Top Tips for Parents

For families of year 6s, the summer holidays can seem like a long run-up to that great mountain of mystery and fear that is big school. Moving up to year 7 is a big step.

Professor Julian Elliott, an educational psychologist at Durham University, says: "For many children, secondary school represents a step towards autonomy and the whole process of growing up and leaving childhood behind." It can be overwhelming for children and parents alike.

This is not a leaflet to teach grandmother to suck eggs but to reassure you that you are doing the right things to prepare your son/ daughter for secondary school. As you are aware there are things you can do to make things easier, and things you can think about now that will help your child adjust and settle in quickly.

Build your child's confidence. Settling in well is all about self-esteem. They are more likely to gather a wide circle of friends. They can confidently say "no" to anything with which they don't feel comfortable. So tell them how great they are. When did you last pay them a compliment? They don't have to have done anything special to deserve one; a compliment on how well they look after a pet, or that they are kind or thoughtful, goes a long way. Do this daily and watch their confidence develop.

Listen to their fears. Your child is possibly anxious and also afraid their concerns will appear trivial. Talk through the options with them. Do this for every concern they may have so that they know you take it seriously.

 Remind your child that being a good friend, especially to shy and quiet children, is one way to make friends. Be encouraging if they want to invite friends home and suggest it if they don't.

Show that you feel positive about their school and "talk it up" even if it was not your first choice or you lost an admissions appeal. If you have high expectations, these will be sensed by your child.

 Have a trial run of the route, especially if they walk or cycle. If they miss a school bus home you need to talk through what they will do, especially if you are working and can't pick them up straight away.

 Get up earlier during the last week of the holidays so that early starts for school aren't a shock to the system.

Stick to the uniform code. Your child will feel more comfortable from day one working with the school to make sure your son/ daughter is following the school rules.

Make sure they have emergency money and credit on their mobile phone . Please remember that mobile phones are to be locked away and only used before and after school for year 7’s.

Think about any changes you might need to make at home so they have the time, space and energy for homework. One parent who has three children shared her strategy: homework begins at a set time every day, after dinner, with all three children working simultaneously to avoid distractions. In the early days you should check their homework diary daily and if it looks empty, check with other parents or the school. Your child may simply forget to write it down.

Encourage them to join after-school clubs. They are a great way to make friends. If after half a term they really don't enjoy it, they can find another club they might like to try.

Give your son/ daughter a few weeks to settle in. If you notice any changes in behaviour at home or are having any problems, social or educational, make an appointment with Miss Simpson.