

# The BIG step up!



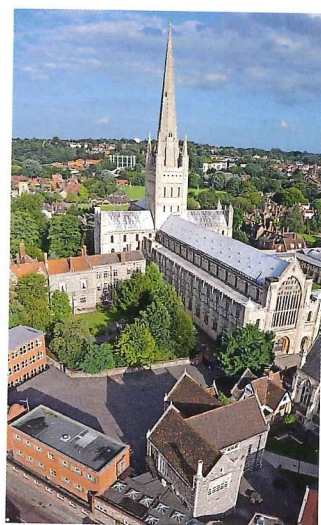
*Moving from the cosy, nurturing environment of primary school where you know everyone and everything to the big unknown world of senior school is a momentous occasion in a child (and parent's) life*

IT is a huge step for any child – the moment they leave primary or prep school and begin the next phase of their education. Whether they are moving to the senior part of their existing school or making the step from primary to a completely new high school, it can be a daunting experience with all manner of emotions to consider – from terror to huge excitement.

Then there are the practicalities, the expectations on making that step up in terms of responsibility, organisation and academic learning.

So what kind of things do schools do to make that process easier and what can parents do to help?

Andrew Rowlandson, acting head of the fourth form at Norwich School, supports



Aerial view of Norwich School

pupils during transition to the senior school – whether they are existing pupils making the jump up, or are completely new to the school.

“As a parent of a boy starting primary school in September, I am wholly aware of the emotions children, and their parents, feel at this time. We therefore take the transition to senior school seriously, recognising that for many children this is one of the most significant and challenging changes they will have experienced.”

He says it is important that parents take advantage of the various open evenings, days and activities which schools put on before the summer and once children have started in September.

“Pupils and their parents will have many opportunities during their first

Above: Norwich School fourth form in the recent production of *James and the Giant Peach*



Year Seven pupils at Norwich School on one of the trips

year with us to smooth the transition.”

At Norwich School there are a host of events organised including new pupils coming to school for a taster day to meet tutors, peer supporters and other pupils; they are also asked to prepare ‘Life Maps’ to be used as a stimulus to help pupils get to know each other better and in September they come into school for an afternoon before term starts to get their timetables and familiarise themselves with the school.

Mr Rowlandson says that until October, new Year Seven parents are also welcome to come to coffee mornings and afternoons held each week, when they can ask staff questions and meet other parents.

“We understand the importance of helping parents with the transition too. We are all clear that positive pupil outcomes are the result of parents, pupils and staff working effectively together. Although there are a number of qualities we try to help cultivate in our pupils, there are certain things which we particularly value parents help with, in particular encouraging independence and resilience.

“We recognise that pupils will go through challenging situations during their time here: from starting the senior school; to making and breaking friendships; to being presented with complex problem solving

in lessons. Our aim is to help encourage pupils to persevere by helping them consider how to learn and grow from setbacks.”

You want your child's first day at school to be as stress free as possible – and while you can't escort them to lessons to stop them getting lost or help them make new friends, there are a few things you can do to ease anxiety.

If your child is worried about the actual journey to school – perhaps a new route to walk, or catching a bus for the first time – do

some practice runs in the week before to help with familiarisation.

There will be a long list of kit which your child will need – be organised.

If you are unsure, ask

other local parents or speak to the school to clarify so any fears your child has about getting told off on the first day for not having the right things – calculator, pencil case, the right bag, the right shoes etc – can be allayed.

If your child is concerned about how to pay for food in the canteen or how the lunch system works, provide them with a packed lunch until they find their feet.

Finally, do not dismiss your child's concerns; they may sound small to you, but starting at a new school – especially if they don't know many people and have come from a very small school – is daunting.♦

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