

TalkingAbout....Secondary School

Introduction The transition from Junior to Secondary education is a worrying time for many children, particularly those with Autistic Spectrum Disorder, or a learning disability.

The latest in our Talking About series gives children the opportunity to discuss common situations and difficulties that may arise in Secondary School, as they try to cope with the extra social demands and complicated routines.

Activities / Using the pack Present one of the large pictures to the individual or group. A description of the scenario is provided, but it may be useful to widen the discussion by asking how the person might feel, or whether anyone in the group has been in a similar position. Some questions are already included on the description sheets.

Then offer the small associated pictures, one at a time, to provide possible courses of action which may resolve the situation. The pictures show both appropriate and inappropriate ways of behaving, which will allow for lively discussion about the 'right' thing to do. Encourage the children to think up their own suggestions.

Many of the situations lend themselves to role-play and 'rehearsal' of social conversations, which are useful for small group work, and when working with children with Autistic Spectrum Disorder. These are labelled on the description sheets.

1. School Uniform Danielle has never had to wear a school uniform before, and really hates it.

What does she have to wear?

Tell me about your new school uniform.

Do you like yours...or not?

What do think would be a good school uniform? Draw a picture of it.

What should Danielle do?

Wear her own clothes to school. What might happen if she does that?

Adapt the uniform so it looks better. Do you think it looks better? What will the teachers say?

Refuse to go to school. What do you think Danielle's Mum is saying?

Wear the school uniform, but ask her Mum if she can buy something nice to wear at the weekend. What might Danielle's Mum say?

2. Forgotten Homework The teacher is asking everyone to hand in their homework. Mitchell opens his bag to get his work but...oh no!... he's left it at home!!

Have you ever forgotten anything important?

Tell me about it.

Do you get homework now? What do think about doing homework?

What might the teacher say..or do.. about Mitchell's 'forgotten' homework?

What should Mitchell do?

Tell the teacher that he'll just run home to get it...it'll only take 5 minutes, because he lives right next door to the school. Is this a good thing to do? What might the teacher say?

Say 'sorry' and explain what has happened. He tells the teacher that he'll bring it in tomorrow. (Role-play)

Try to grab his neighbour's work and say it's his. What will the girl say?

What will the teacher do?

Make up a story about why he hasn't brought in his homework. Do you think the teacher believes Mitchell? What will she do if she thinks he is lying?

3. Dinner Hall It's James' first day at school and he's gone into the dinner hall. He hasn't a clue what to do...and now all the other children are arriving.

How does James feel?

Do you have lunch at school?

Tell me about what happens.

What should James do?

Ask some of the bigger children what to do. What might they say to him? (Role-play)

Try to find someone he knows so that he can sit near them. Who would you like to go into dinner with?

Go and hide in the toilets

Ask one of the dinner ladies what he should do (Role-play)

4. School Bag Jacob is packing his school bag, ready for all his lessons tomorrow...but he's getting all mixed up. He's got so many books to sort through.

What new lessons might you have in Secondary School?

Where would you keep your school books?...in your room?...in a cupboard?

What should Jacob do?

Don't take any books to school. What will the teachers say?

Take all his books to school. Why is this a silly idea?

Check his timetable to see which lessons he is having tomorrow - then pack the books to go with that lesson.

Ring his friend Gina to find out which books she is taking tomorrow. This might not be a good idea. Why?

5. Shyness Neeta doesn't know anyone in her year group - they all come from different Schools. She feels very lonely and shy.

What should she do?

Put her head down on the desk and cry. What will the other children think about that?

Jump around and shout so that everyone will notice her. (Role-play) What will the teacher say?

Introduce herself to the girls on the next table. (Role-play)

Don't speak to anyone, but just get on quietly with her work. What will the teacher think about that? What's wrong with not talking to anyone?

- 6. Bus Queue** Chantelle needs to catch a bus to get to her new Secondary School, but it can be quite scary when all the big children join the queue. They're very noisy and keep pushing in front of her.
- How do you get to school now? How will you get to your Secondary School?
- Do you know any older children?...or do you have any big brothers or sisters?
- What should Chantelle do?***
- Find someone she knows to stand with.
- Wait until the very last minute to get to the bus stop. What might happen if Chantelle does this?
- Join a school club where she might get to know some of the older children. What clubs might you join at Secondary School?
- Yell, shout and push the older children out of the way. What might the older children do?
- 7. Timetables** Yasmin is trying to get ready for school but she can't understand the timetable that she's been given. It's very complicated.
- How do you know what lessons you have each day?
- How does Yasmin feel?
- What should Yasmin do?***
- Write out her own timetable in a much simpler way.
- Crumple up the timetable and throw it in the bin - it's stupid! What's wrong with doing this?
- Ask her teacher to explain it to her again. (Role-play)
- Ask her friend to explain it to her. Why might this be a bad idea?
- 8. Homework** Tom has been given loads of homework to do. He just doesn't know where to start and he's really fed up.
- What should he do?***
- Ignore it and just play on his games console. What will happen if Tom doesn't do his homework?
- Do all his homework at once, and work until midnight. What's wrong with doing this?
- Check his timetable and work out how soon each piece of work needs finishing.
- Do his homework with his friend. What could go wrong here?
- 9. Getting Lost** Paige was moving from one classroom to another and has got lost. Everyone is already in class and she doesn't know where she should be.
- How does Paige feel?
- Have you ever been lost? Tell me about it.
- Have you visited your Secondary school yet? Is it big? Did it have lots of signs and directions?
- What should Paige do?***

Knock on a classroom door and ask for help. (Role-play)

Go to the main office and ask for help. (Role-play)

Check her timetable to see which room she should be in. What might her teacher say if she turns up late?

Call out her friend's name. What's wrong with doing this?

10. The showers Stefan's class have just had a P.E. lesson and now they have to go into the showers.

How does Stefan feel?

Do you have to shower after your P.E. lesson?

What should Stefan do?

Keep his towel around him and go in and out of the shower quickly.

Don't have a shower. What's wrong with this?

Cry and say, "I'm not going in". What will the other children think?

Mess about and make rude remarks about other people. What's wrong with doing this?

11. After school club cancelled Dan and Ellis have just found out that their after school computer club has been cancelled. Dan's Mum was going to pick them up at 5.15, but now they're going to be hanging around for a long time, and they're not allowed to stay in school.

How do they feel?

Why do you think the club was cancelled?

What should they do?

Walk home. What might be wrong with this?

Wait outside school.

Ask the lady in the office if they can ring Dan's Mum.

Hide in one of the classrooms. Is this a good idea?

12. Hard work Gemma's maths teacher has given the class some work, but Gemma doesn't understand what she has to do. It's very hard!

How does Gemma feel?

What work do you find hard to understand?

What do you find easy to do?

What should Gemma do?

Sit and do nothing. What might the teacher say?

Ask the teacher to explain again. (Role-play)

Ask the person next to her what she has to do.

Do the work - even though she doesn't really understand what she should be doing. What will happen if she does this?

13. Long way to school Vikram's new school is a long way from his house and he's not really sure how to get there.

What could he do?

Arrange to go with a friend. Who would you like to walk to school with?

Practise getting to school with a mate before the new term starts.

Don't bother going to school. It's just too difficult! What will Vikram's Mum say?

Ask his Mum to take him to school everyday. What might be wrong with this idea?

14. Bullying Aaron finds break times at secondary school quite scary! Why do you think Aaron is frightened?

Are the older children really being horrible to him?

Has anyone ever been horrible to you?

What happened? What did you do?

What could Aaron do?

Ask if he could go to the library or computer room instead. What will he say to the teacher? (Role-play)

Ask if someone from his class will be his 'buddy'. Who would you ask to be your 'buddy'? Why?

Refuse to go outside. Will the teacher be happy about this? Why not?

Stand in a corner with his back to everyone. Is this a good idea? Why not? What will the other children say?