

Starting secondary school – top tips



Buy an alarm clock!! Most secondary schools start at 8.30am and you can't be late. Time your journey and practice it beforehand so you know exactly how long it takes. It's a good idea to have a back-up route in case the road is blocked/buses not running.

Pack your bag the night before. Charge your phone. Be organised!

Make sure you have a Zip card before term starts, don't leave it until the end of the holidays as it takes a couple of weeks. Don't lose it or the bus drivers will kick you off the bus.

Always eat some breakfast, even if you feel nervous. It's a long time until lunch.

Put in plenty of practice at tying your tie. You'll need to be able to do it at speed and under pressure (eg after PE). Then practise putting it on and taking it off without undoing it.

Check the school rules on what you can wear. You don't want to be shouted at unnecessarily about trainers/make-up/jewellery etc...

If you're wearing a blazer for the first time, don't let your mum buy it too big. You will need to use your hands.

Buy a very big, very strong bag. You will have loads to carry. And that's not counting the days when you'll have your PE kit. Girls, don't be tempted to buy a handbag – they really won't last and your books will get damaged.

Does your new school have lockers or will you be carrying your coat around with you all day? If you do, you may need a lightweight one you can stuff into your bag.

If you can, find a friend to walk with on your first day. Things won't seem so daunting if you can go with someone.

Be prepared to just 'hang out' at break. Take a snack.

Work out how you'll be paying for your lunch – if it's a card or fingerprint system, make sure you're topped up for your first day.

You may find yourself eating your lunch at 11am if the canteen opens early. There may not be enough time at lunchtime, or the queues may be too long. And unfortunately, there may be pushing in from the older ones.

Try not to eat pizza every day.

Find out where the toilets are.

Find out your new school's policy on mobile phones, preferably before yours goes off in the middle of geography.

When it's PE, time is always precious, so for boys, go for adjustable waist trousers – there's no time to be fiddling with a belt. If PE is first period, you may be able to wear your shorts under your trousers for a quick change.

Stock up on sticky-backed plastic – you'll have plenty of exercise books which will need covering.

When you are given your timetable, make at least three copies: one for your bag, one for your pocket and a spare for home.

Get your new friends' phone numbers – you may need to give them a call if you have a last-minute homework panic.

Use your phones sensibly. Think for yourself before you text/use social media. Don't be influenced by other people. In the end people will respect and like you for this.

Be nice to EVERYONE. The people you make friends with at first will probably not be your long-term friends so keep your options open.

Find out all you can about your new friends. Your mum is bound to ask.

Be organised. If you're given a student diary or planner, use it to write down your homework – when there is so much going on, it's easy to forget. Don't lose your planner, you will get into a LOT of trouble.

Find the library. It's a great place to go if you want to do some homework or just sometimes want to avoid the playground.

Never be afraid to ask for help if you're not sure where to go.

At lesson changeover, stick with someone who knows where they're going. And don't try to go against the flow of traffic, you'll only be trampled.

Relax and try to enjoy it – in no time at all, it'll seem like you've been there forever. And this time next year, you'll be showing the new Year 6s around the school.

Good luck. We are proud of you.