

Moving up to secondary school (transition)

Transition is all about change. It's when a child moves from one thing to another. Some transitions are small, such as the move from one lesson to another or from home to school. Other transitions are much bigger for children to manage, such as moving schools.

Change is difficult for many children and young people, and for those with SEN it can be even more challenging. Familiar people, places and routines will all change, and this can cause anxiety and stress. But, being prepared and planning well can really help.

Transition as a journey that takes time. Prepare your child before they start the new school, support them in the first few days and weeks and help them to feel settled and safe throughout year seven.

Communication is key to success. Talk to your child and other family members and talk to staff at both the old and new school. Together you can work out what your child's needs are and what kind of support they're likely to find helpful. All secondary schools do enhanced transitions for children with SEND, where extra support is planned for each child.

Transitions come in two parts and it's important to prepare for both. Your child is leaving one school and going to another and the ending of one school life is as important as the beginning of the next one. That means remembering and celebrating the things that happened in primary school and what life was like there, as well as preparing for a new start.

You child's support is going to be different in secondary school, compared to primary. Primary schools offer more predictability and the move to secondary school brings a lot of

changes - different classrooms and different teachers for each subject, larger buildings spread over a campus, new travel arrangements and coping with support from unfamiliar teaching assistants. It's a lot to take in, but take it step by step and use different tools and opportunities to help your child learn and become more familiar with things.

These tips may help:

- Think about what has worked well in the past when you've helped your child prepare for a new experience and use similar ideas.
- Stay calm yourself, and if you're worried, try not to let them see it. If you're relaxed and positive, they're more likely to be.
- Tell staff at the new school about any signs that your child is anxious, and the best way to communicate with them.
- Ask if your child can visit outside of the usual class visits and open evenings. Make sure they get to see the places and people that will help to support them, such as learning support, a sensory room or head of year.
- Ask if they can meet their tutor or supporting TA and have a copy of their timetable.
- Some children find it helpful to make a 'scrapbook' or 'journal' around changing schools. This can include maps, times of the school day, photos of key places and people and a timetable if available. Some schools have a video tour too – watch it several times to help your child get familiar with the building and people.

More information

- **BBC Bitesize – Starting secondary school**
[bbc.co.uk/bitesize](https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize)
- **Devon Educational Psychology service transition guides**
devon.gov.uk/support-schools-settings/send/educational-psychology/educational-psychology-service
- **National Autistic Society – transitions**
autism.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/topics/transitions
- **Beacon House – Supporting transitions for vulnerable children**
beaconhouse.org.uk

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