

September Pastoral Spotlight

Making a Positive Start to the New School Year

As we reach the end of our first week back, it has been wonderful to see pupils settle into new routines, reconnect with friends, and embrace the opportunities that a new school year brings. For many children, the return to school is exciting and energising. For others, it can take a little longer to adjust after a summer spent with family, enjoying a less structured routine.

The important thing to remember is that both reactions are completely normal. Starting a new school year often brings a mixture of emotions. Alongside excitement and anticipation, there can also be nervousness about new teachers, new expectations, different friendships, or unfamiliar routines. Even confident children can experience moments of uncertainty.

For most pupils, these feelings ease as they settle into the rhythm of school life. However, it is helpful for parents to recognise that anxiety can sometimes show itself in unexpected ways.

Recognising signs of anxiety

Children and young people do not always have the language to explain how they are feeling. Instead, anxiety may present itself through changes in behaviour, including:

- Difficulty falling asleep or staying asleep
- Irritability or becoming more short-tempered than usual
- Difficulty concentrating
- Tiredness or exhaustion
- Physical symptoms such as stomach aches, headaches, or muscle tension
- Increased clinginess or reluctance to separate from parents
- Changes in mood or emotional wellbeing

These responses are often a sign that a child needs reassurance, patience, and opportunities to talk rather than immediate solutions.

Top Tips for Parents

1. Keep communication open

Make time for regular conversations about school. Rather than asking, "How was your day?", try questions such as:

- What was the best part of today?
- What made you smile this week?
- Was there anything you found tricky?

Often children will share more when they feel they are being listened to rather than questioned.

2. Focus on the positives

Encourage your child to think about enjoyable aspects of school life such as friendships, activities, sport, music, trips, or subjects they particularly enjoy.

3. Maintain healthy routines

Children thrive on consistency. Regular bedtimes, healthy meals, opportunities for exercise, and predictable routines all help support emotional wellbeing and readiness to learn.

4. Encourage independence

Allow children to take responsibility for age-appropriate tasks such as organising their school bag, preparing equipment, or managing homework deadlines. Independence builds confidence.

5. Watch for signs of stress

Be aware of significant changes in behaviour, mood, sleep, or appetite. If concerns persist, please do not hesitate to contact your child's Tutor or Head of Year in the first instance.

6. Look after yourself too

Supporting children is much easier when parents are looking after their own wellbeing. Prioritise sleep, make time for activities you enjoy, and remember that perfection is neither expected nor possible.

Top Tips for Pupils

1. Talk about worries

If something is bothering you, tell someone. Your Tutor, teacher, Head of Year, parents, and friends are there to help. Problems almost always feel smaller when they are shared.

2. Give new friendships time

You do not need to find your best friend immediately. Friendships develop naturally through shared experiences and common interests. Be kind, include others, and be patient.

3. Be organised

Simple habits make a big difference:

- Pack your bag the night before
- Check you have the right equipment
- Keep track of homework and deadlines
- Arrive at school ready for the day

Being organised helps you feel calm and confident.

4. Get plenty of sleep

Sleep is one of the most important ingredients for success at school. A well-rested brain learns more effectively, copes better with challenges, and helps us manage our emotions.

5. Get involved

Whether it is joining an activity, trying a new activity, or volunteering for a responsibility, getting involved is one of the best ways to make the most of school life.

6. Remember that nobody is perfect

Every pupil will make mistakes this year. What matters is how we respond. Be willing to learn, keep trying, and remember that progress is often made through challenges as much as successes.

Looking Ahead

The start of a new academic year offers a fresh opportunity for growth, learning, and discovery. Whether your child has settled immediately or is still finding their feet, the early weeks of term are about building confidence, establishing routines, and developing positive habits that will last throughout the year.

By working together as pupils, parents, and staff, we can ensure that every child feels supported, valued, and ready to flourish. After all, a successful school year is not built in a day or week; it is built through small positive steps, taken consistently over time.

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