

Life in Secondary School

A short guide for parents



This leaflet will help you support your child with secondary school.

Starting secondary school is a big change for parents and children. It is important your child works hard, makes friends and can enjoy a range of activities. This will help them to develop skills and responsibilities for their future. Secondary school will be bigger and further from home than primary school, but your involvement is still important.

What does school want from me?



Partnership – It is much better for your child if you and school work together

- **Support at home** - work with your child on practical skills such as organisation, time management, and study skills
- **Understand the school** - find out how the school operates so that you can work together on things like achievement and behaviour
- **Share problems** - tell the school if something has happened in your family, which may affect your child's mood
- **Stay in touch** - send notes, read newsletters, attend organised meetings and parent evenings, check and write in their homework diaries and read reports together
- **Support attendance** - send your child to school every day. If your child is not well, get in touch with school on the first day, before the school start time
- **Being part of the school community** - find out about the events and celebrations that school is putting on and attend if you can. Become involved by volunteering, joining the Parent Teacher Association or even the Governing Body.



How can I send my child to school ready to learn?

Breakfast

Breakfast gives children more energy and better concentration to do better.

- Make sure your child is starting their day with a healthy breakfast
- Give your child a healthy snack to take with them.

Sleep

Children need about 9 hours of sleep to be alert and ready to learn all day. This helps concentration and reduces irritability and hyperactivity.

- Establish a regular bedtime routine on school nights
- Leave enough time before bed to allow your child to relax before lights out
- Limit stimulating activities like TV, video games, and internet access, before bed.

School uniform/dress and bag

- Support your child to organise their clothes the night before. Help check their bag to make sure they have the correct equipment for the next day, including PE kit
- If you have financial worries that prevent you from buying uniform, please speak to the school. You may be able to get assistance with costs.

Talking about school

Shows children that their learning is important to you.

- Make time to talk about school every day
- Try not to be doing other things while you talk
- Listen carefully and give your full attention
- Ask questions that need more than a “yes” or “no” answer. For example, “Can you tell me about that?” or “Tell me something new you learnt today”.

How does school keep my child safe?

Safeguarding and Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)

Schools have a legal duty to look after and protect children from harm. This is called safeguarding.

Schools must get the right help to children to protect them from abuse, bullying, mental health issues and other harms. The DSL is responsible for safeguarding and the wellbeing of all children in the school. They will decide how to get the best help for children who are being harmed or at risk of being harmed. Schools want parents to be involved whenever possible.



Bullying

Bullying is when one person or a group repeatedly intimidates, upsets, threatens or excludes someone with the intention of being hurtful. It can include name-calling, hitting, saying things that are not true and making someone do things they do not want to do. It can happen face to face or online by adults and children. Schools take bullying very seriously. It can affect a child's future. If you think your child is being bullied, you must work with school to find a solution.

Online safety

There are many positives about being online, as well as risks such as bullying and attracting children into crime (grooming). In school, children learn about the dangers of being online and ways to keep safe. It is important parents keep up to date as much as possible. When school has training for parents, you should try to attend.

Mental health

Good mental health is just as important as physical health. Poor mental health can range from slight feelings of anxiety through to suicidal thoughts or mental illnesses. Schools work hard to make sure every child is safe and happy. Some people feel ashamed to speak about mental health problems, but it is really important to ask for help. Schools can help both parents and children with mental health issues.

Special Educational Needs

The Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Co-ordinator (SENDCo) manages support for children. School will involve you in this support. If you suspect that your child may need more support, contact the SENDCo.

How can I help my child with school?

If your children live with, or see both parents, it is always better when they are both involved in your children's school lives.



Stay in touch with the school

The school will send information to you in different ways - emails, website, text, newsletters or letters via your child. Check regularly and make sure the school has your up to date contact details and details of who to contact if you are not available.

Form Tutor - Make sure you have their contact details and get to know them. They are the first person to contact if you have concerns or want to share good news.

Head of Year - Each year group has a head of year who is responsible for the wellbeing and learning of the children in that year group.

Headteacher and Senior Leadership Team (SLT) - If it is difficult to contact the form tutor, or you are not happy with school, you can talk to a more senior member of staff. Look at the school's website or ask reception for a phone call or meeting.

Attendance - every day counts

It is very important that your child attends school on time and every day. Poor attendance (below 94%) disrupts learning and schools have a duty to follow this up.

- Let the school know the reason for absences
- Sometimes a child will not want to go to school because they are anxious about classmates, homework or grades, or teachers. If you think there is a problem at school, talk with your child and the school to find out more and solve the problem.

English is not my first language

Schools are experienced in working with children and adults who do not have English as a first language. Important meetings will have translators and schools will always find a way to understand what you need. You can also get help from local community organisations.

Behaviour and exclusion

Schools try to create a positive environment with good behaviours to ensure good learning and happy pupils. Schools must have a behaviour policy that explains the school's ethos, how it rewards good behaviour and attitude, and how it addresses and sanctions poor behaviour. Most unsuitable behaviour is sorted out straight away, skilfully and with the minimum of fuss. Sometimes, if a pupil's behaviour is causing more serious concern, the school will contact parents. If poor behaviour continues, schools have the right to exclude your child (usually for a short period, or 'fixed term'). This must be in line with the school's behaviour policy and government guidance. Your child will still be expected to learn, although not in school.

Always:

- Talk to the school and try to understand the issue
- Work closely with the school to sort out the problem together
- Be consistent in reinforcing and supporting the behaviours you agreed with school
- Understand the school's behaviour policy
- Get advice from Camden's School Inclusion Team (see contact details opposite).

School clubs

School clubs help with confidence, health and development and usually take place after school or at lunchtime.

- Encourage your child to get involved in activities outside of school
- If you are worried about your children coming home late or the cost, talk to the school, as they may be able to offer support.



Where can I get more help?

Camden Early Help: Families can get help through [Early Help](#)

Phone: 020 7974 3317 (9am to 5pm - ask for Early Help)

Email: LBCMASHadmin@camden.gov.uk

[Camden School Inclusion Team](#)

Phone: 020 7974 4589

Email: Dylan.Buckle@camden.gov.uk

Apps and games: Use [NSPCC Net Aware](#) to check safety.

Young People: lots of info for children (and parents) on [Camden Rise](#)

Crime: [Fearless](#) helps families to understand more about gangs grooming and county lines. You can give information about a crime anonymously

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