someone else. Pretend that that person doesn't know the area, how much detail can you provide? Would that person be able to make the journey without you?
- 2) Pack and unpack your bag! I know this seems silly but the more you pack and unpack, the more you will start to think about what you need to have with you. You will also discover how heavy the bag is, after all you might have to carry it all day! All the changes you are about to go through are simply new habits that need to be formed, you might as well start with the easy ones now!
- 3) Test your own timings! How long does your morning shower take? How long does it take for you to get dressed, do your hair, find your shoes? What about breakfast, how long does that take? What does all of this mean for how long it will take you to get ready and so what time do you need to get up in order to fit it all in and leave home on time? The adults in your life will be there to help but timekeeping is key at secondary school, the sooner you get into the habit of being in control the easier it will be.
- 4) Create a new routine. Be in charge of your own uniform, where will you keep it after you take it off at the end of the day. What will you do if it needs washing? Maybe start to take control of the family washing for a day or 2 so that you know how long it takes. The last thing you want it to discover your trousers need a wash 10 minutes before you need to leave the house!