

Making the difference

Starting a new school year



When children start a new school year or move from nursery to primary school, or primary to secondary school, they face new experiences and opportunities. They may also need extra support at these times. Parents, carers and family members can help children to prepare for changes and settle in more quickly. By knowing as much as you can about the school's arrangements, you can help your child to move on smoothly to the next stage in their education.

Where can I find practical information?

Before the new school year, schools try to make sure you and your child have the right information. They often send out useful details in newsletters or invite parents to meet their child's new teacher and find out more about the school.

You may also receive a copy of the school handbook – or you can ask the school for one. So, you should have answers to most of the things you and your child want to know about.

- ▶ The school day – When does school start in the morning? What time does my child finish in the afternoon? When is the lunch break?
- ▶ Dress code – What items of school uniform are needed? Where can I buy them? How much might they cost?
- ▶ After-school activities – What is available: sports and other activities? Is there a homework club my child can attend?
- ▶ Information about support available – Is my child entitled to free transport, free school meals or clothing allowances? How do I find out about them?
- ▶ If my child has any additional learning needs – What are the arrangements for extra support?

If you are unsure about anything, get in touch with the school.

What happens during the new school year?

Different books and equipment may well be needed on different days. If your child is at secondary school they will have a new class timetable. The school will give you information about important dates and school events during the year such as parents' evenings, school trips, class outings and so on.

Some steps you might want to take at the start of term:

- ▶ Talking to your child about what to expect and what might be different
- ▶ Acknowledging anxieties or worries your child might have and offering support
- ▶ Having a place where you keep track of school events such as a pinboard or calendar can be a useful reminder for the whole family
- ▶ Displaying a copy of your child's timetable at home can help you to remind them about things – like taking books or a sports kit
- ▶ Encouraging your child to organise what they need for school each day can help them become more responsible.

What will my child be learning?

When your child moves on to a new class or school, the school will usually send out information on the topics your child will learn about. This will help you discuss with your child what they are learning.

You may be invited to the school where you can find out more and gain ideas about how you can help. If you can't manage to go, ask the school to send you practical advice on how you can support your child at home. This will help you make best use of your time – and really help your child to learn.

How can I help my child settle in?

Some questions you might want to ask your child:

- ▶ How did things go at school today? (the main and obvious question)
- ▶ What are the new and different things they like or dislike?
- ▶ Is there anything they are unsure of or worried about?
- ▶ How are they feeling about the move to their new class or school?

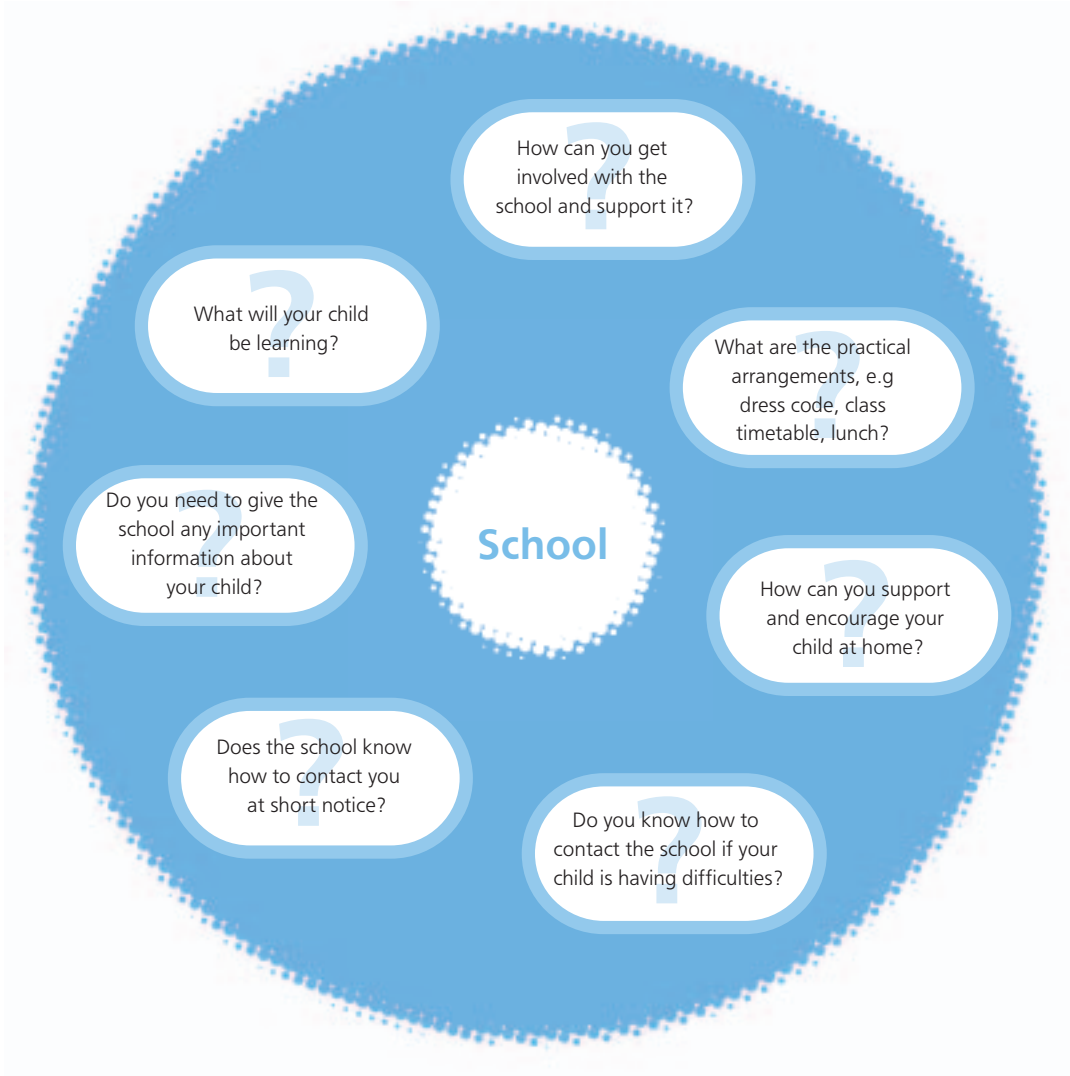
School meetings and parents' evenings are a good opportunity to find out how your child is settling in and to ask teachers what you can do to help. This can also be an opportunity to meet other parents and learn from their experiences.

If you are worried about anything it is important to contact the school and arrange to speak with someone – you don't need to wait until the next meeting at the school.



What should I let the school know about?

It is helpful to let the school know how to contact you or your family, and about any changes that take place during the year. You can also tell the school anything about your child that you think they need to know, such as medical conditions, hobbies/interests, who will collect them from school and so on. It helps the school to help your child.



Useful links and contacts

Your local authority website has a section especially about education and schools. You will find useful information such as term dates and school holidays, special events, and contact details for schools. Some local authorities offer specific guidance on starting a new school year. Parentzone has links to all local authority websites.

Parentzone – www.parentzonescotland.gov.uk

BBC Parents – www.bbc.co.uk/schools/parents

One Parent Families Scotland

13 Gayfield Square, Edinburgh EH1 3NX
Tel: 0800 018 5026 www.opfs.org.uk

Parentscentre – www.parentscentre.gov.uk

ParentLine Scotland

Tel: 0808 800 2222 – www.children1st.org.uk/parentline

Parent Network Scotland

Tel: 0131 555 6780 – www.parentnetworkscotland.org.uk

Enquire (The Scottish advice service for additional support for learning)

Helpline: 0845 123 23 03 Textphone: 0131 222 2439
www.enquire.org.uk

This leaflet is the fifth in a series. It highlights the real difference parents can and do make to their children's learning. Together with the local advice you will have on the arrangements in your child's school, this series will offer information to help you become better involved in your child's education. Other published leaflets are on Homework, Sharing information, Parents' evenings and School holidays. The series also includes materials for schools and teachers on these topics.

If you would like to contact us, or suggest topics for future leaflets, please visit **www.parentzonescotland.gov.uk** or telephone 0131 244 0956. This leaflet will be available in community languages and alternative formats from your child's school and the Parentzone website.

This series is prepared in partnership with the Quality in Education Centre (University of Strathclyde) and Children in Scotland.



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