



How can I help as a parent?

Moving from primary to secondary school is an exciting and significant event in the life of your son/daughter. Most parents would like to help reassure their children, prepare them for the changes, and support them in developing the skills they need. This year, due to COV-ID 19, things are somewhat different and we will not be able to host our normal Induction afternoon for your son/daughter and you as parents/guardians at the end of June. We have created a welcome video which you can view on our school website www.enniskillenroyalgs.com. We will also keep in touch with you over the coming weeks and months about what school will look like in September. In the meantime, we share the following general thoughts and information with you on key areas for Year 8 pupils.

The top two worries for children are being bullied and not making friends and, although common concerns, most children report that they are no longer worried after one or two weeks. If your son/daughter expresses such worries it is useful to tell him/her this and to emphasise that everyone else will also be feeling anxious. As there will be many more children in Year 8 than in P7, everyone has a good choice of friends, and even children who move up with several children from their class tend to make new friends at secondary school.

The remaining worries are nearly all to do with new organisational demands that your son/daughter knows will be placed upon him/her. Luckily these are the areas in which we can help most. To achieve the balance of doing too much or too little for your son/daughter is hard – a useful rule of thumb is:

'Never do anything regularly for your son/daughter that he/she is capable of doing himself/herself'.

Time spent early on in establishing habits of work and independence is an investment that will save endless time, battles and heartache in the long run. The habits and the routines that the children develop in Year 8 are those that will stay with them throughout their secondary schooling and more often throughout their working lives – it's worth the effort of getting it right to start with (so much easier than putting things right when they have gone wrong). If you can help your son/daughter to do this, you will really be making a difference.

Getting there and back

- Be sure your son/daughter is clear about what time he/she is expected to be home and what to do if he/she misses the bus or if he/she is held up for any reason.
- Make sure he/she knows/has your contact numbers.
- Buy an alarm clock and make sure your son/daughter knows how it works. Do a test run before the first day at school.
- Work out with your son/daughter what time he/she will need to get up to get to school on time. Work backwards from the time he/she needs to be at school. Include all the things he/she needs to do.

- If possible, be around for your son/daughter for the first few days/weeks and supervise. Praise and encourage independence but be ready to offer a helping hand.

Uniform matters

- Check the uniform requirements including rules regarding presentation.
- Have spares of essentials at home if possible, it prevents panic when things get mislaid at 8.30am!
- Encourage your son/daughter to put everything out (including shoes, socks and underwear) the night before.
- If you have a timetable displayed for your son/daughter (a good idea) colour the days when your son/daughter has Games/PE so he/she can see each day if a PE bag is required.

New timetable

- Reassure your son/daughter that he/she will quickly get to know his/her way around (most have it mastered within a couple of weeks), and that he/she will move around as part of a group to start with. Teachers are very understanding about children getting lost to begin with and help is at hand if it is needed.
- Use the school plan (available in September) if your son/daughter is very worried and talk about getting from one place to another.
- Use the timetable (available in September) and talk about 'how it works' as well as the timing of lessons,
- Break and Lunch.

Organisation

- When homework is completed, supervise 'packing the school bag'. This is best done the night before.
- Encourage your son/daughter to check his/her planner for any reminders/notes each night. It is usually worth double-checking.

Homework

- Agree a routine for homework with your son/daughter. Life can become a constant 'nag' if you don't start this from the beginning. Homework becomes an increasingly important part of the curriculum as your child goes through school – the habits established now will last until he/she leaves!
- A good time for homework is after a short break when your son/daughter returns from school - get it out of the way early, leaving the rest of the evening free.
- Agree with your son/daughter that TV, video gaming, mobile phone use etc. will only be possible after homework is done.
- Many children will say that listening to music helps them concentrate and do their work. Agree whether this is allowed. If their attention is on their favourite song, it can't also be on their homework (and more so for television) but the important thing is to make an agreement and stick to it.

- Be prepared to invest time at first - be available for a set time each day to help with homework until the routine is established.
- Try to ensure that homework is done on the night it is set to prevent 'build up'.
- If children are stuck – either because they don't understand the task they have written down, or because they 'can't do it', offer support but don't 'do it for them'. If for any reason your son/daughter cannot complete the homework due to unforeseen circumstances, please send a note to the teacher concerned.
- Take an interest in the marks and comments on the homework your son/daughter gets back - celebrate success and give the clear message that homework is valuable and important.
- Homework may not be automatically valued by pupils. Be very wary of excuses your son/daughter will use and try to ensure that, if an excuse is given, you check it out and that your son/daughter still does the homework as soon as the problem is sorted out. If you do this the first few times the 'excuses' will lessen but if he/she is successful in getting out of homework in this way to start with, he/she will carry on and it becomes very hard to re-establish good patterns later on when homework becomes crucial to examination grades.

Friendships

Falling out with friends is very common when children move to secondary school. This happens as children form new friendships and new 'pecking orders' are established. Give advice but don't over-react – the tears and anger are normal but most friendship patterns sort themselves out without adults getting involved. Contact the school if your son/daughter becomes depressed or severely withdrawn over this for more than a couple of weeks, or if you suspect that what is happening may be bullying.

The hallmarks of bullying are intentionality (a deliberate attempt to make someone unhappy); persistence (an ongoing 'campaign', not isolated incidents or arguments about specific issues) and an imbalance of power (if the perpetrators are older, bigger and more powerful or if they are operating as a gang against an individual). The school will deal clearly and firmly with any such issues.

Contacts

Your son/daughter will be placed in a Tutor Group and will have regular contact with his/her Tutor who will generally know your son/daughter best. Pupils will mostly be taught in this group, including their weekly Personal Development lesson which deals with establishing a good routine in managing their work, establishing positive friendships and relationships, staying safe on line and making the most of the wider extra—curricular activities in school. This lesson in addition to twice weekly tutor time also provides a regular opportunity for contact between a tutor and their tutor group which allows the tutor to deal quickly with any concerns or worries the pupils may have. We will send out details of your son/daughter's form class in the next few weeks and we will introduce the pupils to their Tutors as part of the next stage of their Induction in September 2021.

If in the course of the year you have any concerns about your child's learning, behaviour or emotional difficulties in school, please speak to his/her Form Tutor, Head of Year 8 (Mr McDevitt), Head of KS3 (Mr Clarke), Learning Support Coordinator (Miss McCabe), Senior Teacher (Mr Gaston), Deputy Principal, (Mr Beddard) or the Principal (Miss Armstrong). We are all here to help. We also arrange Parent/Tutor meetings just before the October half-term to share information about how the pupils are settling in. We value good open lines of communication and we look forward very much to building productive and positive relationships with you and your son/daughter as the newest and very welcome members of our school community.

Useful Websites

- <http://enniskillenroyalgs.com/>
- <http://www.eani.org.uk/i-want-to/apply-for-school-transport/>
- <http://www.eani.org.uk/i-want-to/fsm/>