

Did your child not get their first choice secondary school?

Some children will inevitably feel disappointed, sad or angry if they didn't get their first choice school.

What can you do to support them?



- Listen to their feelings
- Validate how they are feeling
- Normalise these feelings in general but especially towards the situation
- Remind them that they can still succeed in their new school and environment. Opportunity to meet new people and make new friends
- Don't try to fix their feelings there and then, they need time and space to express how they are feeling
- When they feel up to it, look at the options and possibilities, trying to focus on the positives (i.e. who else do they know going to the school, who else do they know that didn't get their first choice, what clubs are at the new school?)
- Encourage communication – it might help for them to speak to someone from the new school or other students that are going there
- See if there are any more open days at the new school or introductory sessions
- Manage expectations – depending on your area there might be a chance to appeal the decision or ask to be placed on a waiting list for your first-choice school. While these processes can be lengthy and not always successful, discussing them together can help you both feel like there's something you can do. But also, be clear that it's not a given that they'll get their first choice.
- Stay calm – children will look to their parents/carers for reassurance, so remember to stay calm and supportive as it can help them to feel more settled. They will benefit from seeing you handle the situation with resilience.
- Remember to look after yourself too – you too may feel stressed or disappointed about the decision and this can have an impact on your child so make sure you are taking care of your own emotional wellbeing too!

This situation is likely to feel overwhelming for you both. Try to remind yourself that this is just one step in their educational journey. They may end up totally thriving in the new school and it can be a great opportunity for them to learn how to adapt to change and thus build resilience.

kooth

They provide free, safe and anonymous online support and counselling for children and young people.

Kooth are able to communicate via messages if the young person prefers.

<https://www.kooth.com/>

Signposting

What 0-18

This has further information on child mental and physical health. It also offers further advice about the transition to secondary school.

<https://www.what0-18.nhs.uk/>