

Starting Secondary School

A Parent's Guide



OXFORD

Starting Secondary School

6 common concerns and ways to help overcome them

Starting secondary school can be daunting, even for the most confident of children. *Bond 11+* and *SATS Skills* author Christine Jenkins has collated some top tips for parents supporting their child through the transition to a new school, including how to approach a suddenly increased workload.



1. Travelling to school by themselves

- Have several trial runs of the journey, building up their level of independence gradually.
- Ask them to text you as they arrive at school safely, if possible.
- Consider downloading an app which allows you to track where they are (such as 'Find My Friends') – also useful for picking them up after school trips.
- Arrange for them to travel with a friend and allow plenty of time.
- Keep emergency phone numbers in their bag, in case they lose their phone and need to contact you.

3. Getting organised

- Use coloured folders to keep the work for each subject together.
- Ensure they pack their bag the night before: don't be tempted to do it for them!
- Encourage them to check off what they need against their timetable.
- Teach them how to put a reminder in their phone for anything extra to remember.
- Buy a key ring with stretchy chain to attach to their bag, to avoid lost locker/door keys.
- Make sure there is secure place for bus pass/canteen pass and emergency coins in their bag.

2. Leaving homework to the last minute

- Get your child to mark their planner with the deadlines for each subject's homework in different coloured pens.
- Teach them how to create a to-do list with the pieces of homework needed soonest at the top – whiteboards are great for this.
- If signing their homework planner, talk through what needs doing and how they will organise their time.
- Help them to distinguish between tasks that are best staggered over time (revision, research, etc.) and self-contained tasks that can be done and then ticked off.
- Get into a routine for getting homework done and make sure they have a suitable space to work in. A quiet shared area can help you to ensure they are not getting distracted!

4. Building confidence and making friends

- Remind your child that everyone is in the same boat when they start. Talk to them about ways to initiate conversation if they find this difficult.
- Remember friendships take time to develop: don't panic if they haven't made a friend immediately.
- Encourage them to join clubs and become involved in school life. This can be a good way to make friends with students in other forms and year groups.

5. Taking longer than expected on homework

- If this is a 'one-off', do not panic. Your child may have found something particularly interesting or challenging and wants to do a thorough job.
- If it happens regularly, talk about the reason with your child. They may be misunderstanding the level of detail required, finding something hard or simply doing too much.
- If it continues, encourage your child to talk to their subject teacher. If your child is not confident enough to do this themselves, a quick call or email to school may be useful.

6. Taking time to settle

- Try not to panic if they have not made a new circle of friends immediately: this is very common. Reassure your child that it often takes time for new friendships to form.
- Suggest they join a club at lunch time or after school. Sometimes these start once the term has begun, so this can be a good time to meet new people, now that your child has got used to the new routines of school life.
- Find out if your child's school has a buddy system with older pupils assigned to support younger ones. If so, encourage them to speak to their buddy. This can be less daunting than speaking to a teacher.

My first year at secondary school

Mum and daughter Michelle and Ella share their experience of the first year of secondary school:

Michelle: Ella has now completed her first year in secondary school, and I would view the whole experience as extremely positive. Ella adores her new school, has made friends with three other girls who really seem to bring out the best in her and she has learned to cope very well with the logistics of secondary school life.



Ella: Once I had started, I found that of the older students, most were really helpful. In fact, I joined the school drama club, where there were lots of older children. You didn't even notice that they were older as you all work together as a community when you're working on a show.

FREE activities to prepare your child

We've compiled a range of free activities and worksheets to keep your child engaged throughout the summer and prepare them for the transition to Key Stage 3. You'll find the activities along with advice, hints and tips, and a handy starting secondary school checklist at www.oxfordsecondary.co.uk/startingschool.

The Key Stage 3 Curriculum

The majority of Year 7 to 9 students will follow the Key Stage 3 national curriculum. We've summarised key points and requirements of the curriculum below.

What's compulsory at Key Stage 3?

The compulsory national curriculum subjects* at Key Stage 3 are:

- English
- Maths
- Science
- History
- Geography
- Modern Foreign Languages
- Design and Technology
- Art and Design
- Music
- Physical Education
- Citizenship
- Computing

*If your child is due to attend an academy, free school or a private secondary school, the school won't have to follow the national curriculum. However, academies must teach a broad and balanced curriculum including English, Maths and Science. They must also teach Religious Education. Faith schools have to follow the national curriculum, but can choose what they teach in RE.

English

- Read widely and in depth: a range of varied and challenging material.
- Acquire a wide vocabulary and an understanding of grammar and linguistic conventions for reading, writing and spoken language.
- Write clearly and accurately and adapt their written style for a range of contexts and audiences.
- Explain their understanding and ideas verbally, and participate in group discussion.
- Literature plays a vital role in children's cultural, emotional and intellectual development.

Modern Foreign Languages

- Pupils must learn at least one modern foreign language, though schools can choose which they teach.
- Lessons should develop pupils' confidence in listening, speaking, reading and writing, based on core grammar and vocabulary.
- Pupils should be able to understand and communicate personal and factual information as well as points of view.

Maths

- Study topics such as number (percentages, fractions and decimals), algebra, ratio, geometry, proportion and statistics.
- Develop fluency, mathematical reasoning and competence in solving increasingly sophisticated mathematical problems.
- Begin applying mathematical knowledge in other subjects, such as Science, Geography and Computing.

Science

- See the connections between Biology, Chemistry and Physics, and the big ideas underpinning scientific knowledge and understanding.
- Big ideas include structure and function in living organisms, the properties and interaction of matter, and the transfer of energy.
- Relate scientific explanations and phenomena to real-life examples and the world around them.
- Learn to 'work scientifically' – collecting, processing and recording data to evaluate results, and taking account of new evidence and ideas.

History

- Learn about the development of British society from Medieval Britain to the present day.
- Identify significant events, make connections and draw contrasts, analysing trends within a particular historical period and over long periods of time.
- Understand how different types of historical sources are used to make historical claims, and why contrasting interpretations of the past have been constructed.
- History lessons are likely to combine both overview and depth studies.

Geography

- Understand how geographical processes interact to create distinctive human and physical landscapes that change over time.
- Develop greater competence in using geographical knowledge and concepts, and analysing and interpreting different data sources.
- Increase knowledge of the world's countries and understand their similarities and differences.

Art and Design

- Learn to use a range of techniques and media, including painting.
- Develop a critical understanding of artists, architects and designers, and develop their own creativity.
- Learn about the history of art, craft, design and architecture, including periods and styles from ancient times to the present day.

Physical Education

- Use a range of tactics and strategies in competition and team games such as cricket, football, hockey, netball, rounders, rugby and tennis.
- Develop technique and improve performance in other competitive sports e.g. gymnastics.
- Perform dances using advanced dance techniques in a range of dance styles and forms.
- Analyse performance and demonstrate improvement to achieve personal best.
- Get involved in exercise and sports outside of school, and understand and apply the benefits of physical activity.

Computing

- Design, use and evaluate computational abstractions that model the behaviour of real-world problems
- Understand several key algorithms that reflect computational thinking
- Use two or more programming languages, at least one of which is textual, to solve a variety of computational problems
- Understand hardware and software components that make up computer systems
- Undertake creative projects that involve selecting, using, and combining multiple applications to achieve goals
- Understand a range of ways to use technology safely, respectfully, responsibly and securely

Citizenship

- Pupils should develop an understanding of democracy, government and the rights and responsibilities of citizens, and be equipped to think critically and debate.
- Learn about the UK political system, operation of Parliament and civil liberties, roles played by public institutions.
- Prepare pupils to become responsible citizens, manage their money well and make sound financial decisions.

Design and Technology

- Pupils should be taught the knowledge, understanding and skills needed to engage in an iterative process of designing and making.
- Learning should work in a range of domestic and local contexts (e.g. the home, leisure and culture) and industrial contexts (e.g. engineering, manufacturing, food, agriculture).
- Understand developments in design and technology and their impact on society and the environment.
- Pupils should be taught how to cook and apply the principles of nutrition and healthy eating.

Music

- Pupils should be taught to play and perform confidently in a range of solo and ensemble contexts.
- Understand musical structures, styles, genres and traditions.
- Listen with increasing discrimination to a wide range of music from great composers and musicians, developing a deeper understanding of its history and context.

NOTE

Each country within the UK has its own curriculum. In this guide, we've focused on the curriculum in England, but you can find out more about your specific curriculum on the following websites:

England:

www.gov.uk/national-curriculum

Wales: learning.gov.wales

Scotland: www.gov.scot/Topics/Education/Schools/curriculum

Northern Ireland:

cea.org.uk/curriculum/

Starting Secondary School - thoughts from Jill Carter



Jill is an Advanced Skills Teacher and former Leader of English, and has been teaching for 23 years. She currently works part-time as an English teacher, as well as authoring for Oxford University Press. She is mum to Seb, aged 12.

“Get to know your child's teachers and ask questions even if you feel shy about them. Many teachers are only too happy to explain and share information about teaching and learning.”

“Your child will probably be issued with a “Homework Diary” or “Planner”. Make sure you use it to check homework and to write any comments or notes that may be useful for your child's teacher to know.”

“Continue to encourage reading – reading affects progress in all subjects.”

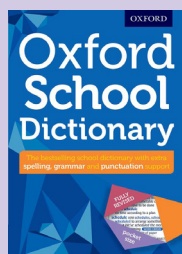
“If your child's school has a “Friends of” society and you want to get to know more about the school and meet other parents, join it. Read newsletters and emails from the school.”



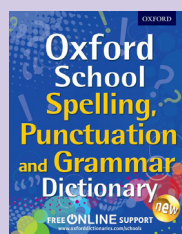
Books for starting Secondary School

Suitable
for
ages 11+

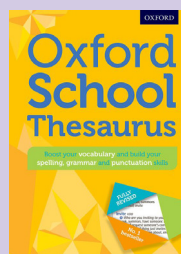
Dictionaries, Thesauruses and Atlases



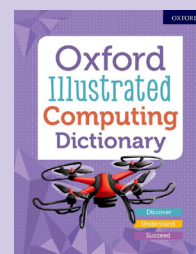
Oxford School
Dictionary
978 019 274710 5 £7.99



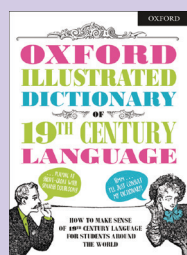
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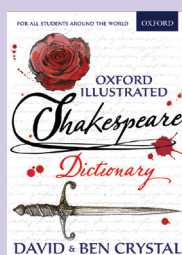
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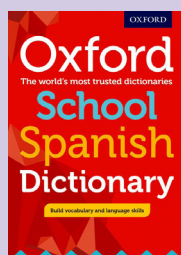
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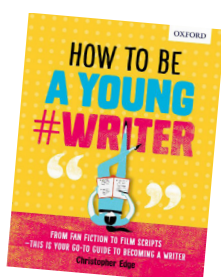
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978 019 913702 2 £11.99

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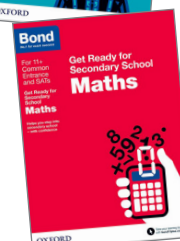
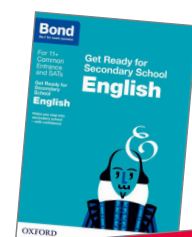


Bond Get Ready for Secondary School

Preparing for the transition
from Key Stage 2 to Key
Stage 3

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Bond 11+: Maths: Get Ready for
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978 019 274225 4 £7.99



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