

Starting Secondary School in 2020

Student Guide



Moving up to secondary school is an exciting step. There will be lots of opportunities, but also some challenges. You will have to get used to new students, new teachers, and a larger school site. You might have to travel some distance to get there. All these changes take time to get used to. They also bring new opportunities for specialist teaching, a variety of different and interesting ways to learn, new subjects, specialist rooms and special equipment, so it can be very exciting. Here is some advice to get you through the first term.

Photos: Kirsten Holst for UCL

- **Don't expect too much of yourself: the first days and weeks will likely be tiring and there might be times when you feel you'll never get used to it, but by Christmas, you'll find it hard to remember what it was like at primary school.**
- **Make the most of any friends who've come with you to secondary school, and help each other to find your way around, and to remember what you are supposed to be doing. But keep an eye open for students who haven't come with friends, and be alert to new friendships.**
- **Starting secondary school is a new beginning, so listen to what teachers ask you to do. If you do your best, teachers will recognise and respect that. If you find things difficult, just ask for help.**
- **Try to find opportunities every day to be physically active and to keep yourself healthy.**



While schools were closed, you might have worked in new ways or not been able to do much schoolwork at all. You might have learnt new things, and there were quite likely to be times when you were bored. You might have missed being with your friends, and probably had some mixed times with your parents, enjoying some parts of being at home and disliking others. You might even prefer being at home. You might know people who have been quite ill with the coronavirus, or you might have someone in the family who has become very ill or died. Your experiences, and the learning you did, will be different from those of everyone else in your class. It will take time for people to recover. It will also take time for teachers to get to know you, and how you work best, and to work out what knowledge and skills you have brought to secondary school. You can help them, and yourself, by:

- **Being prepared to say how things worked out for you during school closures if you are asked, or else saying politely 'I'd rather not talk about it, thank you'.**
- **Trying hard to follow what is happening in class, but if you can't, putting up your hand or talking with the teacher to tell them so.**
- **Not worrying if you feel there are big gaps in what you have learnt because most people will experience this. Teachers are there to help you fill those gaps, but it will take time.**
- **Sharing with others interesting or intriguing experiences or learning you had during school closures, especially when it links to what you are doing in class.**

Finally, the school closure period has made it very clear that there are skills that are valuable for remote learning, and will continue to be so throughout your life. The last period has been challenging for everyone, but you will have matured and whether it feels like it or not, will be bringing good knowledge and skills to your secondary school. Now you need to:

- **Try to work steadily, asking for help from teachers, friends, and family as you need it.**
- **Keep yourself organised, and use what you have learned over the school closure period.**
- **Understand that sometimes teachers need you to work independently, and sometimes in groups – and that you will learn different things from those.**
- **Behaving in a sensible way that shows other people, students and teachers, that you respect them and what they bring to class, and make it easy for you all to learn together.**

Want to know more?

These links take you to a university website where you can download some useful comic strips on school transitions, and open them on your device.

School transitions – Whose transitions are they anyway?

<https://discovery.dundee.ac.uk/en/publications/school-transitions-whose-transitions-are-they-anyway>

Lost and found in transitions (for older students leaving school, who have similar issues)

https://discovery.dundee.ac.uk/ws/portalfiles/portal/49454086/lost_and_found_in_transitions_pandemic_tales.pdf

The mental health organisation ‘Young Minds’ has produced a useful film that gives information and advice for young people moving up to secondary school.

Find Your Feet

https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=45&v=xT6ctrk3pVQ&feature=emb_title

Finally there is official advice for children available about the Covid-19 pandemic available here:

<https://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/report/childrens-guide-to-coronavirus/>



About Us

The UCL/Wellcome Trust funded ‘Moving Up’ research project is led by Dr Sandra Leaton Gray and Dr Jane Perryman at the UCL Institute of Education, and supported by Professor Divya Sindal-Snape. This leaflet is based on work by Dr Jennie Golding and Professor Eleanore Hargreaves, who are part of the research group.

We are looking at transition from primary to secondary school during the coronavirus pandemic. As part of our project we are designing useful publications and materials for teachers and students.

We are always looking for young people to be involved in our research, and you can complete our survey and/or volunteer to be interviewed here (you will need permission from a parent). The link is here: <https://is.gd/movingupstudent>

Or you can email us at ioe.movingup@ucl.ac.uk if you would like to know more.