

Year 6: The Big Transition Year

Year 6 is the last and busiest year of primary school: you apply for a secondary school, some areas have the 11+ exam, KS2 SATs take place in May, and at the end of the summer your child starts secondary school. This guide is written to help every family moving into Year 6 get through the year **step by step and calmly**.

When are you reading this guide?

- **Summer of Year 5 / September:** the “Year 6 calendar”, “Choosing a secondary school” and “The 11+” sections matter most for you.
- **November – March:** if you've applied, see “After Offer Day” and “KS2 SATs”.
- **April – July:** the “KS2 SATs” and “Getting ready for secondary school” sections.
- **Whenever you're reading:** the “Month-by-month checklist” gives small steps for every month of the year.

“Success is being better than you were yesterday.” — Anonymous

Every flower blooms in its own time

No two flowers in a garden are alike. Some bloom on the first day of spring, others in midsummer. Some love the sun, others the shade. But they are all flowers, and each one blooms in its own time.

Our children are the same. Settling into a new school, new routines and sometimes a new language or country can take time. Taking longer does not mean falling behind; it means putting down roots.

Our job is not to compare them with someone else's garden, but to make sure they never go without water, sunlight and patience.

Three goals for this year

1. Choosing the right school: getting to know schools and applying on time and with care. **2. Preparing calmly for SATs:** short, regular practice; the basics of reading and maths. **3. Being ready for secondary school:** independence, organisation and confidence.

“As the twig is bent, so grows the tree.” — Proverb

The Year 6 calendar (every year)

The calendar below runs the same way every year; exact dates may shift by a few days from year to year.

When?	What happens?	Who for?
Summer of Year 5 (June – July)	11+ registration (depends on the area; in most places it closes in the summer of Year 5)	Those sitting the 11+
September of Year 6	11+ exams (in September in most areas); the secondary school application system opens	11+ / everyone
September – October	Secondary school open evenings / open mornings	Everyone
October	11+ results (depends on the area; announced before the application deadline)	Those who sat the 11+

31 October	Secondary school application deadline (the same every year in England)	Everyone
1 March	National Offer Day: you find out which school has offered a place (the next working day if it falls at a weekend)	Everyone
March - May	Accepting/declining, waiting lists, appeals	If needed
May (usually the 2nd week)	KS2 SATs: 4 days, in the mornings	Everyone
July	SATs results come with the school report; secondary school transition days	Everyone

Check the exact dates every year on your local authority's school admissions page and on gov.uk. You apply through the local council where you live, not through your child's current school.

Choosing a secondary school: step by step

"Two heads are better than one." — Proverb

Type of school	What you need to know
Comprehensive / Academy	Most state secondary schools; no entrance exam. Places are usually given by distance, siblings and the school's own criteria.
Grammar	Selective state school; requires passing the 11+. Common in some areas (e.g. Kent, Buckinghamshire), absent from many parts of London.
Faith	Church and other faith schools; most ask for an extra form (Supplementary Information Form).
Independent (private)	Fee-paying; they have their own entrance exams and timetables; bursaries and scholarships may be available.

- **Get to know the schools:** go to open days at the end of Year 5 and the start of Year 6; look at the school's website, Ofsted report, exam results, transport and admissions criteria.
- **Read the admissions criteria:** how far away the last child offered a place lived last year ("last distance offered") gives a realistic idea.
- **Applying:** through the council's online system; most areas let you list 6 preferences. List them in the order you genuinely want them; the system doesn't lower your chances because of that order. Include at least one school where a place is likely.
- **Extra forms:** faith schools and some grammar schools ask for a separate form; watch for the school's own deadline.
- **After Offer Day:** accept the offer within the deadline (even if it's not the school you wanted; this doesn't affect your place on waiting lists). You can stay on the waiting list for the schools you want and appeal; the appeal deadline is in the council's letter.

The 11+ exam

The 11+ is the entrance exam for grammar schools. Not every area has one, and where they exist, the format and timetable vary. It usually covers English, maths, and verbal and non-verbal reasoning, and is taken at the start of Year 6 (in September in most places). That's why preparation and registration happen in Year 5.

- **Registration:** the 11+ needs a separate registration, which closes in the summer of Year 5 in most areas. Late registrations are usually not accepted.

- **Results and applying:** an 11+ result doesn't give a school place on its own; you also need to list the grammar school on your application form.
- **If your child doesn't pass:** it doesn't define your child's ability or future. What matters is choosing a good comprehensive, protecting your child's confidence and, if appropriate, considering an appeal.
- **Independent schools** usually hold their own exams in the autumn or winter of Year 6; find out their timetable from the school.

Find out about the 11+ in your area. Your council's "secondary school admissions" page tells you whether there are grammar schools in your area, the name of the test, registration dates and sample questions. You can also apply to grammar schools in neighbouring areas. Some London boroughs have grammar schools (e.g. Barnet, Bexley, Sutton, Kingston, Redbridge, Enfield).

KS2 SATs: without the fear

"Little drops of water make the mighty ocean." — Proverb

Day	Test
Day 1	English grammar, punctuation and spelling: 2 papers
Day 2	English reading
Day 3	Mathematics Paper 1 (arithmetic) + Paper 2 (reasoning)
Day 4	Mathematics Paper 3 (reasoning)

- **Scoring:** results are given as a "scaled score"; 100 is the expected standard. Writing is assessed by the teacher.
- **There's no pass or fail,** and SATs don't affect most secondary schools' admissions decisions; schools consider applications before SATs. Some secondary schools may use them when setting classes.
- **Support at home:** 15–20 minutes a day; reading, times tables, spelling lists. Past SATs papers are free on gov.uk; from January, one short section a week is enough.
- **SATs week:** early nights, breakfast, calm mornings. Instead of talk that adds to the worry: "just do your best, that's enough".

SATs preparation with IXL

As well as Year 6 Maths and English skills, IXL has a SATs-focused test prep section. The advantages:

- **Topic by topic:** questions get easier when a child struggles and harder as they learn.
- **Instant feedback:** after a wrong answer, it shows the correct method step by step.
- **Reports for parents:** they show how much has been practised in each topic and the weak areas, so you know what to focus on.

Suggested use: 3 × 15–20 minutes a week from November; focus on the SATs prep section from January to April; short reviews only in May. **An IXL membership can be requested from UKER.**

At school and at home: what to work on

"An investment in knowledge pays the best interest." — Attributed to Benjamin Franklin

What?	How?	Skills it builds
20 minutes' reading a day	Aloud and silently; after reading, "why, how, what do you think?" questions	Reading, Speaking

Times tables	10 minutes a day; the school's platform (e.g. Times Tables Rock Stars)	Numeracy, Independence
Spelling	The school's weekly list; the Year 5–6 word list	Writing, Independence
IXL: SATs preparation	IXL Year 6 Maths and English + the SATs prep section (3 × 15–20 minutes a week); follow weak topics with the parent report	Numeracy, Reading, Problem solving
Writing	One short piece a week: a diary, a story, a letter (in English and, if you speak another language at home, in that language too)	Writing, Creativity
Homework routine	A fixed time and place; practice for the planner routine at secondary school	Planning, Independence

The skill names match the 12 skills your child will use in Unifrog at secondary school (Reading, Writing, Numeracy, Planning, Listening, Speaking, Teamwork, Leadership, Problem solving, Creativity, Independence, Adaptability & Resilience).

Outside school: what to try

Area	Year 6 examples	Skills it builds
Sport and movement	Swimming, football, netball, gymnastics, dance, martial arts, cycling (Bikeability)	Teamwork, Adaptability & Resilience
Skills	A musical instrument, chess, coding (Scratch), art, cooking, reading and writing in a home language	Creativity, Problem solving
Community	Cubs / Scouts, Brownies / Guides, school council, classroom jobs, volunteering with family	Leadership, Teamwork
Exploring	Library events, museums, nature walks, the school's Year 6 residential trip	Independence, Listening

At secondary school, these areas become the sections of the Duke of Edinburgh's Award (DofE). An activity started today becomes concrete experience on a CV and in applications years from now.

Getting ready for secondary school: an independence checklist

- ☐ Has walked or taken the bus on the route to school with an adult a few times
- ☐ Can tell the time and keep track of it
- ☐ Packs their own bag and school things
- ☐ Does homework at a set time without being reminded
- ☐ Can keep track of their own money (pocket money, school dinner account)
- ☐ Has agreed family rules for phones and the internet
- ☐ Knows who to tell when there's a problem (family, teacher, form tutor)
- ☐ Has practised meeting new people and introducing themselves

Two languages, one advantage

"To have another language is to possess a second soul." — Attributed to Charlemagne

For children who speak another language at home, being bilingual is one of their biggest advantages:

- **The foundations are laid now:** a child who builds the habit of reading and writing in the home language at primary school finds it much easier to prepare for a GCSE in that language at secondary school (an extra GCSE). Exam boards offer GCSEs in many community languages, including Arabic, Bengali, Chinese, Polish, Russian, Turkish and Urdu.
- **At home:** speak the language at home; 15 minutes' reading in it 2-3 times a week; messages to relatives in the language; stories and audiobooks.
- **Supplementary (weekend) schools** and community libraries are valuable for both language and culture.
- **Choose by level:** if it's a struggle, start with easier books and read aloud together.

10 tips for parents (Year 6)

"Do not be afraid of growing slowly; be afraid only of standing still." — Chinese proverb

- **Don't feed exam anxiety:** SATs and the 11+ matter, but they don't define your child's worth.
- **Choose the school together:** take your child to open days and ask what they noticed.
- **Don't miss the dates:** 11+ registration (summer of Year 5), the application (31 October), Offer Day (1 March).
- **Short and regular:** 20 minutes every day (e.g. 15 minutes of IXL + reading) works better than one long session a week.
- **Help them love reading:** let your child choose books; comics and magazines count as reading too.
- **Don't compare:** comparing with siblings, cousins and friends lowers motivation.
- **The phone decision:** agree phone and social media rules together before secondary school starts.
- **Sleep:** 9-11 hours is recommended at age 10-11; no screens in the bedroom.
- **Talk about feelings:** leaving friends and feeling excited or nervous about a new school is normal.
- **Celebrate:** whatever the Offer Day result, celebrate the effort and the new beginning.

Resources: which platform? Where can I find books?

Platform	What for?	Cost	How?
The school's platforms	Times Tables Rock Stars, reading and spelling apps	Paid by the school	These first: the homework the school sets
IXL (recommended)	Year 6 Maths and English + the SATs prep section; instant feedback and parent reports	Membership (can be requested from UKER)	3 × 15-20 minutes a week from November
BBC Bitesize (KS2)	Topics explained with short videos and games	Free	Revisit a tricky topic
Oak National Academy	KS2 video lessons and quizzes	Free	Missed topics
gov.uk: past SATs papers	Previous years' KS2 tests and mark schemes	Free	One short section a week from January

- **Books:** school and council libraries (membership is free; Libby or BorrowBox for e-books and audiobooks). In the summer holidays, libraries run the free Summer Reading Challenge for ages 4-11.
- **Books in your home language:** many council libraries have world-language collections (ask your library); community centres and supplementary schools often lend books; book swaps between families.

Month-by-month checklist

Each month: 2 small steps (School & Exams · Family & Growth) + 1 watch/listen suggestion + 1 book. If you speak another language at home, add a book in that language too. The calendar works for any year; tick the boxes together with your child.

September · Researching schools

- ☐ **School & Exams:** open days: visit at least 3 secondary schools; if sitting the 11+, an exam-day routine
- ☐ **Family & Growth:** a 20-minute daily reading routine; the library at weekends
- ☐ **Watch/Listen:** Newsround (CBBC · news)
- ☐ **Read:** Matilda – Roald Dahl

October · Application month

- ☐ **School & Exams:** apply before 31 October (order of preferences, extra forms)
- ☐ **Family & Growth:** times tables: 10 minutes a day
- ☐ **Watch/Listen:** Brains On! (podcast · science)
- ☐ **Read:** The Wild Robot – Peter Brown

November · Routines

- ☐ **School & Exams:** check the application confirmation; start IXL SATs prep (3 × 15 minutes a week)
- ☐ **Family & Growth:** a club or activity (Cubs/Scouts, sport, music)
- ☐ **Watch/Listen:** Operation Ouch! (CBBC · health & science)
- ☐ **Read:** Percy Jackson and the Lightning Thief – Rick Riordan

December · Taking stock

- ☐ **School & Exams:** parents' evening: strengths and areas to develop
- ☐ **Family & Growth:** a holiday book (in your home language, too) + family games (chess, word games)
- ☐ **Watch/Listen:** Blue Planet II (BBC · documentary)
- ☐ **Read:** The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe – C. S. Lewis

January · Practice

- ☐ **School & Exams:** the IXL SATs prep section + one short past SATs section a week
- ☐ **Family & Growth:** independence: their own bag, their own homework time
- ☐ **Watch/Listen:** Horrible Histories (CBBC · history)
- ☐ **Read:** Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone – J. K. Rowling

February · Understanding

- ☐ **School & Exams:** reading: “why, how, what do you think?” questions; spelling lists
- ☐ **Family & Growth:** money: pocket money and shopping sums
- ☐ **Watch/Listen:** Deadly 60 (CBBC · nature)
- ☐ **Read:** a Horrible Histories book – Terry Deary

March · Offer Day

- ☐ **School & Exams:** 1 March: accept the offer; waiting list / appeal if needed
- ☐ **Family & Growth:** celebrate the result; get to know the new school together
- ☐ **Watch/Listen:** Absolute Genius with Dick & Dom (CBBC · scientists)
- ☐ **Read:** Rooftoppers – Katherine Rundell

April · Calm revision

- ☐ **School & Exams:** Easter: 20–30 minutes a day; the weak topics from the IXL report
- ☐ **Family & Growth:** time outdoors; a sleep routine
- ☐ **Watch/Listen:** BBC Bitesize KS2 (BBC · revision)
- ☐ **Read:** Varjak Paw – S. F. Said

May · SATs month

- ☐ **School & Exams:** SATs week: early nights, breakfast, calm mornings
- ☐ **Family & Growth:** a small treat or outing after SATs
- ☐ **Watch/Listen:** Cosmic Kids Yoga (YouTube · calming down)
- ☐ **Read:** The Boy Who Grew Dragons – Andy Shepherd

June-July · Moving up to secondary school

- ☐ **School & Exams:** transition days; a practice run of the journey to school; school equipment
- ☐ **Family & Growth:** the Summer Reading Challenge; phone rules
- ☐ **Watch/Listen:** Our Planet (David Attenborough · documentary)
- ☐ **Read:** Front Desk – Kelly Yang

Most watch/listen suggestions are free on BBC iPlayer (CBBC). The books are commonly recommended for ages 10–11. If one doesn't grab your child's interest, choose another for that month.

Would you like one-to-one support?

The UKER guidance programme offers one-to-one support with choosing a secondary school, the 11+ and the transition. Find out more: ukegitimrehberi.co.uk

Sources: gov.uk (KS2 tests: information for parents; applying for a secondary school place); local councils' school admissions pages; The Reading Agency (Summer Reading Challenge). Dates should be checked every year.