

Moving On...

Suggestions for busy families with a child with special educational needs moving on to secondary school

Moving to secondary school is a worrying time for pupils and parents alike. The process is even more stressful if you have a son or daughter with a special educational need (SEN). These worries include your child having to get to know lots of teachers and the pressure of meeting fellow pupils, the size of the school, how they will cope with moving around for each lesson and travel to the new school.

The more organised you can be ahead of the move the better, and these guidelines have been devised to support you in building a transition plan to support your child move into their new school as smoothly as possible.

You may want to show your child the 'Top Tips' guide we have developed for young people (part of a suite of materials that can be accessed via www.learningdisabilities.org.uk/moving-on. It can be helpful to look at these together).

When at primary school:

Ask your child's teacher or Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO) about transition planning at their school. For example, they may be offering extra ICT or sports lessons



to encourage more independence. Or they may be using a weekly timetable to get pupils prepared for using these at secondary school.

Plan a meeting with the SENCO or your child's teacher to discuss any concerns and draw up an action plan. For example, you may want their help in arranging a visit to meet the SENCO at the secondary school before the autumn term.

If you meet with the SENCO at the secondary school, some questions to consider asking are:

- Will it be possible for my child to meet with new teaching assistants during the summer term?
- Will it be possible to arrange extra visits if my child needs to spend more time at the school?
- Is there a buddy or peer support system in place to support new pupils?
- What kind of pastoral support does the school have?



Find out if other pupils from your child's class or school are going to the same secondary school. Having a group of friends known to your child when they start school will increase their confidence; perhaps they could travel together.

Look out for activity clubs and summer schemes locally that may have others from the new school – recognising some familiar faces can help when starting at the new school.

Start getting your child organised and taking more responsibility for themselves. For example suggest they:

- Practise getting ready for school or for school trips by themselves. Lists, visual charts or digital photo frames can help.
- Use a weekly timetable to get used to one before starting secondary school.
- Practise choosing (and buying) food when you are out – this will help if they have school dinners.
- Look for apps that can help with their organisational skills or course work. Schools might be able to signpost you to these.

Preparation

Speak to your child's teacher or SENCO to ask about the transition visits. If you think your child needs extra visits, talk to the teacher or SENCO about it.

Look at the website for the new secondary school. Find out if you can access a map of the school, examples of timetables, lists of school clubs and lunch menus to get your son or daughter familiarised with the school.

Find out if there is a 'safe place' where your child can go to if they feel worried or if there is a particular member of staff who they can talk to.

During the summer holidays listen to your son or daughter's concerns and suggest ideas to help them cope. For example, if they worry about getting lost, make sure they have a map with them or know they can ask a teacher. Or if they worry about not having something to do at lunchtime suggest they go to the library or find out if there is a 'safe place' at the school.

With your child, make a passport style guide that includes the essential information about him or her that will be of immediate use to their new teachers or teaching assistants. For example, their likes/dislikes; use of language; use of specialist equipment or other learning aids; learning style, best way to motivate; learning pace; what affects their emotional well-being.

If school transport is not provided, start planning and practising the journey to school during school holidays.

If they are not used to using a library, start familiarising them with your local library – get them to use the computers and learn how to locate books on topics of interest.

Consider when you will take your holidays – some people may prefer to be at home for a week or two to begin to prepare for starting a new school, rather than rush from a holiday straight into the school term.

During the last week of the school holidays get them to wake up earlier so it does not come as a shock when they start school!

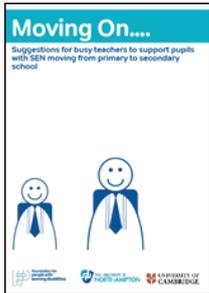
When at secondary school:

- Make sure you have a timetable at home to help your child get organised for school the next day.
- Find out what activities and clubs are available for your son or daughter.
- In case of emergencies, make sure they have some money or credit on their mobile phone.
- Ask for the dates of parent evenings and review meetings.



This guide was written by Jill Davies, Ann Fergusson and Richard Byers and designed by Kate Ball. We could not have written this without the help of the Year 7 pupils, families and staff from the schools who took part in the 'Moving On to Secondary School' project.

Guides for pupils and teachers are also available. To find out more about this work or to download these free resources, please visit our website www.learningdisabilities.org.uk/moving-on



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