

Lesson 3: Feelings and common anxieties when transitioning to secondary school

Key stage 2: Year 5/6

This is the third in a series of three lessons written for upper KS2, Year 5 or 6, about mental health and wellbeing. It focuses on the feelings and common anxieties pupils may face when starting key stage 3/ starting secondary school and ways in which they can more positively manage them. It also encourages pupils to carefully consider the best sources of support when seeking help and advice.



Learning objective

Pupils will learn:

- about the feelings and common anxieties pupils face when starting key stage 3/moving to secondary school
- ways of managing these feelings.



Learning outcomes

By the end of the lesson, pupils will be able to:

- identify feelings people might experience when starting a new school / moving to secondary school (KS3)
- recognise common causes of worry, challenges and opportunities that may be part of this transition
- identify and evaluate the usefulness and reliability of different sources of support and information available; explain how to access them
- identify ways to positively manage the move to secondary school (KS3)



Climate for learning

Before teaching these lessons, ensure that you read the accompanying PSHE Association document [Teaching about mental health and emotional wellbeing](#) for guidance on establishing ground rules, the limits of confidentiality, handling questions, and additional advice relating to teaching about mental health effectively and safely.



Resources required

Box for anonymous questions



A4 paper (blank)



Pens and pencils



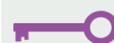
Flipchart paper and pens



Resource 1: Sources of support cards



Resource 2: Message to self



Key words

transition, hopes, fears, challenges, concerns, worries, anxieties, strategies, support

Activity	Description	Timing
1. Baseline assessment	Pupils imagine they work for a problem page or online forum and respond to a concern.	5-15min
2. Feelings brainstorm	Pairs of pupils jot down different feelings a person might have when moving to KS3; discuss conflicting feelings.	5min
3. Hopes & challenges	A scenario about someone about to start KS3 inspires pupils to consider their possible hopes and fears.	10min
4. Managing challenges	Pupils work in groups to work out the best ways the character can manage their fears and share their ideas with each other.	20min

5. Sources of help and support	Groups evaluate the most reliable sources of support to find information and advice regarding moving to KS3	10min
7. Plenary & Endpoint assessment	Pupils consider advice to give themselves, to be ready for secondary school using Resource 4: Message to self and have time to write an anonymous question. Pupils add further ideas and thoughts to help their problem page/forum response	15min
8. Extension activity	Pupils write a news piece for the school website or school newsletter about how to manage feelings/anxieties over the summer holiday break to help to be ready for their new school.	-

Baseline assessment



Problem page



Ensure this activity is completed before delivering the lesson.

Pupils imagine they are working for a teenagers' advice column for a magazine or online forum and write a response to the concern below.

Dear Ask Ali,

I am really worried about starting secondary school, what is the best thing to do?

Nusrat, age 11

The purpose of this activity is to enable you to find out the pupils' existing knowledge, skills and attitudes. Whilst they are working, do not prompt them in any way. When complete, ensure pupils write their name at the top of their paper. Collect in and check pupil responses, noting any responses and any misconceptions that need addressing through the lesson.

Core activities



Feelings brainstorm



Establish or reinforce existing ground rules and highlight any rules that are especially relevant to the lesson. Introduce the lesson, explaining that talking about mental health may make them think about themselves or people that they know who are experiencing a difficult time with their feelings or emotions. Remind pupils of the people in school that they can talk to if they are concerned.

Pupils work in pairs to jot down feelings a person might have when moving to secondary school/key stage 3.

Compare responses and discuss how this situation can cause people to experience mixed-up or conflicting feelings; people can feel lots of different emotions all at once.

Refer back to lesson 2 - different situations that can prompt similar feelings.



Hopes and challenges activity



Read aloud and/or display the following scenario:

It's the night before Nusrat starts secondary school (KS3) and they're in their bedroom thinking about the next day. Nusrat's uniform is all laid out and their bag is packed and ready. Nusrat feels kind of excited, but a few things are worrying them too.

On a piece of flipchart paper or interactive whiteboard write 'hopes' as a heading on the left-hand side and on the right-hand side write 'challenges'.

Pupils suggest what Nusrat might be excited about (hopes) and worried about (challenges). Record their responses under the headings.

Hopes might include: making new friends, learning about new subjects, joining different clubs and after school activities, meeting new teachers, going on different school trips, new responsibilities.

Challenges might include: getting lost around the new school building, not being in the same class as best friend/s, more homework, big lunch hall and choosing a meal, don't understand new subjects, wanting to join a club but don't know whom to go with, not knowing the rules and getting detention.

Note that some aspects may be both a hope and challenge, such as new responsibilities or making new friends.



Managing challenges group work



Organise pupils into small groups and assign each group one of the challenges from the list made in the previous activity. Pupils write the worry at the centre of their paper and then brainstorm ways in which they could manage the particular worry, including sources of support or help.

Once complete, each group displays their brainstorm on the classroom wall.

Allow each group a few minutes to look at all the other groups' work and discuss what they think might work well. Invite groups to put a tick or a smiley face next to those ideas that they think would be the most effective strategies.

Each group feeds back one or two reasons why they thought some strategies would be particularly effective.



Sources of help and support



Reiterate that help and advice is available but that some help and advice may be more useful or more valid than others. Inevitably, there may be rumours or gossip about starting secondary school/key stage 3 that are not helpful, so finding reliable sources of support will be useful.

Introduce **Resource 1: Sources of support cards** – each group needs one set.

Working in their groups and reflecting on their work from the previous activity, pupils consider which sources of support would be most useful for Nusrat to talk to about their concerns. Pupils rank the cards in order of reliability and usefulness, explaining and justifying their views.

Pupils discuss how Nusrat could approach the chosen sources of support and what they could say.

Support:



Pupils choose three sources of support that will be the most useful to Nusrat and explain why.

Challenge



Pupils consider some of the advantages and disadvantages of each of the sources of support. For what types of concerns might some be more useful than others?

Plenary/ Assessment of learning



Reflecting on today's learning and assessing progress

Pupils write a short uplifting message of advice using **Resource 2: Message to self**, to open and read on the evening before they start their new school. Which key bits of advice are going to help them manage their thoughts and feelings so that they are ready to cope with all the opportunities and challenges of moving into Year 7?

Allow time for pupils to write anonymous questions and follow up as appropriate following this lesson.

Pupils revisit their response to Nusrat's question...

Dear Ask Ali,

I am really worried about starting secondary school, what is the best thing to do?

Nusrat, age 11

...and amend it in the light of their new learning, adding any further ideas, using a different coloured pen.

Extension activity

Pupils write a news piece for the school website or newsletter describing practical steps to take between now and the start of secondary school. This could include how to manage feelings and anxieties over the Summer holiday break, on the evening before they start their new school and on the first day. This could be shared and promoted with Year 6 pupils and parents.