

# SUPPORTING YOUR CHILD AS THEY MOVE FROM PRIMARY SCHOOL TO METHODIST COLLEGE: TIPS FOR PARENTS AND CARERS

## THE PREPARATION STARTS NOW

Research evidence suggests that starting a new school is a significant transition in a child's life and they need to be effectively supported through it. The research also suggests that school-readiness should start well before the start of term, so your child is as positive, prepared and excited from day one as possible.

## 2. DON'T EXPECT THEM TO BE HIGHLY ORGANISED IMMEDIATELY.

Instead, help them to practise this skill. Neuroscientists tell us that, at this stage in their development, children may not have the ability (brain matter!) to be very organised and parents can inadvertently stress children by expecting them to be. Stay patient and nudge them towards thinking through what they need ahead of each school day, rather than doing it for them. Over time, confidence in their organisational skills should improve.

## 1. TALK ABOUT CHANGE IN POSITIVE TERMS.

Try to exude a sense of excitement about the new school start and confidence in your child's ability to settle in well.

Parental anxiety can sometimes correlate with children's anxiety, so try to keep any concerns to yourself. If children pick up on your worry, they may fear what lies ahead for them.

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## 3. PRIORITISE SLEEP.

The quality of sleep that your child enjoys can directly impact on their ability to concentrate, memorise and learn at school. Try to ensure that they have a great breakfast ahead of the school day. We know that this can have a major impact on mood, as well as on school performance!



## 4. OVER THE SUMMER, NUDGE YOUR CHILD TOWARDS DIVERSE AND INTERESTING EXPERIENCES.

Trying new or challenging activities, and working towards accomplishing them, can help boost their overall emotional and physical resilience. Perhaps the whole family could try to learn a new skill or sport?

## 5. When it comes to talking about school work and working hard at their new school, try to set REALISTIC BUT HIGH EXPECTATIONS.


Don't be afraid to tell your child that 'we go to school to learn and work hard', whilst assuring them that you will be there for them as they move into this new educational stage. Parental engagement in learning can play a critical role in helping children to thrive academically at school.

6. ENSURE THAT YOUR CHILD HAS A STRONG SENSE OF YOUR FAMILY DIGITAL VALUES

and digital hygiene. This is particularly important for children who might be taking phones to school or on a school journey for the first time.

Try to open up family chat about how to stay safe online.

7. IF YOUR CHILD IS A LITTLE BIT 'WOBBLY'



or even very anxious, about starting 'big' school, make sure they understand that everyone is 'in the same boat'. Listen to any worries supportively, but don't overly reassure them. Instead, proactively encourage them to think through ideas that might lessen worries. Perhaps they are afraid of travelling on the school bus for the first time. What ideas can you come up with together, to deal with this? (hint: try a practice bus run? Agree to catch the bus with another child?).<sup>1</sup>

8. TALK TO YOUR CHILDREN ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE OF KINDNESS TOWARDS OTHERS.

How might they help other children settle in during their first week? Encouraging altruism towards other children can actually enhance your own child's self-esteem and general wellbeing.



9. TEACH YOUR CHILD THAT THEY HAVE THE AGENCY, ABILITY AND SKILL SET TO FORM FRIENDSHIPS.



Hone their social skills by thinking through conversation starters as a family. How might they initiate a conversation with another child on their first day? Which conversation openers might help to get the chat going?

10. As tempting as it is, when school starts, TRY NOT TO BOMBARD CHILDREN WITH TOO MANY QUESTIONS AT THE END OF THE SCHOOL DAY.

They will have put in a tremendous amount of physical and mental effort just to get through it! Give them time, their tea, and then maybe, just maybe, they might open up and let you know how they got on.

<sup>1</sup> Parents of very anxious children might benefit from reading Professor Cathy Creswell's (2019) book, *Helping Your Child with Fears and Worries: A Self-Help Guide for Parents*, which explains evidence-based approaches to childhood anxiety.



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At Methodist College, we understand that starting a new school is an exciting time in a child's life and in yours, but it can also feel a little bit daunting. That is why we have made sure that all parents and carers have access to **the very best advice.**

## OUR PARTNERSHIP WITH TOOLED UP EDUCATION

We are a 'Tooled Up' school. This means we subscribe to a library of resources for parents, designed to boost children's resilience, self-esteem and mental health to help them thrive throughout their educational journey and beyond. Once your child starts Methodist College, you will have full access to this unique site. The Tooled Up library is full of evidence-based tips, articles, videos and podcasts for you to delve into, covering all aspects of your child's development.

Look out for further information on how to access your account, coming in July.