

Going to Secondary School



BURNLEY
HIGH SCHOOL

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 this involves 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

How can I help as a parent?

Moving from primary to secondary 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 the begin secondary schools – like reading and writing, they have to be taught and our children need support in developing them.

For many of us, our own experience of secondary school is all we have to compare to. The top worries that Y6 children express are social concerns. Although common, most children report that they are no longer worried about these after just one or two weeks at school.

So what is different about secondary school?

- Children often have to travel further (some making their way to and from school independently for the first time – some travelling by bus)
- They may have to wear a full school uniform for the first time, and get used to new rules and regulations to remember
- Instead of one teacher who has often known them since their early years, they will be taught by potentially up to nine different teacher and have to get to know a whole range of adults in different roles within the school.
- The site will be much bigger and children will have to find their way around, moving from classroom to classroom between lessons, often carrying their belongings with them.
- They will have to use and interpret a complex timetable and a school planner
- For the first time children may be fully responsible for ensuring that they have the correct books and equipment for six different lessons, their dinner money, bus fair, PE kit etc
- Children will be given full responsibility for recording homework, completing it by the correct day and giving it in on time

- There will be new lesson (eg Languages) and new variations on familiar ones (eg Science in a laboratory)
- Teaching and learning styles may be 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
- Break and lunch time 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 pupils are expected to be more independent, self-reliant and self-organised, a welcoming development for many pupils but a challenge for most.

Getting there and back

Key tasks for pupils

- Getting up on time
- Getting washed, dressed and ready to walk out of the door with everything you need
- Leaving the house to get to the bus stop or 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 you are 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 their 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 evening? Will they get their school bag ready the night before or in the morning?
- Who will make up the packed lunch? 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.

The new timetable being in the right place at the right time

Tips for pupils

- 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 break and lunch

Tips for parents

- Following your visit to school, talk about how it is laid out/organised,
- Reassure your child that they will quickly get to know their way around (most have it mastered in 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 needed
- Your child will be given a plan of the school. Talk about getting from one place to another, look at the plan together.
- Get a list of your child's teachers as soon as you can in September, this helps you to know who teaches what

When your child starts

- Get a copy of their timetable (it will usually be written in their planner in the first week). Keep it 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 get lost
- Persuade your child to wear a watch
- Organise books and equipment together
- Use the planner as a method for getting messages to and from school

The organisation of secondary school

In a primary school, the roles and titles of staff are usually quite straightforward – you have a head, deputy head, several class teacher, some teaching assistants and a few other assistants and an office administrator. There is usually a lot of informal contact and you are likely to know exactly who to talk to when you need to and have a close relationship with your child's class teacher.

In comparison, the structure of a secondary school and the many adults involved can seem complex. On the pastoral (welfare) side, your child will be placed in a tutor group with other Y7s and the tutor has responsibility for your child's overall wellbeing. They generally know your child the best. There is also a Head of Year 7 and transition (Miss Campbell), a Head of Pastoral (Mr Nicolson) and an Assistant Head of Pastoral (Mrs Mossop). Generally, the staff you will have most contact with will be your child's tutor and their Head of Year.

Contacting the School – When and who?

Just as it is hard to know how to achieve the balance between offering your child too much support (and being accused of fussing) and leaving them to flounder and perhaps fails, it is also hard to achieve the balance between becoming the over anxious parent (on the phone

to the school every time your child falls over with a friend or grazes their knee) and letting things go on too long because you don't want to interfere.

The job is made much easier if you keep talking to your child about how things are at school. You will have a good idea about how the work is going, and your child's general feelings about school. You know your children best, and if any aspect of school life is persistently distressing them it is probably best to err on the side of caution and intervene early. If you have talked to your child, offered reassurance, helped them come up with ways of solving the problem themselves and things still haven't changed after a couple of weeks, then it is time to speak to the school.

Problems children face and what to do about them

Falling out with friends

This is very common as children form new friendships that may differ from those they had at primary school. Give advice but don't overreact – the tears and anger are normal but most friendship patterns sort themselves out without adults getting involved. Contact the school if your child becomes depressed or severely withdrawn over this for more than a couple of weeks, or if you suspect what is happening may be bullying. The characteristics of bullying are intentionally (a deliberate attempt to make someone unhappy) persistence (i.e. an ongoing campaign and not isolated incidents or arguments about specific issues) and an imbalance of power (if the perpetrators are older, bigger, more powerful or if they are operating as a gang against an individual).

Contact your child's tutor if the problem continues, ask to meet with them or if this doesn't improve the situation, ask to speak or meet with Mr Nicolson, Head of Pastoral.

Losing belongings

This is very common for children with organisational difficulties (and very expensive for their parents). After following advice around organising books and bags etc the day before, the situation doesn't improve, contact your child's tutor and ask for their support – they can often provide checks at key times and be very creative in supporting your child towards independence at school.

Getting into trouble for not completing homework

In many ways, homework makes the most demands on both year 7 pupils and their parents. Make sure time is set aside each night for homework to be completed and check that it is being recorded in planners accurately. If your child struggles to complete homework, ask for a meeting with the teacher concerned.

A guide to parents evening

Because of the larger numbers of pupils, and the fact that your child now has several teachers rather than one, parents evenings are organised rather differently in secondary schools.

You will be given the date of the Y7 parents evening well in advance

Your child will be tasked with making appointments with the teachers who teach them.

Most appointments are about 5 minutes long, and you will need to allow some time for finding and moving between teachers. Try to see as many teachers as possible, especially if there are issues you need to raise with them. It is always a good idea to see your child's form tutor as they have the best overview of how your child is settling in generally. Jot down any questions or concerns before the meeting.

You appointments with the teacher will provide an opportunity for them to tell you how they feel your child is getting on in very general terms and for you to ask any questions or raise any concerns that you have.

If you or they have major concerns, the teacher will probably suggest a further, longer meeting at another time.

Take your child with you to Parents Evening – on to hear what the teachers have to say, but also to guide you and find the teachers you have arranged to meet.

Finally, don't feel daunted – all new parents will feel exactly the same

Timing of the school day

Monday – Thursday

Activity	From	Until
Registration	8.30am	8.45am
Period 1	8.45am	9.45am
Period 2	9.45am	10.45am
Break	10.45am	11.00am
Period 3	11.00am	12.00am
Period 4	12.00pm	13.00pm
Lunch	13.00pm	14.00pm
Period 5	14.00pm	15.00pm
Period 6	15.00pm	16.00pm

Friday

Activity	From	Until
Reg & Personal Development	8.30am	9.15am
Period 1	9.15am	10.15am
Break	10.15am	10.30am
Period 2	10.30am	11.30am
Period 3	11.30am	12.30pm
Lunch	12.30pm	13.30pm
Period 4	13.30pm	14.30pm
Assembly	14.30pm	15.00pm