



| NSW Department of Education

Getting ready for high school





What to expect in high school

Starting high school is an exciting time for students as well as their parents and carers.

Going to high school will be a new experience for your child. The school is likely to be much bigger than the primary school and your child may feel a little insecure at first. Instead of being a senior in a small school, they are now a junior in a secondary school. However, it is also an exciting time with many opportunities and a broader curriculum.

New experiences

From day one, there will be many changes to get used to including having a number of different teachers and different classrooms, often spread across a larger campus. Set class periods on particular subjects may also be longer than in primary school. Students carry around notes and books, which can be heavy, from class to class.

New way of learning

Year 7 students will be expected to be more independent, self-reliant and self-motivated than in primary school. Lessons will often be more student-centred.

New teachers

In high school, students usually have 8 or more teachers and a student or year adviser to coordinate their activities. Teachers will become resources and guides, rather than instructors. There are also head teachers for different key learning areas, and classmates can vary from class to class.

Timetables

Students are given timetables with subjects, times and room locations listed. They need to check their timetables each night to make sure they have the correct books, equipment and homework completed for the next day's classes. If they have sport or PDHPE, they may need to pack their sports uniform and shoes. Reading and understanding timetables can take some time to get used to, and moving from room to room might unsettle and tire them.

Peer pressure

Making new friends and a desire to fit in sometimes means students do things they might not normally do – just so they can be liked or be one of the crowd. Letting children know they don't have to do everything their peers do is an important way of ensuring the friendships they make are genuine and positive – not based on pressure or conformity. A valuable message is that a real friend is someone who likes them for who they are.

Did you know?

Your child will have access to Adobe, Microsoft and Google software with free, filtered internet and unlimited secure cloud storage in the classroom.

New friends

Making new friends can be a daunting task for Year 7 students. Students often come from a variety of primary schools and they may find themselves in classes filled with children they don't know. Fitting in is often important to Year 7 students – finding people they like and who share their interests helps motivate them and increase their self-esteem. Discuss their new school experiences each day, the people they've met or observations they've made – that way there is an awareness of difficulties when they arise.

Mobile phones

Generally, your child won't need to use their mobile phone or any personal digital (gaming) device while they're at school. If you need to communicate with your child during school hours or if they need to contact you, this can be organised through their school. Procedures for mobile phone use vary across NSW public high schools and are based on the best approach for the individual child and school community. Check with your child's school for their specific mobile phone rules while on school grounds, at school-related activities and outside of school.

Technology

Your child will have access to a wide range of technology tools and services. Teachers expertly integrate these tools to enhance the teaching and learning experience of students. Tools include online platforms to facilitate digital classrooms, and applications to allow students to consume and create multi-modal experiences. Students will also engage with digital technology and science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) tools to develop skills for their future. Each school and teacher will choose the best digital tools for the task to meet key learning intentions.

Get ready for high school

General checklist

- Does your child have allergies or a health condition? If so, talk to the high school principal as soon as possible.
- If your child has disability and additional learning and support needs, talk to your primary school about your child's transition to high school. They will be able to help you start a conversation with the high school and help to set up the right supports there for your child.
- Buy school uniforms, books, stationery, school bag, drink bottle, house key and any other supplies.
- Find out whether your child will need a device such as a laptop. If you are buying a device, check the recommended minimum requirements with your school.
- Find out the school's position on mobile phones.
- Label everything.
- Join your school and the department on social media to get all the updates.
- Learn how you can become involved in the school.
- Connect with other parents on social media.
- Give the school your current contact details.
- Provide your child with money and your contact numbers in case of emergencies.

- Talk positively to your child about the move to high school. Ask them what's exciting about high school. Does anything worry them?
- Make sure you have the school's phone number with you.
- Remind your child that there are specialist staff they can talk to if they need to.

Getting to and from school safely

- Help your child organise a school Opal card or bus pass if travelling by public transport. Phone 131 500 or go to transport.nsw.gov.au/ssts
- Help your child plan their public transport route to school, if needed. Use the trip planner at transportnsw.info/trip
- Plan and practise walking routes with your child. Discuss with your child what they will do before and after school, and when they need to be home.
- Talk about what to do when they're running late, miss the bus or train, lose their travel pass, feel unsafe travelling to and from school, or it's wet weather.
- Discuss the dangers of being distracted when crossing the road or riding a bike – including talking on the phone, texting or using headphones.

Before you start

- Participate in any transition to high school program available.
- Watch videos about high school at education.nsw.gov.au/high-school
- Break in school shoes over the summer holidays to make them more comfortable.
- Practise travelling to and from school using your new transport or travel route. If you're catching public transport, you'll need to know how to check a timetable.
- Label everything you will be taking to school.
- Set up a quiet work area with some stationery supplies.
- Organise personal hygiene items in your school bag.
- Pack a healthy lunch or choose healthy choices if your school has a canteen.
- Set your alarm so you can get ready on time.



At high school orientation

- Find out about school uniforms (including sports uniforms).
- Get a map of the school to identify buildings, entry points and bike racks.
- Find out the school start and finish times.
- Get details on programs the school offers.
- Make a list of book packs and school supplies.
- Meet with your Year 7 Advisor and the Aboriginal Educational Officer at your school.

Once school starts

- Print, photocopy or write out school timetables to place in school diaries, inside locker doors and on the fridge. Download a copy to your device.
- Join clubs, teams and societies to meet new friends.
- Note all assignments, homework and events in your diary.
- Check through the timetable each night while packing your bag.
- Remember to eat healthy food and get a good night's sleep.

Year 7

Many schools begin a transition program during Term 3 and 4 of Year 6. Make sure you attend any orientation or 'meet the teacher' events offered by your school. It will make Year 7 easier if you know what to expect, how the school works and who to talk to about issues. Staying in touch with your child's progress is harder than primary school as they may have a different teacher for each subject. Getting to know the staff is important.

Ask the school



Some questions to ask at information sessions:

- Is there a parent or student portal with details of timetables, assessment tasks, excursions and so on? How do you access it?
- Who is the year adviser for Year 7 and how do you contact them?
- Does the school have an Aboriginal Leadership Group and a local Aboriginal Education Consultative Group?
- How do you contact individual teachers with any concerns?

Support networks and staff



If your child has disability or additional learning and support needs, start planning early to support your child's successful transition to high school. Every high school has a learning and support team or teacher who can support your child's transition.

High schools have the same kinds of supports available as primary schools. If your child has adjustments or supports in place in primary school, you should have access to similar adjustments for your child in high school.

Together with the school, you can identify educational options that best support your child's individual learning needs and the most appropriate curriculum options and adjustments for your child.

education.nsw.gov.au/parents-and-carers/inclusive-learning-support

Voluntary school contributions



All NSW public schools can request contributions to enhance educational and sporting programs. School contributions are voluntary and payment is a matter for decision by parents.

Financial assistance for elective subjects



Schools may charge for elective subjects that go beyond the minimum requirements of the curriculum. Parents who are unable to pay for elective subjects because of financial hardship may be eligible for assistance from the school.

The principal will ensure no student or family suffers any discrimination or embarrassment over failure to make a voluntary or subject contribution.

Telephone Interpreter Service



If you would like more information from the school and you need an interpreter, please call the Telephone Interpreter Service on 131 450 and ask for an interpreter in your language. Tell the operator the phone number of the school you want to call and the operator will get an interpreter on the line to assist you with the conversation. You will not be charged for this service.





Learning in Years 7 and 8

Year 7 students participate in a variety of familiar and new subjects taught by subject specialists. All Year 7 students attend English, mathematics, science, personal development, health and physical education (PDHPE) lessons and planned physical activity.

In addition, technology mandatory, music, visual arts, geography, history and a language are taught in Years 7 and/or 8.

English

Students develop knowledge, skills and understanding of the English language and learn how to become effective communicators through the exploration and creation of written, spoken and visual texts.

Creative arts – music and visual arts

Students discover a variety of art forms through the study of music and visual arts where they learn to appreciate, make and perform.

Personal development, health and physical education (PDHPE)

Students explore issues of health, safety and wellbeing. Students also participate in challenging and enjoyable physical activity, improving their capacity to move with skill and confidence.

Mathematics

Students develop knowledge, skills and dispositions to become confident users and communicators of mathematics in the world around them.

Human society and its environment (HSIE)

Students explore varied subjects in human society and its environment (HSIE) to learn about history, geography, people, societies and culture.

Technology mandatory

Students use a range of tools, materials and techniques in the design process and technological experiences through theory and practical lessons.

Science

Students learn about the natural and made worlds and how to apply scientific skills, knowledge and understanding across a broad range of contexts.

Languages

Students develop communication skills, learn about languages as systems and explore the relationship between language and culture.

Planned physical activity

Students participate in 2-3 hours of planned physical activity each week. This might be integrated into other lessons.



Literacy and numeracy



NAPLAN

Years 3, 5, 7 and 9 students in Australian schools sit the National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN).

NAPLAN is held in May and involves 4 different tests:

- language conventions (spelling, punctuation and grammar)
- writing
- reading
- numeracy.

They are not English or mathematics tests. Rather, NAPLAN assesses students' general literacy and numeracy skills, which are required in all subject areas. Texts used in NAPLAN come from a variety of key learning areas.

Students with disability or additional learning and support needs may require adjustments to support their learning. Students learning English as an additional language or dialect (EAL/D) may qualify for some exemptions. Contact your school to discuss further.

Best Start Year 7 assessment

At the beginning of Year 7, your child may undertake a Best Start Year 7 assessment. This assessment is used in many high schools to help identify students who may require additional support in the development of key literacy and numeracy skills. Teachers also use a range of other assessments to identify students' literacy learning needs and teach the skills they require.

Support for students who are learning English

If your child is learning English as an additional language or dialect (EAL/D) they may require additional support to develop their English language skills. Schools provide language support for EAL/D learners to participate fully in schooling. Newly arrived EAL/D learners with limited English language skills may also be eligible to attend an Intensive English Centre or Intensive English class. Contact your school to discuss how the needs of EAL/D learners are met.



Supporting literacy learning in high school



In high school, students will develop and use literacy skills in all their subjects. Strong literacy skills, including good vocabulary knowledge, can influence success in all areas of learning throughout high school.

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You can support your child to develop their literacy skills through a range of speaking, listening, reading and writing activities.

Speaking and listening



Developing speaking and listening skills is important for children to socialise, make friends and actively participate in learning activities.

- Encourage your child to share what they are learning at school. Listen, ask questions, and discuss these topics with them.
- Share stories from your world. Sharing memories, family traditions and history can support students in understanding their place in the broader world.
- Introduce new words relevant to your child's culture, experience and interests.
- Listen to your child and encourage them to tell stories, retell favourite events or create new stories based on their surroundings.
- Encourage creativity – use visual cues such as family photographs or people you see on a walk to create new 'characters', situations and events.
- Encourage your child to listen to audio books, podcasts or stories from friends and family.

Reading



Encourage your child to read widely on subjects that interest them, both fiction and non-fiction, and share their reading with others. This will support your child to build a love of reading.

- Encourage your child to read a range of reading materials, including books, magazines and online texts. Some of these may be about topics studied at school.
- Talk about and share your favourite stories or books from your childhood. Children learn to love and value reading by watching, copying and interacting with others.
- Encourage your child to borrow books or e-books from school, local or online libraries. Browse the library collection online with your child, talking about the books and covers that interest them.
- Ask your child for reading recommendations. After reading, talk about and compare your favourite parts, characters, events and/or writing.
- Encourage your child to read print versions of their favourite film or TV shows. Talk about how the story or character may differ and which they prefer.
- Model reading at home, discussing news, sport or topics that interest you and your child.

Writing



Encourage your child to write in different forms about topics that interest them. This will support children to explore how messages can be communicated in different ways.

- Look at the writing tasks your child is doing in different subjects at school. Discuss these pieces and encourage your child to share what they see as their strengths and areas for improvement.
- Have a booklet, journal or diary that your child can write or draw in daily.
- Ask your child to draw or write about things they like to do, or on an issue that is important to them.
- Encourage your child to write their own story. Create illustrations and 'publish' digitally or in print.
- Encourage your child to write about their world – their observations through a window, or of a family member or a pet.
- Ask your child to write a book, film or game recommendation.

Providing encouragement, support and positive literacy learning experiences will benefit your child in their high school years. Developing strong literacy skills prepares young people for success in everyday life after school.



Wellbeing



Encourage your child to keep a balance in their high school life. They still need time to relax, have fun and spend time with friends and family. They also need healthy food, exercise and a good night's sleep.

Responding to the pandemic

The past 2 years have brought a lot of change and disruption for everyone, including children. Supporting your child through this change can help them settle into high school.

How your child may be feeling...

Your child may feel **excited or happy** about starting high school.

Or, they may feel **nervous or frustrated** about all the changes.

It's important to remember that all of these feelings are normal and your child may react differently to others.

What you can do to help support your child

- Monitor the media your child is watching.
- Talk to your child about their understanding of the situation and correct misunderstandings or confusion.
- Include your child in making plans for the future.
- Support your child to stay connected to friends.
- Keep to your regular routines and activities as much as possible.

Thinking about the future

Change can be stressful and the pandemic has only added to the uncertainty and challenges of high school. Your child might feel worried about what will happen this year, as well as what lies ahead in 2022 and beyond. These emotions, while understandable, can be distracting and draining. That's why it's important to have some strategies to manage their worries, re-focus their thinking and ensure they're looking after themselves.

education.nsw.gov.au/parents-and-carers/wellbeing

Supporting your child

Anti-bullying

All NSW public schools actively prevent student bullying and encourage appropriate behaviour by helping students build social skills and respect for others.

Schools develop their own anti-bullying plan which includes strategies to reduce bullying behaviour, cyberbullying or harassment, and school staff are trained to respond to these situations. Contact the school for a copy of your school's anti-bullying plan or to report a concern.

The anti-bullying section on our website includes evidence-based research to support educators, parents and carers, and students to identify, prevent, and respond effectively to student bullying behaviours.

education.nsw.gov.au/anti-bullying

Support services and counselling

All NSW public schools have access to psychological expertise through the school counselling service. Secondary schools have staff dedicated to supporting the mental health and wellbeing of students. Each school has access to school counsellors or school psychologists, and many have a Student Support Officer and a Head Teacher Wellbeing.

They can help students who are having difficulties at school or home and connect families with services outside of school if needed. You may make an appointment to access the school's counselling or psychology services by contacting the school.



How to respond to bullying online



What is bullying online?

Bullying online (sometimes called cyberbullying) is using technology to deliberately and repeatedly bully someone else. It can happen to anyone, anytime, and can leave you feeling unsafe and alone. Bullying online can include:

- abusive texts and emails
- posting unkind messages or images
- imitating others online
- excluding others online
- inappropriate image tagging.

Online bullying is serious. The person who is being bullied may not feel they are able to escape it, even at home.

How do I know my child is being bullied online?

Your child may not tell you if they are experiencing bullying behaviour online because of a fear it might make things worse for them or they may lose access to their devices and the internet.

Signs to watch for:

- being upset after using the internet or their mobile phone
- changes in personality, such as becoming more withdrawn, anxious, sad or angry
- acting more lonely or distressed
- unexpected changes in friendship groups
- a decline in their school work
- changes in their sleep patterns
- avoidance of school or clubs
- a decline in their physical health
- becoming secretive about their online activities and mobile phone use.

How you can help

The eSafety Commissioner recommends ways you can support your child.

esafety.gov.au



- 1 Seek immediate help where there is a risk of harm through counselling and support services or call triple zero (000) where there is risk to physical safety or self harm.
- 2 Stay calm, listen carefully and ensure your child knows they are being heard.
- 3 Try to resist immediately taking away their device. Removing your child's phone or computer could be unhelpful and make the situation worse.
- 4 Before you or your child block someone or delete posts or other bullying material, take screenshots and collect evidence including dates and times.

If the bullying material involves sexualised images, be aware that possessing or sharing such images of people under 18 may be a crime, even if you have just taken a screenshot for evidence purposes.
- 5 Do not retaliate or respond as it may make the situation worse. If your child has already responded, encourage them not to respond any further.
- 6 Use the eSafety Guide to report abusive content
- 7 Consider speaking to your child's school.
- 8 Try to keep your child engaged and stay aware. Check in with your child about how they are feeling.

Tips for healthy screen use



Help your child balance screen use for entertainment with other activities to support their physical and mental health.

- Encourage your child to break up watching TV, playing games or scrolling social media with other activities like exercise, social activities and hobbies.
- Get involved in offline activities with your child and make it part of the family routine.
- Encourage your child to use an alarm clock or app to track or limit the time they spend on social media or playing games.
- Limit your own use of screens for entertainment and show how much fun your child can have without a device.
- Work with your child to create family rules for screen use, like no TV after a certain time.

Avoid using screens before bedtime

Screen time in the bedroom can lead to adolescents not getting enough sleep. Screens stimulate the brain and make you more alert - the opposite of what you want to do when you're trying to go to sleep! The blue light from electronic devices can affect the quality of your child's sleep and disrupts rapid eye movement (REM) and circadian rhythms, causing your child to be tired and moody during the day.

So how to avoid all this? The best way is to encourage your child to turn off screens in the hours before bedtime. If your child really needs to use a device before bedtime make sure it's on night time mode. Studies show that night time mode reduces the blue light emissions that are so harmful to your brain and your sleep.



Every day counts

A day away from school here or there doesn't seem like much but absences add up.

Student attendance at school has an impact on academic achievement and social and emotional wellbeing for individual students. Good student attendance is achieved when schools and families work in partnership to support every student.

Attending school

Going to school every day continues to be important in high school, just as it has been from Kindergarten to Year 6.

What your child learns each day builds on what they learned the day before. If your child misses school, their learning routine is broken. Students can also lose confidence and miss out on building their friendships. You have a legal responsibility to send your children to school every school day.

If your child misses school due to illness, religious reasons, family circumstances or other reasons, contact the year adviser or Deputy Principal. Remember to contact the school within 7 days to explain the reason for their absence.

If your child arrives at school late or needs to leave early, you will need to go to the office to sign your child in or out and explain the reason for the absence.

If you're having difficulty getting your child to school every day and on time, contact the year adviser or Deputy Principal.

If you need help with English, ask for an interpreter. The school will arrange one if available.

When your child misses just...

1 day per fortnight

.....
they miss upwards of

4 weeks per year

which equates to over

1 year missed over their school life



Studying at high school

Once your child is in high school, regular study becomes important. Study time is completely different to doing set homework.

Homework will vary in amount and type because of the number of teachers and subjects each day. Most students will need to do some homework every night. It might be a review of the day's lesson, completion of exercises or starting an assignment that is due later on.

During study time, students should go over the day's work, read their textbooks or notes, create summaries and try to increase their understanding of concepts covered in class.

Students in high school should regularly review work covered in class, summarise key ideas and do additional reading and research on topics, as well as practise tasks such as essays and maths problems.



Suggestions for effective studies

There is no one 'best' way to study. Students often find different methods and times to study to suit themselves. The key is regular study, not cramming before a test or exam.

Does your child have a homework and study planner or diary? Some will prefer scheduling homework and setting reminders on their phone or device, but you still need to check they are keeping up with their homework and study each week.



Engaging with your child's education



Your school is committed to working with you to ensure you have all the information and support you need to help your child get the most out of school. In addition, you have the right to feel welcome at school, to be treated fairly and to be able to actively participate in your child's schooling.

We ask that in return you commit to making your interactions with your child's teachers, other school staff, other parents and other children positive. We are all partners in our children's education. Every child has the right to expect their best interests will shape our decision-making and actions.

School staff have the right to feel safe in their workplace and be free of intimidating actions or language as well as inappropriate or unhelpful communications. All our interactions and communications – including those about difficult or complex issues – should be timely, respectful, transparent and focused on solutions.

All public schools in NSW have a School Community Charter which provides the framework for school-based behaviour and interactions. The charter creates clear expectations and a framework by which we can all be held to account. If at any time you think a communication or interaction has not been handled in line with the charter, please raise this with your school or the department.

education.nsw.gov.au/school-community-charter

Finding the right person if you have questions or concerns

We understand that you may have questions about your child going to high school. Our students' wellbeing is our priority and we want to work with parents, carers and families to support them during this transition. If you have a question or issue and want to talk to someone before your child starts high school, you can contact your local school and ask to speak to someone about your query. Once your child starts high school, the subject teacher can discuss your child's progress in that subject. The head teacher of a specific subject or the year adviser can also be a good place to start.

education.nsw.gov.au/your-feedback



Calendar 2022

January

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Key dates

- Term start and end dates***
 - Term 1 (Eastern) – 28 Jan to 8 Apr 2022
 - Term 1 (Western) – 4 Feb to 8 Apr 2022
 - Term 2 – 26 Apr to 1 July 2022
 - Term 3 – 18 July to 23 Sept 2022
 - Term 4 – 10 Oct to 20 Dec 2022
- School development days**
 - Term 1 (Eastern) – 28 Jan and 31 Jan 2022
 - Term 1 (Western) – 4 Feb and 7 Feb 2022
 - Term 2, 3 and 4 – 26 April, 18 July and 20 Dec 2022

- School vacation dates 2022**
 - Summer (Eastern) – 20 Dec 2021 to 27 Jan 2022
 - Summer (Western) – 20 Dec 2021 to 3 Feb 2022
 - Autumn – 11 Apr to 22 Apr 2022
 - Winter – 4 July to 15 July 2022
 - Spring – 26 Sept to 7 Oct 2022
- School development days**
 - Summer (Eastern) – 21 Dec 2022 to 26 Jan 2023
 - Summer (Western) – 21 Dec 2022 to 2 Feb 2023

- Education Week**
 - 1-5 August 2022
- Exam dates**
 - Selective high school placement test – 10 Mar 2022
 - NAPLAN online test window – 10 to 20 May 2022
 - Opportunity class placement test – 28 July 2022
- Public holidays**

Download the NSW Education Parent app

Stay up to date with the latest news, newsletters and events from your school and the department.



Scan me for practical school tips!

To help your child get the most out of their school year and to explore our resources, check out our back to school hub at education.nsw.gov.au/back-to-school

School zone speed limits apply on all school days, including school development days.

* Check with your school as starting and finishing dates may change.



Useful websites

education.nsw.gov.au/useful-websites

Translated school information

education.nsw.gov.au/translated-documents

A-Z quick guide for parents

education.nsw.gov.au/parent-guide

Enrolment

education.nsw.gov.au/enrolment

Parents and carers resources

education.nsw.gov.au/parents-and-carers

Complaints, compliments and suggestions

education.nsw.gov.au/your-feedback

Aboriginal Outcomes and Partnerships

education.nsw.gov.au/teaching-and-learning/aec

Aboriginal Education Consultative Group

aecg.nsw.edu.au

Disability, learning and support

education.nsw.gov.au/starting-school-with-additional-needs

NSW Health

health.nsw.gov.au

mhcs.health.nsw.gov.au

Road safety

education.nsw.gov.au/safe-travel

We acknowledge the homelands of all Aboriginal people and pay our respect to Country.



Say hello

 @NSWDepartmentofEducation

 @NSWEducation

 @NSWEducation

education.nsw.gov.au

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