

Secondary School

# **Survival Handbook**

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# junior leaders

Junior Leaders is based in London and provides practical skills training to help young people thrive in education and life.

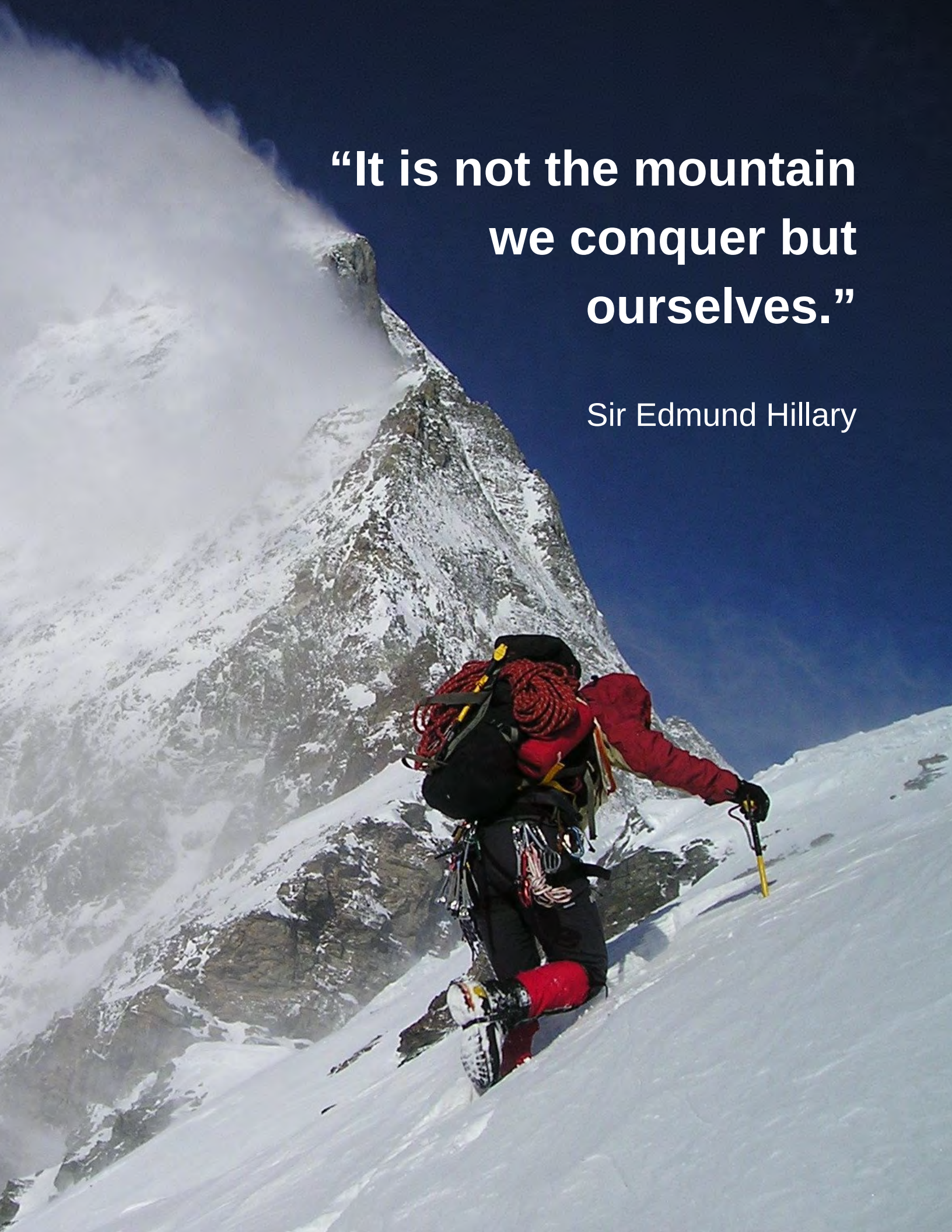
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**“It is not the mountain  
we conquer but  
ourselves.”**

Sir Edmund Hillary

# **The start of a new adventure**

Moving to secondary school is the start of a new, exciting adventure!

There are going to be lots of changes - new buildings, new subjects, new teachers, new daily routines, new journeys to school, new friends and new responsibilities.

This change might initially seem daunting, but here's a little secret - with the right advice, preparation and attitude the journey can be fun, exciting, interesting and one of the best experiences of your lives!

This Secondary School Survival Handbook is intended to be read by students and their parents or carers to help prepare for the transition. The Survival Handbook may help identify any topics or issues that hadn't been previously considered and start a discussion.



# Why are we going on this journey?

Education is incredibly important to both the individual and to society. It is the engine of the country's economy, the foundation of our culture and provides essential preparation for adult life.

The purpose of education is to prepare young people for life, equipping them with the knowledge and skills to contribute to a thriving society.

Secondary school aims to help you become a well rounded individual who is happy and successful in life!

*"The most powerful childhood predictor of adult life-satisfaction is the child's emotional health. Next comes the child's conduct. The least powerful predictor is the child's intellectual development."*

London School of Economics, What Predicts a Successful Life, 2013

# What to expect at your new school?

At secondary school there will be many changes and many new opportunities. Some of these will include:

- you will be one of the youngest students in the school.
- the school will feel, and probably be, very large with many new buildings and larger grounds.
- have a broader range of subjects and many more teachers.
- the day will be set out in a timetable, with a lot of chopping and changing of rooms.
- wider choice of sports and clubs.
- class sets, form groups and new houses.
- the opportunity to make new friends.
- chance to discover your strength / weaknesses and your likes / dislikes.
- the chance to reinvent yourself.
- more homework!

# **New responsibilities and independence**

Joining secondary school is the start of your journey to becoming an adult. The role of your new school is to prepare you for adulthood and all the responsibilities and independence that comes with it. Therefore as you join and then progress through school you will be given more responsibilities, including:

- managing your own routine and timetable.
- finding your own way to school.
- getting to school and classes on time.
- completing your homework to the best of your ability and within deadlines.
- making sure you have the correct books, uniform, kit and equipment for the whole day – including lessons, sports and clubs.
- looking after yourself, including making sure you have enough sleep, are eat healthily and have good personal hygiene.
- making time to have fun!



# Be prepared!

It is important to make sure that you are properly prepared and organised before joining your secondary school. Here are a list of things you should do before starting:

- establish a new daily routine – write it down!
- check that you have all the uniform and equipment required by your new school - they will provide lists.
- prepare your travel plans and practice them.
- set up a quiet space at home to do homework.
- where will you store your school equipment and bags?
- consider having a white board or pin board at home for to-do lists, timetables and your daily routine schedule.
- make sure you put emergency contact numbers in your phone and have a paper backup to carry with you.
- explore what extra-curricular activities your school offers and think about which ones you'd like to do.
- prepare for the next day the night before!

# Pack your bag the night before!

**Always, always, always** pack your school bag the night before! Getting everything organised the night before will ensure that you don't forget anything important like your homework or sports kit!

- check your timetable for what is needed the next day.
- make sure any homework has been completed.
- pack any textbooks and exercise books.
- pack your pencil case and any other instruments you need, such as a calculator or protractor.
- make sure uniform is clean / ironed and shoes polished.
- pack sports kit including shoes and equipment.
- packed lunch, snacks and water bottle.
- pack travelcard, money, wallet and keys in a safe place.
- charge phone and bring any chargers.
- put a reminder in your phone for anything extra to remember!

# Homework

At secondary school you will likely have more homework than you are currently used to. Homework doesn't need to be hard, boring or time consuming. It is useful to remember that your teachers are not trying to catch you out or punish you - they want to help you learn!

So why homework?

- practices what you have learned in class.
- helps you remember and understand.
- identifies areas of strength and weakness.
- develops your ability to work on your own and organise your own time.
- builds responsibility and independence.
- readies you for tests and exams.
- develops intellectual curiosity and problem solving techniques.





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MAN  
  
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& SON LTD

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WOMEN  
LOUISA M.  
ALCOTT

THE  
NEWCO

VOL

WM.T

“The dictionary is the only  
place where success comes  
before work.”

Mark Twain

# Surviving homework

Here is some advice to help make homework as painless as possible:

- write down your homework clearly in a homework planner.
- listen in class.
- do your homework the night it is set and in priority order.
- choose the place you do your homework carefully.
- create a good homework space:
  - clear desk.
  - desk lamp.
  - comfortable chair.
  - peace and quiet – less distractions the quicker you can get homework finished.
- build a homework support network to help with any questions you have – parents, siblings, classmates?
- if there is anything unclear or you don't understand about your homework – ask your teacher, immediately!

# Homework

## Do's and Don'ts

### Do your homework:

- ✓ in priority order according to deadlines.
- ✓ somewhere quiet with little risk of interruption.
- ✓ have a good work space.
- ✓ have drunk plenty of water.
- ✓ take regular breaks.
- ✓ set a reward.
- ✓ discuss topics you find interesting or challenging.
- ✓ ask for help!

### Don't do your homework:

- ✗ at the last minute.
- ✗ whilst eating.
- ✗ in front of the TV.
- ✗ whilst listening to your favourite music loudly.
- ✗ lying on your bed.
- ✗ late at night or just before sleeping.



# Money management

An essential skill in life is to be able to look after your money effectively. At secondary school you will have to manage your pocket money, ensure you have adequate funds on your cashless swipe card to pay for food and drinks, and perhaps even pay for the journey to and from school.

You might want to consider:

- setting a budget for your pocket money - how much will you spend / save?
- open a bank account and a savings account.
- having a debit card or cash card.
- do you know how to check your balance and top-up your school swipe card?
- download a banking app to your phone.
- keeping a money box at home for spare change / savings.
- how much cash do you need to carry to school?
- having a wallet or purse.

Travelling safe  
and secure



# Travelling to school - general advice

Deciding how you will get to school is an important discussion to have with your parents or carers. Your new journey may be longer and involve taking public transport on your own. Don't worry - after a few days your journey will become second nature! Here are some things to think about:

- plan your journey in advance.
- discuss and agree with your parents or carers.
- be observant and concentrate – keep aware of your surroundings.
- look confident.
- cross roads at designated crossing points.
- always stop, look twice and listen before crossing roads.
- be aware of corners, driveways, exits and entrances.
- avoid talking on the phone or displaying any valuables.
- stay in well lit public places.
- give a wide berth to suspicious people and areas – consider crossing the road.
- have a back-up plan for travel disruptions!
- can you travel with someone else or in a group?



# Buses, trains and tubes

One of the most common ways of getting to school is by public transport or school bus. As you will be going to school during rush hour your journey may be busy with commuters and could be disrupted. Make sure you:

- plan your journey in advance, including alternative routes.
- know where you are going and which stop you need?
- how long will it take - with and without disruption?
- do you know the timetable?
- stand back from the edge of the platform or road when a train or bus approaches.
- wait in a well lit area, particularly at night or poor weather.
- you have your ticket, travelcard or change ready in your hand with your purse or wallet out of sight.
- do you know where the help points and passenger alarms are?
- if you feel concerned about safety, sit close or speak to the driver on a bus, or move to a carriage where there are other people on a train or tube. Do speak to a uniformed member of staff.

# Walking and cycling

If you are lucky to live close to your new school then cycling or walking is an excellent way to travel. As you will be sharing the roads with other road users, including pedestrians, cyclists, cars, trucks and buses you will need to keep especially aware. Make sure you:

- plan your journey in advance, including alternative routes.
- think about the route and identify places where you might feel threatened or at risk.
- try to stick to public places where there will be other people.
- avoid using shortcuts and badly lit areas.
- be observant and concentrate – keep aware of your surroundings. Look confident and walk purposefully.
- **never** accept a lift with a stranger or someone you don't know very well – even if you are lost, cold, tired or it is late and dark.
- **cyclists** – always wear a helmet and always wear reflective clothing and use your lights in poor weather conditions and at night.

# Taxis and cabs

There may be occasions when you need to use a taxi (black cab) or a cab. There are several rules you should follow when using them:

- always use a licenced taxi or minicab.
- book your minicab by phone, online or from a minicab office. Never approach or accept a ride from a driver on the street. Only black cabs are allowed to be hailed by customers and be picked up off the street.
- when your booked minicab arrives, make sure the driver can confirm your name and destination. You may also have been sent the vehicle registration number (number plate) and drivers name – licenced cab drivers will have photo ID. Check both before entering the cab.
- always sit in the back and if possible have a mobile phone.
- make sure you know how you are making payment before starting the journey!



# Travel etiquette

You should always act in a considerate and responsible manner when travelling to and from school. Remember that you are an ambassador to your school.

On your journey make sure you:

- act safely.
- cooperate with transport staff and treat them and other passengers with respect.
- use language that does not cause offence to others.
- ensure you are the only person that can hear your music.
- ensure you pick up all your litter.
- keep your feet off the seats.
- give up your seat for others.

# Useful travel tips

Most days your journey to school will be trouble-free, however you should always be prepared for the unexpected and for your journey to be disrupted. You should make sure that you have prepared an alternative route and that you know who to contact in case your journey has been delayed or if you are in trouble. The following tips may prove handy:

- do you have an 11-15 Zip Oyster photocard, or equivalent?
- download travel planning apps - such as Citymapper, TFL and National Rail.
- install a 'track my location' app on your phone so you can be found in an emergency.
- can you remember an emergency telephone number?
- charge your phone before leaving home.
- regularly check that you have enough call / text / data allowance on your phone.
- carry a charger and maybe a portable charger.
- do you have change for a UK Payphone? Minimum fee is 60p.

Taking care of  
yourself



# Rest and sleep

Getting adequate rest and sleep is essential for success at school. Not only is a good night's sleep needed for the effective operation of your body's systems but it significantly improves your ability to learn and process memories. Too little sleep can lead to physical and mental health issues, including: mood swings, irritability, poor concentration, depression, high blood pressure and illness.

You should strive to have between 8-10 hours sleep every night. In fact you should try to get as much sleep as possible, within reason! As you settle into your new school, you need to find the right balance between how much time you spend being active - studying, sports and clubs - and relaxing.

To ensure you keep your energy and concentration levels high during the day, you should take regular breaks during the day to prevent burnout.

**Remember:** the brain becomes unproductive when not properly rested.

# Getting a good night's sleep

One of your main responsibilities at secondary school is to make sure that you sleep well and are fully rested for the next day. The following tips will help:

- set a consistent sleeping and waking time.
- develop a bedtime routine (shower, read, etc).
- no electronic devices in the bedroom – including phones!
- do not use TV or electronic devices within 1-hour of bedtime.
- don't eat or drink caffeinated drinks late in the evening.
- keep your room dark and cool.
- exercise.
- prepare your uniform and pack your school bag the night before!

# Healthy eating

Like sleeping, healthy eating is essential to maintaining physical and mental health and staying alert. Healthy eating:

- improves concentration.
- prevents you getting ill.
- provides you the energy to get through a busy day.

You should always eat a healthy breakfast including protein and carbohydrates. It is also important to eat five portions of fruit and vegetables per day, whilst avoiding too much sugar and salt. During the day you should keep well hydrated by drinking water regularly.

**Remember:** a healthy diet is an investment for your education and future. Not eating properly can lead to poor concentration in class leading to poor performance.



# Personal hygiene

Good hygiene is important. Germs can spread easily at school. To ensure you stay healthy make sure you:

- wash your hands thoroughly before and after eating, after using the toilet, coughing, sneezing, playing in the playground etc.
- ensure your finger and toe nails are clean and neatly cut!
- cover your mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing - use a tissue or handkerchief.
- brush your teeth twice daily for 2-minutes.
- shower or bathe regularly – particularly after sports.
- brush your hair and regularly wash it.
- dry yourself properly – particularly feet to avoid fungal infections.
- wash your clothes regularly.
- consider using deodorant.

“If you make friends with yourself  
you will never be alone.”

Maxwell Maltz



# Self-esteem

Self-esteem is all about knowing yourself and being comfortable in your own body. One of the great things about secondary school is that it gives you a place to identify your strengths and weaknesses - and accepting them - in a safe and supportive environment.

Before starting your new school school it is worthwhile thinking about and discussing the following:

- a positive self-image dramatically improves confidence.
- developing a positive attitude.
- celebrate your achievements.
- physical appearance alone does not make a person.
- accept your imperfections (no-one is perfect!).
- take pride in your appearance.
- dress nicely and take care of yourself.
- have good personal hygiene.
- take care of your uniform and equipment – do own laundry, iron clothes, polish shoes.
- Try new things!



# **Making new friends is a skill**

Having a group of close, high quality friends is important key for happiness and success at school and in life.

So, choose your friends wisely! Quality over quantity!

For some making friends is easy, for others it's harder. Here are some top tips to make new friends at your new school:

- say hello.
- be approachable.
- introduce yourself.
- smile and make eye contact.
- relax and be yourself.
- listen and then respond.
- join a club.
- take part in sports.
- think of questions you can ask.

# How to introduce yourself

In the first few days of joining your new school, you will be likely to be asked to stand up and introduce yourself to your class, sports team and clubs.

To ensure this goes well, why not prepare and practice giving a short introduction to include:

- your first name and surname.
- what you like being called.
- where do you live?
- which school did you come from?
- what subject do you like?
- what hobbies and sports do you like?
- what are you looking forward to at your new school?

Remember to take a deep breath before standing up to introduce yourself. Make sure you stand still, speak slowly and confidently whilst looking at everyone in the room.





“Good manners will open doors  
that the best education cannot”.

Clarence Thomas



# Peer pressure

Our friends and peers influence the way we behave. It's only natural to want to fit in - however it is useful to be aware of:

## **Positive peer pressure:**

- encouragement to do better in school or club.
- importance of team sports and sporting improvement.

## **Negative peer pressure**

- pressure to do things that you don't want to do.
- can have life changing effects – physical, psychological and reputational.
- people can be manipulative.

## **Top tips:**

- don't be afraid to say no.
- make your own decisions.
- have courage, strength and self-confidence.
- walk away from situations that you know are wrong.
- talk to someone you trust – parent, teacher, older sibling etc.
- change your friends.

# School etiquette

Being respectful to others is a major ingredient to success in secondary school and throughout adult life.

- Be polite, have good manners and be courteous both at school and whilst travelling.
- Follow your school rules and dress codes.
- Primary purpose at secondary school is to learn – irrespective of whether you like particular teachers or not.
- Being rude to teachers and using bad language is wrong.

# Bullying

Bullying affects lots of people and can happen anywhere: at school, travelling to and from school, in sporting teams, between neighbours and in the workplace.

It is very important to deal with bullying quickly and effectively.

Bullying can be defined as repeated behaviour which is intended to hurt someone either emotionally or physically, and is often aimed at certain people because of their race, religion, gender or sexual orientation or any other aspect such as appearance or disability.

Bullying can take many forms including:

- physical assault.
- teasing.
- making threats.
- name calling.
- cyberbullying.

# Dealing with bullying

Telling someone is the first step in taking control of the situation and starting to make things to improve.

**Talk to your parents:** find a quiet time to tell them what is happening, how long it has been happening, who has been involved and how it makes you feel. It may help to write everything down and then show them. Ask a friend or family member to join you if it will make you feel more confident.

**Report to the school:** report directly to a teacher or member of staff. They have a duty to keep you safe from bullying and your school will have procedures in place to support you.

**Talk to a friend:** surrounding yourself with good friends is the best way to prevent bullying. Confide in them and ask for their help.

# Cyberbullying

Cyberbullying is misuse of digital technologies or communication to bully a person or group. It includes:

- abusive comments.
- sharing pictures, videos or personal information without consent or with the intention to cause harm or humiliation.
- hacking to extract and share personal information.
- creating dedicated websites to spread malicious rumours or make fun of someone.
- pressurising someone to do something they don't want to do.

**Report it:** start by telling your parents or a trusted adult. Report it to your school, your internet service provider and the police.

**Prevent it:** don't respond, block bullies using security settings, increase your privacy settings and take care of your online presence – think before you post!



# Online safety

The internet is an invaluable tool for communicating, entertainment and researching information for school - however there are dangers. Follow these tips to stay safe online:

- don't share personal information – such as home address, email address or mobile number.
- think carefully before:
  - posting or sharing pictures and videos of yourself.
  - posting comments.
  - once published it is in the 'public domain' and can be shared and downloaded by anyone for ever. This may come back to haunt you!
- don't befriend people you don't know.
- don't arrange to meet people you have met online.
- keep your privacy setting high.
- If you see something online that makes you uncomfortable, worried or unsafe, turn off your computer or device and tell a trusted adult.

# Surviving the first day

Starting secondary school is the start of a new exciting adventure where you will have the opportunity to make new friends, learn new subjects and take part in a wider range of sports and extra-curricular activities. Secondary school is the place to discover and develop your talents and potential.

## **Remember:**

- don't panic!
- there will be lots of other new joiners!
- help each other!
- don't be embarrassed to ask for help from teachers, staff or other students.
- be friendly and smile! This will help make you and others feel better and make a good impression.

## **Enjoy the adventure!**

“Success isn't always about greatness. It's about consistency. Consistent hard work leads to success. Greatness will come.”

Dwayne Johnson



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