

# Moving on to secondary school

A guide for choosing and starting secondary school



**Please contact us on 0845 090 8044 for other leaflet formats e.g. large print, audio, another language or to have a discussion.**

## At a glance

### How to choose a secondary school for your child

- It's important to start preparing your choice of secondary school early, so that you can make the best decision for your child.
- There are different kinds of school, often with different rules for admitting pupils. If you have a school in mind, ask what its admission criteria are before making an application.
- Local authorities handle applications for state schools. For independent (private) schools, you should apply directly to the school.
- Don't just go for a school that you think has a good reputation. Ask what is best for your child, and take time to discuss schools with them.
- Research schools in your area carefully, using a variety of sources. The tips in this leaflet will help you compare different schools, so that you know you are making the right choice.
- You have a right to state what your preferred schools are when you apply for places. But that school may not be able to give your child a place as some schools have more applications than places.
- If you are unhappy with the place your child is offered, you can appeal. The letter you get offering you a place will tell you about this process.

### Additional comments:

If your child is moving to secondary school, and you live in Warwickshire, you need to complete an application form and return this to the Admissions Service. The easiest way to do this is to apply online at [www.warwickshire.gov.uk/admissions](http://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/admissions). The admissions team can also take your applications over the phone on 01926 742047. Or they can send you a paper copy of the application form which should be completed and returned to: Warwickshire Admissions Service, Saltisford Office Park, Ansell Way, Warwick, CV8 4UL.

If you live outside of Warwickshire, apply through your local (home) authority.

# Planning and preparing for secondary school

**Your child won't automatically be given a place at your local secondary school. You have to apply.**

The law says that your child has a right to a place at a school, and you have the right to say what school you'd like them to attend. But that doesn't mean that you will be offered a place at your favourite school.

There's a lot to think about. Start planning early and there's less chance that you'll miss the deadline for applications and find that all the places at your favoured school have been taken.

In the June of Year 5, your child will receive a booklet and a letter on how to apply for a secondary school place. You will have about three months to complete the application process.

This leaflet will help you make sense of what's on offer. It covers:

- the different kinds of school you can choose
- thinking about your child's needs
- finding out about schools you're interested in
- how to apply for a place
- starting secondary school

# The different types of school

## State schools

Over 90% of children go to state schools, which are free and open to children from all backgrounds.

You will come across different kinds of state school:

- community schools
- voluntary-aided schools
- academy schools
- foundation schools
- voluntary-controlled schools

With the exception of academy schools who get their funding direct from central government, all other state schools get all or part of their funds from the local authority and have to follow the National Curriculum. But there are differences in the way they are managed and often in the rules they have for offering places to pupils. It's a good idea to ask schools what rules they use. You can also find this information in the booklet "Apply for a Secondary School Place" available from the Admissions Service and can be downloaded from [www.warwickshire.gov.uk/startingsecondaryschool](http://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/startingsecondaryschool).

Most state schools do not offer places based on a child's ability, but a few schools – such as grammar schools – select pupils in this way.

Warwickshire County Council's Admissions Service has responsibility for handling applications to most state schools including academies.

## Independent schools

Independent schools are also known as private schools. They are paid for by parents and do not have to follow the National Curriculum. Private schools can also decide how to run their own affairs and which pupils they will accept. So if you're thinking about private education for your child, it's important to check the school can give them what they need.

For further information contact the Independent Schools Council on 020 7766 7070 [www.isc.co.uk](http://www.isc.co.uk)

Applications for private schools are dealt with directly by the schools.

# What's best for your child?

When you want the best for your child, it's easy to think that you just need to look for a school with a good reputation, however your child's needs are just as important. If a school is popular but your child is unhappy there, it may not be the right choice.

It's worthwhile asking yourself these five questions before you even start looking at different schools.

## 1. What school does your child prefer?

You might not approve of their choice but ask them why they want to go there, and you'll find out what's important to them.

## 2. Where are their friends going?

Is this an opportunity to make new friends, or will your child be better off staying with their old school friends?

## 3. Does your child need special attention?

If your child is particularly bright or has special needs, it's important to choose a school that can support their ideas and individual needs.

## 4. Is there one subject your child is best at?

Or do they have particular interests – such as sports, language or music? Can you find a school that is strong in this area? Some specialist schools focus on one subject but still follow the National Curriculum.

## 5. How will your child get to school safely?

Think about trips to and from school on cold winter mornings and evenings. Will the journey be safe?

### **Remember...**

...what suits one child can be wrong for another. So it's best not to compare your child with their friends and classmates.

## Making a decision

Try not to make a decision about a school without finding out as much as you can about it – even if it's been top of your list of favourites for a while. Don't automatically write off a school on the basis of what others have said until you've seen it yourself. Schools can change fast, so you should always check how one school compares to others in your area. Ask friends and family how their children got on at their schools, or follow our tips below.

### Practical tips

- Contact your local authority. They will give you a booklet with details of all the schools in your area, [www.warwickshire.gov.uk/secondaryschools](http://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/secondaryschools)
- Find out what the school is looking for. Read the school's admission arrangements carefully – you'll find them in the local authority's booklet or, in many cases, on their website or in their prospectus. Every school will give priority to some applications over others eg to those with a brother or sister in the school or to people who attend a certain type of church. Sometimes living near a school is not enough to be able to go there. Know what different schools are looking for.
- Read OFSTED reports. OFSTED (the Office for Standards in Education) inspects and monitors how well schools are performing. Every school is inspected and receives a report on their progress, which you can read. Visit [reports.ofsted.gov.uk](http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk) to find reports for your local schools.
- Ask the school for a prospectus. This is a brochure that tells you about the school and how it educates its pupils. These can usually be found on the schools website.

- Look at school performance tables. The Government publishes these every year. They tell you how well pupils did in exams at every school – so you can compare one school's results to others in your area and nationally. Visit **[www.education.gov.uk/performance](http://www.education.gov.uk/performance)** for more information.
- Most importantly visit the school with your child. This is a great way of seeing things for yourself and is an opportunity for you to ask questions. Some parents say writing a list of questions helps. You can call a school to ask if they have open days for parents and children, or you can ask to visit the school on a separate day if you are unable to attend the parents evening. This information can be found in the secondary school booklet.

### **Remember...**

...if you are applying for a place at an independent school, you should approach the school directly to find out how they process applications.

### **Information at your fingertips**

If you have access to the internet, you might like to use the Find a School service on the Warwickshire Direct website. Not only can you look for schools near you, but you can see Ofsted reports and performance tables for schools in your area. Simply visit: **[www.warwickshire.gov.uk/schoolfinder](http://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/schoolfinder)** for more information.

## Applying for a place

Warwickshire Admissions Service coordinates admissions for most state schools and the easiest and quickest way to apply is online at: **www.**

**warwickshire.gov.uk/admissions.**

Alternatively, you can contact the Admissions Service on 01926 742047.

All you need to do is list your favourite schools in order of preference and the local authority then sends you an offer of a school place. Where possible, this will be for your first-choice school, but it depends on whether your child meets their admission criteria. If you are not offered a place at any of the schools on your list, the local authority should still offer you a place at another school.

**Remember - make sure you get your application form in on time. If you miss the closing date your application will not be considered until after all of those who applied on time, even if they don't meet the criteria as closely as you.**

## What if you're not happy with the place you're offered?

If you are unhappy with the place offered, you can appeal against this decision. The letter you receive from your local authority with your offer should tell you what to do and inform you about waiting list and appeals. Your letter should tell you if your child has automatically gone on a waiting list or if you need to request that your child be put on the waiting list in case a place comes up - be realistic as this may not happen.

If you decide to go through with the appeal process, an independent appeals panel will hear your case and if you're successful, your child will be offered a place. For more information on the appeals process visit: **www.warwickshire.gov.uk/schoolappeals**

# Applying for a place when your child has special educational needs

If your child has special educational needs you can get more information about applying for a school place from the 'Applying for a Secondary School Place' booklet, [www.warwickshire.gov.uk/startingsecondaryschool](http://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/startingsecondaryschool).

## Where can I get advice and support?

SENDIAS (SEND Information, Advice and Support Service)

The service can provide:

- one-to-one educational support
- impartial advice and information about special educational needs
- support at meetings (e.g. with schools or the local authority)
- support during assessment for a Statement of Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND)
- liaison with schools, the local authority, support services, local statutory and voluntary organisations
- written information on SEND procedures

- representation on strategic groups to promote parents' views

Please contact:

SENDIAS,  
Canterbury House  
Exhall Grange Campus  
Easter Way  
Ash Green  
Coventry  
CV7 9HP  
[wias@family-action.org.uk](mailto:wias@family-action.org.uk)  
[www.family-action.org.uk/wias](http://www.family-action.org.uk/wias)  
02476 366054

The Special Educational Needs and Disability Assessment and Review (SENDAR) Service can also offer advice on special needs policy and practice. If you have any questions that cannot be answered through your child's current or new school, these can be addressed by SENDAR by calling 01926 742160 or emailing [sen@warwickshire.gov.uk](mailto:sen@warwickshire.gov.uk)

# Starting Secondary School

Below are some tips and advice on how you can make the move to secondary school as positive an experience as possible for your child.

- Most schools have induction days during the summer term of Year 6 so make sure your child is around for that date, it will give them a taster of what school life is going to be like and give them a chance to meet their new classmates.
- If the school has a uniform make sure you have the correct one. If this is expensive, speak to the school to see if they can help with the cost. The school will usually provide you with a list of items that your child will need before they start.
- Try to get your child to talk about how they feel about starting 'big' school. It's a huge step going from being the eldest in a school to being the youngest and they may feel nervous or apprehensive.
- Try not to pass on your worries to your child. Be encouraging.
- Be sympathetic to your child's worries and be prepared for some insecurity at first.
- If your child has special educational needs (SEN), talk with the new special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO) about strategies and systems that will be available. Many schools offer a buddy system for a couple of weeks for more vulnerable children.
- Make sure the school is aware of any medical issues your child has.
- Put the school's phone number in your mobile.
- Make sure that your child's clothes are manageable - putting on a tie may be a new and complex skill that should not be left until the first day of term.
- Once a timetable is finalised, put a copy in your child's bag and a copy on the bedroom wall. Keep spare copies for you to replace lost or damaged ones. You may want to get the timetable laminated.

- For many children the system of colour coding works well. This needs some time to set up, but is simple to use once it is up and running. Each day is labelled with a colour on the timetable; each item required on that day is identified with the colour and the use of an appropriate sticker.
- Make a shelf available in their bedroom for homework organisation. Using clearly labelled files/boxes (one for each subject) can help your child to keep all necessary items together - worksheets, textbooks, exercise books and so on, which will make them easier to find when needed.
- Try to encourage your child to get into the habit of preparing for school the night before.
- Remember your child may well be exhausted when they come home from school for the first few weeks, so allow them time to relax.
- Talk to your child about their choice of friends. A good way to meet new friends with similar interests is by joining a school club. Suggest that your child explores the options available. Remind them to always tell an adult if someone is being unkind to them.
- Finally, encourage your child to relax and think positively. With caring support, you can help make the transition a happy one.

# Thinking about the journey to and from school

Familiarise your child with the route to school. For many it is their first experience of travelling by bus.

## Bus Pass

- You may be able to apply for a school bus pass for your child. Visit [www.warwickshire.gov.uk/transporthelpunder16](http://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/transporthelpunder16) for more information.
- Find out what the bus route is and where the bus will pick up and drop off your child.
- See if there is a child living nearby who may be doing the same journey as your child so that they will have someone to travel with.

## Bullying

This is a common concern for parents and children at this time. Talk to your child about bullying without scaring them. Explain to them that it is wrong and that they must tell you or their class teacher if anything happens as soon as possible. Reassure them that you will do as much as you can to get the bullying to stop. Bullying is a very serious problem and can be upsetting

## What about walking?

- Practise the route with your child so that you both feel confident and happy with the journey, they may not want you taking them to school anymore so this will give you peace of mind.
- Make sure your child has 'emergency money' just in case they forget to take their pass or have to call you to come and collect them.

for both you and your child. It can be hard for children to talk about being bullied or choosing to bully others, and you may not be sure that your child is being bullied.

For more information on bullying go to [www.warwickshire.gov.uk/bullying](http://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/bullying)

## Your relationship with the school

Many parents feel isolated once their child starts secondary school as they lose the connection they had with other parents at the school gate. It can be difficult to get involved with the school if you have bad memories of your time at secondary school. However, there are ways in which you can keep in touch:

- Ask if there is a Parent Teacher Association and find out about the schools meetings with parents and other events which they may have.
- Ensure that you sign the home school agreement and use it as

an opportunity for you to ask any questions you may have about the school.

- Speak to your child's class teacher or tutor about any problems you or your child might have.
- If you and your partner are separated tell the school that they will need to include a non-resident partner in any mailings.

### **Remember...**

...the school is there to help both you and your child through this time of transition.

## Further Help

All schools in Warwickshire have a range of activities and events including information sessions and new parents evenings in the summer term prior to your child entering Year 7. These events will help support the smooth transfer for children moving onto secondary school.

Information sessions or new parents open evenings provide new parents with opportunities to:

- Meet other parents
- Share and discuss ideas and worries

- Hear about practicalities and activities at your child's new school
- Receive practical information on parenting support
- Find out about local and national parenting services

For further information on the range of activities and information sessions available, please contact the school your child will be attending.

# Finally

Moving on to secondary school is a big event for the entire family and often marks a time of change for everyone. Your children are suddenly growing up fast and may begin to challenge you about what they can and cannot do. They are beginning to find independence and make choices without you. Children in their pre-teens will begin to push boundaries and test how far they can push you and how much you can take.

- Set boundaries so that your child has a clear message on what you value. Involve them in this process. If boundaries are made and agreed by everyone they tend to work far better. This will also help to keep your child secure and safe.
- Explain to your children clearly what you want and why, and most importantly listen to their point of view.
- Compromise. You may think this means you're giving in, but it shows to your children that you value their opinion and are allowing them to take more responsibility for themselves.
- Trust them. If your children feel trusted and part of a team they are more likely to cooperate.
- Children need to be kept safe so give them some ideas on how they can keep themselves safe. This also gives them the opportunity to take some responsibility for their own safety.
- If an arrangement is not working then sit down and talk over why it isn't working and make a new rule or agreement between you.

## Further information

### **[www.warwickshire.gov.uk/schools](http://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/schools)**

Everything you need to know about state schools in Warwickshire.

### **[www.warwickshire.gov.uk/admissions](http://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/admissions)**

Information on applying for school places in Warwickshire.

### **SENDAR**

### **[www.warwickshire.gov.uk.sendassessments](http://www.warwickshire.gov.uk.sendassessments)**

Supports children with special educational needs.

Tel: 01926 742160

email: [sen@warwickshire.gov.uk](mailto:sen@warwickshire.gov.uk)

### **[www.gov.uk/browse/education](http://www.gov.uk/browse/education)**

Government portal that includes advice on finding a school for your child and a Schools and Curriculum section.

### **[www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)**

Website for the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted), which monitors schools and produces reports on their performance.

### **[www.education.gov.uk/performance](http://www.education.gov.uk/performance)**

Government performance tables, showing how well each school in the country did in national tests and exams.

### **[www.family-action.org.uk/wias](http://www.family-action.org.uk/wias)**

SENDIAS supports the parents and carers of children with special educational needs.

Tel: 024 7636 6054

email: [wias@family-action.org.uk](mailto:wias@family-action.org.uk)

## Can't get onto the internet at home?

Visit your local library which will offer free internet access.

**Other titles in this series include:**

Choosing Childcare and Early Years Education  
Dealing with Bullying – A Parent’s Guide  
Dealing with Separation and Divorce  
Encouraging Good Behaviour  
Life with a Teenager  
Staying safe online  
Tackling Homework and Revision  
Talking to your Children about Relationships and Sex  
Talking to your Children about Alcohol and Drugs  
Why Dads Matter  
Your Child’s Learning – Getting Involved  
Dealing with Discrimination - A Parent’s Guide

If you are looking for any further information or advice for your family the Family Information Service can help you. We offer a free and impartial information and signposting service for parents and carers of children and young people aged on a range of topics such as; childcare, benefits, health, leisure and much more. If you don't know who to ask, ask the Family Information Service!

Tel: 0845 090 8044 or 01926 742274

Email: [fis@warwickshire.gov.uk](mailto:fis@warwickshire.gov.uk)

Web: [www.warwickshire.gov.uk/fis](http://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/fis)



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