



Malmesbury School | Supporting Transition at Home

Introduction

Making the transition from Primary School to Secondary School is an important step in every child's life. For most children, they are more than ready to make the change and embrace the increased independence and wider range of experiences that secondary school can offer. However, this doesn't stop this being an anxious time for them, and for their parents, as they contemplate how their future will be different and how they will cope.

Malmesbury School work closely with our local primary schools to ensure that the transition process is as smooth as possible. I speak with the Year 6 teachers in detail, and Jessica Abel-Goldbin (SENDCo) liaises with the SENDCos, so that we know what support individual students will need to flourish at secondary level. In addition, I know that our colleagues at these schools work hard to prepare the students for the challenges that they will meet.

Sadly, due to Covid-19 and the school closures, Year 6 students aren't in school, and preparing them for the future looks very different this year. I know from talking to the Year 6 teachers that they are in frequent communication with their students and are offering as much support as they can, but no-one would deny that this is still far from ideal.

With the current situation in mind, I thought you may find the following resources useful to help you talk about transition with your child at home. The sessions are numbered but you don't need to do them in any particular order; please feel free to pick what works best for you and adapt it to your individual child's needs and personality.

I hope that you find them useful but please remember that the people who know your child and the transition process are the Year 6 teachers, so if you have any particular concerns, do seek their advice.

I look forward to meeting you in the future and in the meantime, wish you and your children all the very best.

Rowena Wood
Senior Pastoral Leader, Transition and Year 7



Session One

Feelings about change

Focus: To explore their feelings about moving to secondary school

Context:

Transition to secondary school is a big change for children and many will feel nervous and/or excited about it. Feeling isolated or like they are the only one who feels this way can make this anxiety worse, and there's even more danger of this at present, given the children's physical isolation from their peers. It's therefore really important that we encourage them to talk about their worries and concerns and help them to understand that everyone will be feeling the same way.

Things to consider:

Children may feel very differently about issues from what you anticipated, but all these feelings are valid and should be respected. It can be helpful to share their feelings with other Year 6 students so that they find out that they're not the only one who feels like they do, so encourage them to talk about this with their friends via social media, video calls, phone calls etc.

Resources: • Post its or pieces of paper • Pens • Hat/bowl • Signs: 'Nervous' 'Excited' 'Not Sure'

Activity:

Start the session by explaining that your child can talk about how they're feeling without worrying. Reassure them that you are here to help them and that they don't need to protect you or hide their feelings from you to stop you being anxious.

- Explain that you are going to discuss going to secondary school and how this thought makes them feel.
- Ask the children to think about what they are worried or excited about when they think of going to secondary school. Ask them to write each idea on a post it or a piece of paper.
- When they have written all their ideas down, ask them to put all their post-its in the hat/bowl.
- Put out the signs 'Nervous', 'Excited', 'Not Sure' in different areas of your room or on different parts of a large table.
- Read out each statement and ask your child to put it under the heading that best describes how they feel about it. Ask them to explain why they feel that way and acknowledge this reaction.
- Repeat with other statements.
- Ask your child whether they think other children might be feeling the same way.

Session One cont.

• Look at the following resources together:

- The 'Year 7 So far...' video on the Transition webpage (<https://www.malmesbury.wilts.sch.uk/students/year-6-transition/>)
- This video from YoungMinds about transition (<https://youngminds.org.uk/resources/school-resources/find-your-feet-transitioning-to-secondary-school/>)
- The comments from current Year 7 students on the Transition webpage <https://www.malmesbury.wilts.sch.uk/students/year-6-transition/>

Talk about how lots of children have the same worries and concerns. Remember, it's often helpful to know that you're not the only one who's feeling a particular way.

- Talk to your child about the concept of resilience: 'Resilience is having the skills and resources to deal with difficult situations in life. There are different ways to build resilience in people and we can build resilience by talking through our concerns and thinking about different ways to cope.'
- Talk through some of child's concerns and get them to think about who they can talk to about these worries. Take time to explore the rest of the school website and our social media pages so that they feel informed. Also remind them of the other people they've got in their lives who they can turn to for help and support.

Be supportive and constructive rather than dismissive. Also, try to help them to think of solutions to possible problems themselves, instead of giving them all the answers.

"I LEARNED THAT COURAGE WAS NOT THE ABSENCE OF FEAR, BUT THE TRIUMPH OVER IT. THE BRAVE MAN IS NOT HE WHO DOES NOT FEEL AFRAID, BUT HE WHO CONQUERS THAT FEAR."

Nelson Mandela

Session Two

Being Positive

Focus: To identify positive qualities about myself

Context:

Sometimes young people find it hard to believe positive things about themselves and for many it is easier to believe the negative things. Taking notice of your child's successes, strengths, talents and interests will build their resilience, self-esteem and confidence. Encourage them to use what they have achieved as a way of helping them cope with stress and adversity. Helping to point these things out to your child is especially important at the moment, as they might not have been able to do many of the things which normally help them to feel good about themselves.

Activity:

Find a time to talk to your child about their positive qualities and how they see themselves. These conversations are often more successful when you're alongside one another, and especially if you're doing something else at the same time, to make it seem more casual. For example, talking whilst you're driving somewhere or whilst you're cooking together can work well, as it takes the pressure off and stops it feeling like an interrogation.

- Talk about the positive qualities that you value. Ask them what qualities they value in other people.
- Push them to identify positive things about themselves. If they're finding it hard, point out things you value about them.
- Discuss how it feels when someone says something positive about you. How can this make us feel good and why does it sometimes make us feel uncomfortable?
- Talk about why being positive and valuing yourself is important, especially when you're facing a new challenge and meeting new people. Remind them of times when they've coped with challenges and change successfully in the past.

Remember, it's common for young people to reject positive feedback and praise but don't let this discourage you. Also try to be really specific in your praise to make it more meaningful. So, rather than "You're doing a great job" you might say, "I really admire the way you got on with the Maths task today, even though it was hard and you were finding it boring. That shows great resilience."

Things to consider:

Talking about their positive qualities might make your child feel uncomfortable, especially if they have slightly low self-esteem. Talk to your child about the different positive qualities you value in them and other people. Try to steer your child away from qualities about appearance, as this can put pressure on them and others to look a certain way. Similarly, avoid placing too much emphasis on levels or results they have achieved. Instead, focus on qualities like their character and their work ethic.

Session 3

Was it the same in your day?

Focus: To share experiences of secondary school and keep talking about how they're feeling.

Context:

Young people can often forget that we've been through similar experiences and that we know what it's like to go to secondary school and to feel nervous about it. Talking with different people about their memories of starting school is a great way to get your child to think about their feelings and to hear positive stories about school.

Things to consider:

Try to focus on positive stories or events where you were able to overcome a challenge in a positive way. Also try to avoid comments like "I was never good at maths when I was at school", as children are quick to pick up these ideas and adopt them as their own attitudes.

Activity:

Get your child to investigate different family members' experiences of secondary school. They could do this in several different ways:

- Create a podcast or video where they interview people about their secondary school memories.
- Interview people and turn it into an article for a magazine. Perhaps it's something they could share with their Year 6 teacher or the rest of their Year 6 class.
- Use the template on the next page to create a Random question generator and play it with other family members.

Afterwards, discuss what they found out. What do they think will have changed and what might be the same?

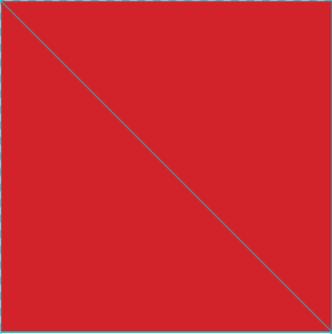
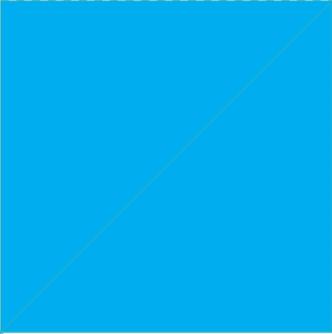
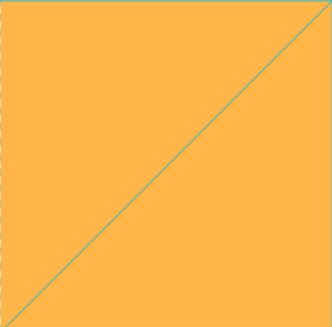
To get them started, they might like to ask questions like:

- What was secondary school like when you went?
- Do you remember your first day?
- What was the uniform like?
- What punishments did people receive if they misbehaved?
- Did you get a lot of homework?
- What were your favourite subjects?

But of course, encourage them to think of other questions of their own too.

Session 3 cont.

Cut along dotted lines 

	<p>2</p> <p>What did you do at lunchtime?</p>	<p>3</p> <p>What funny memory do you have of secondary school?</p>	
<p>1</p> <p>What did you take with you to secondary school?</p>	 	 	<p>4</p> <p>How did you travel to secondary school?</p>
<p>8</p> <p>What was your favourite subject?</p>	 	 	<p>5</p> <p>What happened if you didn't do your homework?</p>
	<p>7</p> <p>What time did you start school?</p>	<p>6</p> <p>Who was your favourite teacher?</p>	

Session 4

Getting organised

Focus: To think about the practicalities of going to secondary school

Context:

When we're faced with a big change, it's worrying about the unknown which is one of the worst things. Being as organised as possible can help your child to feel more secure, as you'll start to reduce the number of things that they might have to worry about. Helping your child to organise themselves also provides a great opportunity for you to model these skills for your child, and allows you to empower them to start taking more responsibility for themselves.

Things to consider:

Recent events surrounding Covid-19 have certainly proved that nothing is certain and that things that seem fixed can be thrown into a state of flux. This is difficult for all of us, but it is especially challenging for Year 6 students who were already facing a big change. As you're working on this session, focus on what things they can get organised and constantly reassure them that there is a wide network of people who are thinking about them and will support them through the next stage of school, whatever that looks like. Also encourage them to "not sweat the small stuff!": things like uniform and PE kit can be organised at a later date.

Activity:

Sit down and get organised together. Put things down in writing and create 'To do' lists that your child can tick off, so that they can see that they're making progress and getting 'Malmesbury Ready'.

1. Talk about the new routine for getting to and from school.

How will they get to school? What time will they leave in the morning? What time will they return? Will they need to be home alone at all and if so, for how long? Which roads will they need to cross? What should they do if they miss the bus? What are the rules on going to someone else's house?

2. Equipment

Write a list of what equipment they will need for school. Some things will be different from primary school, so talk about what additional things you might need to buy. Think about things like:

- | | | |
|----------------------|-----------------------|----------------|
| - blue or black pens | - a pencil sharpener | - highlighters |
| - pencils | - glue | - pencil case |
| - a ruler | - colouring pencils / | - school bag |
| - a rubber | pens | - water bottle |

Session 4 cont.

What other things might you need?

- house keys
- wallet
- bus pass
- lunch card
- mobile phone

Discuss the possible issues that your child might have with these things? How will they keep them safe? What should they do if they lose them?

Talk about what they'll need to do to be organised and to help look after their things:

- ✓ Make sure everything is clearly labelled with your name;
- ✓ Check your timetable the night before and only pack what you need;
- ✓ Get up in good time so that you're not rushing.

3. **Agree a new routine**

Create a plan of the school day with your child so that they know what to expect and what you expect of them. What time will they need to get up? When will they need to leave the house? What other chores do you expect them to do? When will they have free time? What time do they need to go to bed?

4. **A new era?**

Secondary schools expect students to be a lot more independent. Your child may well be travelling a greater distance to get to us and you won't be there every morning and afternoon to resolve problems and remind them of things. This is an important milestone in your child's life, but don't forget to talk to them in advance about what this will look like and what you expect of them.

Also, don't forget to discuss what else might change in terms of your rules and expectations. Are you expecting them to take more responsibility for their own homework? Are they old enough to do certain things on their own? What do they feel they're ready to take on?

Session 5

Primary School Memories

Focus: To reflect on their time at primary school and think about their memories

Context:

Year 6 is often filled with memorable moments and opportunities to remember and celebrate. Unfortunately, the school closures have had an impact on this and many of the normal elements of Year 6 have been lost. Whilst primary schools will be doing their best to make up for this, it is undeniable that it won't be the year everyone wanted it to be.

Remembering what the children have done and celebrating their achievements is an important part of moving on and preparing for the new adventure of secondary school. It's especially important if your child's closest friends aren't coming to Malmesbury School with them.

Activity:

Different primary schools will be doing everything in their power to celebrate their Year 6 students in creative ways. However, you might like to supplement this by encouraging your child to do some of the following:

- ✓ Create a personal scrapbook of memories. Include photos, pictures they've drawn, bits of work that have come home, funny stories...
- ✓ Get your friends to record videos of them telling you their favourite memories from primary school and then edit them together into one video.
- ✓ Create an audio diary of your memories and save it somewhere safe. You could have different sections like School Trips, My Favourite Lessons, Sports Days, School Plays...

Things to think about:

As you reflect on their time at primary school with your child, talk to them about the opportunity that the move of school offers to leave behind certain habits or behaviours. Children often feel trapped in certain behaviours because they've got a reputation for being a certain way and they fear their peers' reactions if they try to change. Moving to secondary school offers them the chance to make that change.

Talk about the importance of making a good first impression and what kind of person they'd like their new teachers to meet. At Malmesbury School we place a lot of emphasis on giving students a clean slate when they join us and only reacting to what the students show us.

Session 5 cont.

- ✓ Write a letter to your teacher or a family member all about the things that happened in primary school and your proudest moments.
- ✓ Ask friends to send you photos and create a collage or photobook. Maybe you could even give them as presents.
- ✓ Write a funny song or poem about things you remember.
- ✓ Create a Primary School time capsule. Put various things that are linked to primary school in an airtight container, like a biscuit tin, and stick a label on the front that says, '**Don't open until July 2027**' (when you'll finish school/college for good). Ask your parents to hide it away somewhere or even bury it in the garden! You could include recordings of songs you and your friends liked, things that were crazes while you were at primary (loom bands? fidget spinners?), photos, an old exercise book, programmes from school plays...

Take the time to talk to your child about how much they have changed over the last seven years and all the things they've achieved. Whilst they might be feeling sad, especially as they haven't had all the normal Year 6 rites of passage, it's also important to be positive about the future. Talk about the adventures that are to come and keep reminding them of how excited you are to see what they achieve.