

Tips for the new term

“What did you do today?”

Do not ask your child what he/she did at school that day. Most children find it impossible to imagine you would understand about school so they say, “Nothing”, whereupon parents panic and start to wonder why they are paying £s a term. More success may come from an opening sentence such as, “While you have been at school I have been reading, writing and talking to some of my friends. Did you do any of the same things?” or, “Did you do any painting today/is it today that the French teacher comes?” Statements and questions like these give your child signposts to what you are looking for in the conversation.

First Timers

Be aware that children who are finding separation difficult have little sense of time. Saying to your three or four year old, “it’s only going to be for 3/4/5/ hours” means “You are not going to see me for ages”. Instead, be less precise and relate the time to tasks your child has seen before. So try saying, “I’m just going to Sainsbury’s, and to send an email to Granny, and then it will be time to collect you”.

Friends

All parents worry about their child being left on his/her own or not having enough friends. Recognise that some children prefer to ‘observe from the outside of the circle’ and this does not mean they are unhappy. Tell them how when you went to school you used to play on your own some days, and then on other days you looked for someone who might be looking a bit lonely and went to play with them. If they have lots of friends you will know it anyway, but reinforcing that not having a best friend is fine will make it a win/win situation.

Niggles

Try to avoid picking up every little niggle with the teacher! Of course, medical and pastoral issues must be shared with the school but worrying about a button coming off a cardigan or a break-time snack of loving sliced apple coming home uneaten is best kept to yourself. The most successful partnerships between the school and the parents come from mutual trust. The school will always share important milestones or concerns with the parents, and in turn the staff expect parents to trust that they are doing their best for the child.