

Hillingdon Children’s Integrated Therapy Service
Third Floor
Beaufort House
Cricket Field Road
Uxbridge
Middlesex
UB8 1QG

Email: citsadmin.cnwl@nhs.net
Tel: 01895 488200

Things to talk about to help prepare for secondary school

Below are some ideas for activities and things to talk about to prepare for secondary school.

Choose the topics and adjust the level of difficulty according to your child’s needs.

Most schools are very supportive and help the new children to settle in – and most children settle in much better than they thought they would/ their family thought they might. It is often the worry beforehand that is worse than the actual experience.

1. How Primary and Secondary School are different

Talk through how secondary school and primary school differ (some ideas below). Your child is likely to see some differences as good and others as more or less worrying. Take a positive, problem-solving approach to the worrying items.

Planning and support will help to minimise difficulties.

A problem-solving prompt sheet is included with this pack.

Time	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1						
2						
3						
4						
5						
6						
7						
8						

Differences between primary and secondary school:

	Primary school	Secondary school
School building and classrooms	Do not have to move classes for different subjects	Bigger building and students have to move between classes
Uniform	May not have neck tie	May have tie and trainer with shoe laces
Subjects, organisation and packing	Set number of subjects	More subjects including different languages to learn. Students expected to bring their resources such as pens etc
Teachers	Mostly same teacher for all subjects	Different teachers for different subjects
Breaks	Set number of breaks and break times	Less number of breaks
School trips	Local trips	Trips may be abroad
Storing resources	Tray under the table desk	Carrying books around or may

facilities		have lockers
Lunch time	School lunches or packed lunch	Pay for your lunch – find out how your school does this. Most schools have a cashless system
Travel to school	Parents drop off	Expected to independently travel to school via bus/walking/cycling etc
Friends	Same friends throughout the school year	New friends/children from different primary schools
Timetable and homework	Mostly same timetable/ subjects across all weeks	Different weeks in timetables and student expected to remember to bring homework
Behaviour monitoring	Rewards for positive behaviour and time outs for negative behaviour	Points/merits/awards for positive behaviour Detentions, exclusions and sanctions for negative behaviour
Awareness	Road safety, social norms, equality and fair share/play	Students are expected to know about Bullying and online safety

2. Timetables

A sample timetable is included in this pack. Talk about the main things a timetable shows us:

- Days of week
- Periods/lessons
- Time of lessons (start and finish)
- Subject
- Place i.e. classroom
- The name of the teacher

Discuss the different subjects, paying special attention to new subjects, e.g. Geography, Textiles etc. Some subjects have different names eg. English instead of literacy.

Point out the parts of the timetable which are the same every day, e.g. registration, assembly, breaks, lunchtime.

Introduce abbreviations (i.e. shortened form) of subjects that can be found on a timetable, e.g. ICT, RE, PE, DT, PSHE.

Ask and work through questions, e.g. what subject do you have after lunch on a Wednesday? What resources do I need for this subject? Who teaches maths on a Monday morning? Where is PE on Friday? etc.

3. Packing a school bag

Introduce the idea that your child will have to learn to pack their school bag when they go to secondary school. If possible, have a practice.

Discuss:



What different things will you need to put in your school bag each day?

- Books for that day
- Homework to hand in
- Sports/PE kit

What will you pack that will stay the same each day?

- Homework diary/planner
- Timetable
- Map of school
- Wallet (if needed)
- Bus pass (if needed)
- Lunch pass (if needed)
- Pencil case
- Water bottle

When will you pack it?

- Night before or in the morning?

Perhaps think about having a checklist.

4. Finding your way around

Talk about the fact that schools are used to Year 7 students getting lost – and that students will be moving from lesson to lesson as a group – and that often an adult will be with them.

Talk about what you could do if you did get lost.

A sample (pretend) map is included in this pack.

Use it to talk about the different things a map shows us:

- Floors
- Stairs
- Subject rooms/areas
- Toilets
- Gym
- Computer room
- Laboratories
- Hall
- Canteen/Cafeteria
- Library
- Staff room

Ask different questions about the map, e.g.:

1. Which floor do you need to go to for your lesson after break on Wednesday? (1st Floor)
2. Where would you go if you got lost on your 1st day? (Office)
3. Where would you find one of your teachers if you needed to speak to them at break time? (Staff Room)
4. Which floor do you need to go to for science on Monday? (2nd Floor)
5. Where would you go to carry out an experiment? (Science Lab)
6. Where would you go to research a project? (Library)
7. Where would you go to buy lunch? (Canteen)

5. What you can do if you don't understand

Everyone finds some things difficult to understand. Things that might go wrong when you don't understand – and then don't ask for help:



- Do the wrong thing/get work wrong
- Won't know what to do
- Get into trouble/get told off
- Miss out on something good
- Get left out
- Only do part of what you're supposed to do
- Upset someone
- Get the wrong time
- Forget something important
- Bring in the wrong things
- Might get hurt
- Teacher might be annoyed/upset/disappointed
- Lose friends at break times
- Go to the wrong place

Talk about that it is good to ask for help – and that everyone needs help sometimes. Talk about some times when you have needed to ask for help.

Talk through some solutions and strategies:

- Put your hand up and let the teacher know that you need some help
- Ask the teacher to say it again for you
- Ask the teacher or your friends what a new word means
- Ask the teacher to say the information a bit at a time
- Ask the teacher to write down what you need to do
- Ask the teacher to say it slower
- Ask the teacher to make it simpler or shorter
- Ask the teacher to explain it again for you
- Ask a friend e.g. at break time
- Ask a member of your family when you get home
- Ask the teacher/helper/assistant
- Try and write down some key words
- Go and find the teacher at lunchtime/playtime/end of lesson/end of day
- Sit at the front of the classroom or ask to move near the front
- Underline any words that you don't understand so that your teacher knows what you do and don't understand

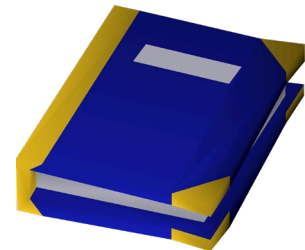
6. Learning new words

Encourage your child to find words that they don't understand – and to underline or highlight these in written information.

Talk about the meaning of new words as they come up in conversation/TV/films/games/books etc.

Talk about useful strategies for finding out the meaning of words in secondary include:

- Ask a friend
- Ask the teacher/adult in the classroom
- Ask an older family member (if you are at home)
- Look up the meaning on the internet (if you are at home)
- Use a simple dictionary if needed (but make sure your child can understand the meaning once they have looked up the word – many dictionary definitions are hard for our children to understand)



Help your child to develop skill using a dictionary by looking up a variety of words. A “How to look up the meaning of words in a dictionary” flowchart is included in this pack.

Practise recording difficult words in a vocabulary book as this will be a useful strategy in secondary school. If your child already knows any word learning strategies, it would be a good idea to revise them, e.g. word maps, spider charts etc.

You can find some word maps in the School Talk packs on the Hillingdon Talks, Moves and Plays website.

7. Emotions

Encourage your child to talk about how they are feeling about moving to secondary school.

Sometimes your child might be more likely talk about their own emotions, if you talk about your own emotions and strategies you use to cope – rather than asking them lots of questions eg. “I am feeling angry because the kitchen is a mess – I am going to take a deep breath and count to 10 to help me calm down” eg. “I am feeling really stressed today, so I am going to go out for a walk”

Talk about times when you were nervous about doing something new – but how after a short time you enjoyed it – and it wasn't as bad as you imagined eg. starting a new job, learning to drive, joining a new club

Talk about times when your child was nervous about doing something new – but how after a short time they enjoyed it eg. going on a fast ride at a theme park, learning to ride a bike, learning to swim, joining a new football club.

Talk about strategies your child can use if they feel nervous eg. breathing out through the mouth for a count of 5, and in through the nose for a count of 5 several times, finding someone to talk to, thinking about something positive eg. a special pet, person or place.

If your child is feeling particularly anxious then you can explore some relaxation/mindfulness apps eg. Headspace for Kids, Smiling Mind, Calm.

Talk about how it is normal to feel anxious when you are doing something new – and that nearly all the other children will be feeling the same.

You can have a look at our parent advice sheet on emotions on the Hillingdon Talks website (see below)

https://www.cnwl.nhs.uk/application/files/9116/1337/4782/Emotions_advice_sheet_parents.pdf

You can also find more information here:
www.zonesofregulation.com



8. Online safety

When your child starts secondary school they are likely to be more exposed to social media via their phone, tablet etc.

There is some really useful guidance on the following website:

<https://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/>

9. Making Friendships

Talk about ideas for starting conversations to make new friends:

- Hello, what's your name?
- What school did you used to go?
- Do you have any brothers or sisters?
- What do you like to do?
- Do you live near here?
- How did you get to school today?
- What form are you in?
- Do you have any homework yet?
- How are you finding things so far?
- Would you like to come and get some food with me/ play with me?

Talk about what are good topics of conversation – things that you can talk about with anyone. If your child suggests some inappropriate conversation topics (eg. topics most other children are not interested in, topics that are too personal) talk about why these are not such good ideas.

You can find some “good topics of conversation” prompt cards in the School Talk Secondary pack on the Hillingdon Talks, Moves and Plays website.

10. Friendship issues

Talk through the “friendship problem solving” scenarios included in this pack with your child – and feel free to make up some others of your own.

Talk through the consequences of any inappropriate suggestions eg. hitting the other person

11. Further ideas for discussion

See the enclosed Kidscape leaflets for further ideas for discussion including friendship and bullying.

<http://www.kidscape.org.uk/resources/>

Some friendship problem scenarios are included in this pack.

12. Hillingdon Talks, Moves and Plays website and social media

Parents and schools are able to find lots of information, resources and strategies, signposting to support groups and other useful websites to support children/young people with communication needs on our website – including School Talk packs.

www.cnwl.nhs.uk/hillingdon-talks-moves-plays

Parents can also follow us on our Hillingdon Talks Facebook page and Hillingdon_TalksMovesPlays Instagram page.



