



## **NEW PARENT SUPPORT**

### **A PARENT'S ROLE IN MESSING PRIMARY SCHOOL**

"Together we can shape our school's future"

At Messing Primary School, we like our parents to feel comfortable and welcome. Our school is approachable and friendly and values parental involvement. Whether you volunteer to become one of our PTFA helpers or roll up your sleeves to help out on special occasions, you become part of a wider school life that enriches your child's experience.

We thought it might be helpful if our current parent's shared their experience of their child starting at our school with you, including tips on how to make the transition smoother.

### **Preparation for starting school**

In their first few days at Messing Primary School, your child will be introduced to new places, people, rules and relationships. This can be both an exciting and anxious time.

You can help by familiarising your child with their new environment before school starts:

- Make at least one visit to the school before your child's first day. Arrange to show your child around their new classroom and meet their teacher. Take a look at where they'll leave their coat and lunchbox and show them the toilets, playground and hall
- Talk about each place as you visit. For some children, just looking will be enough. But others will benefit from your descriptions
- Find out about the daily routine from the teacher and let your child know what to expect. Knowing what's coming next will help your child make sense of their day
- Point out the school whenever you pass it
- Tell stories about what you enjoyed at school and the fun things you did
- Build a school with your child from cardboard boxes or play-brick and act out some classroom scenarios with your child

- Read some positive books about starting school. Good titles include Topsy and Tim Start School by Jean and Gareth Adamson or Starting School by Alan and Janet Ahlberg
- Walk or drive to school together so your child gets to know the route. (Note how long it takes so you leave in plenty of time on the first day)
- For your own reassurance you could ask the teacher what strategies he or she uses to settle the children

### **Plan ahead**

Our school has a meeting for new parents – so go along and take note of all the items your child will need on their first day.

Shop for uniform and other equipment early - you're more likely to find things in the right sizes and you'll avoid the crowding of the last week before term starts. Make the shopping trip into a special event for you and your child and emphasise they are choosing their grown-up school clothes.

### **The countdown**

If your child is in holiday routine - staying up late and rising late - then one week before term begins, change their schedule. Gradually bring their bedtime back to a time suitable for school nights and introduce more regular eating habits with meals at set times.

Write a list of all the things you will need to organise, such as dinner money, snacks and lunches and gym clothes. Stick the list to the fridge and tick each item off as you sort it out.

Involve your child in getting ready for their first day. The evening before term starts, you and your child can work together to prepare their uniform, bag and snacks.

Set your alarm early for the first day - even the most organised parents and children need extra time to get ready for the big event.

### **Your emotions**

Your feelings will guide your child's emotions. If you approach your child's first day with confidence, they will be fine. Use positive words about school and provide loving attention so their anxieties are reduced.

Saying goodbye at school may be very emotional for you. But try to send your child off with a smile and a wave along with the reassurance that you will be there to collect them later.

Remember, even distressed children settle very quickly once you are gone, so make your leave loving but brief. If you are particularly worried we are happy if you want to phone in later to check your child is settling in ok.

### **The end of the day**

Make sure you are a little early to collect your child at the end of the first few days - even a few minutes late can seem an eternity to a waiting child. Your child will probably be tired and hungry, so a healthy snack and some quiet time, with or without you, will be just what they need after school.

Make listening to your child a priority. They will probably talk about their day in their own time so avoid pressing your child, but do give them opportunities to talk to you.

### **CHANGING SCHOOLS**

Here at Messing Primary School, we make a special effort to ensure all our new pupils feel welcome and settle in as soon as possible. Moving house, lack of friends, poor teaching – these are some of the reasons why parents are forced into changing their child's school and sometimes it is mid-year. It is quite different from starting together in reception or moving up to secondary with all their friends.

It can seem very traumatic at the time, especially if your child is well settled in school, has left a good group of friends and you have just moved house. If your child is changing school following difficulties, for example unhappy at a previous school, it is worth privately having a word with your new teacher to make them aware of this.

You have to follow the same process as you do when your child first starts school so check our previous check-list and see if you can adapt these tips to help your older child.

The biggest issue for children when starting at a new school is probably friendships. What will the other children be like? How will I find my way around? Messing Primary School is well versed in sorting these things out.

Your child may each be assigned a buddy on the first day, to show them round. This is hugely reassuring and they will enjoy being fussed over as several children will want to be their friends.

Changing schools mid-term may even have its plus points as they are able to join in with all the fun end of year activities!

It is worth encouraging your child to view a change of school as a positive experience; a chance to benefit from all their new school has to offer and to make some new friends, while still keeping in touch with their old ones.

### **Moving on up.... Getting ready for Secondary school**

Your child has been used to the small, secure environment of Messing Primary School. Suddenly they have got to adjust to the large, much less personal world that is secondary school.

You too may find this a difficult time. You may worry about which school your child is going to, how they will get there, and whether they can cope with new friends, new subjects and all the other pressures.

- Make every effort not to pass on your anxiety to your child. Be positive and up-beat about the change
- If your child expresses worries, show you are sympathetic, but remind them all the new children will be feeling the same
- We arrange visits to local secondary schools; if your chosen school is not included, speak to the school or arrange a visit yourself before the new school term begins
- Make sure all the necessary uniform, physical education (PE) kit and equipment is sorted out well in advance
- Make sure your child is fully aware of road safety issues, to ensure they are safe during the journey into school

- Be prepared for some insecurity in the beginning. Regression to more childish behaviour, tears and tempers, or feeling ill and unable to go to school, are all common
- Chat often about the work and the new subjects, and take an interest in homework and new friendships
- Check out what pastoral care the school provides, so you can be reassured that your child's problems will be taken seriously and dealt with effectively
- Homework needs to be taken more seriously. Make sure your child has a quiet place to work undisturbed by others

### **Trouble adjusting**

Occasionally children find the transfer to secondary just too much and begin to show real dislike for school. When this happens it is important to talk to your child and the school to find out what is going on and what can be done to help the situation.

Your child may be finding the work overwhelming or even boring, or s/he might be finding it hard to make new friends. It is important to tackle this early. Remember your support and confidence in your child will help him or her thrive and make the move to secondary school go more smoothly.

**Please remember if you or your child has any concerns please tell your teacher, so the school can help you in the best way possible.**

**This page has been written by a parent at Messing Primary School**