

## **Contents**

### **Page**

- 1 Children's top 10 worries about starting secondary school
- 2 How can I help as a parent?
- 5 What is different about secondary school?

### **Helping your child develop the skills they need**

- 7 Getting there and back
- 11 Uniform matters
- 15 The timetable - how to be in the right place at the right time
- 19 Organising books and equipment
- 24 Homework

### **What do I need to know?**

- 33 The organisation of secondary schools
- 35 Contacting the school - common problems and when to contact the school
- 39 A guide to parents' evenings

### **Sample checklists**

Sample day planner (Page 41)

Sample display timetable (Page 42)

## 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 it 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 school 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 they begin secondary schools - like reading and writing, they have to be taught and our children need support in developing them.

Most parents would like to help reassure their children, prepare them for these changes, and support them in developing the skills they need, but feel they lack the information and expertise to do so. For many of us our own experience of secondary schools is all we have to go on.

The top two worries that Y6 children express (see the 'Top 10' worry list) are social concerns.

Although common, most children report that they are no longer worried about these after just one or two weeks at school!

If your child expresses these worries it is useful to tell them this, and to emphasise that everyone else will also be feeling anxious. As there will be many more children in Y7 than in Y6, everyone has a good choice of friends, and even children who move up with several children from their class tend to make new friends at secondary school. Talk to your child's Y6 teacher if these worries become great - they will be able to arrange for your child to meet some other pupils who will be starting (or already at the school) and perhaps a 'buddy' for the first two or three weeks.

The remaining worries are nearly all to do with the new organisational demands that they know will be placed upon them. Luckily these are the areas in which we can help the most.

The aim of this booklet is to provide you with the information you need to help your child to achieve independence, while supporting them in getting there. To achieve the balance of doing too much or too little for your child is hard - a useful rule of thumb is

*'never do anything regularly for your child that they are capable of doing for themselves'.*

The book clearly outlines exactly what your child needs to be able to do to succeed at secondary school ('Key tasks for pupils') and provides as many practical tips and ideas as we could cram in to help you to help them develop the skills for success ('Tips for parents').

The suggestions in the book are practical, down to earth and have all been used by real parents with real, busy lives. You do not need to be an 'expert' or devote your life to your child's schooling to help your child to get it right!

Time spent early on in establishing habits of work and independence is an investment that will save endless time, battles and heartache in the long run. The habits and routines that children develop in Y7 are those that will stay with them throughout their secondary schooling and often throughout their working lives - it's worth the effort of getting it right to start with (so much easier than putting things right when they've gone wrong). If you can help your child to do this, you will really be making a difference.