

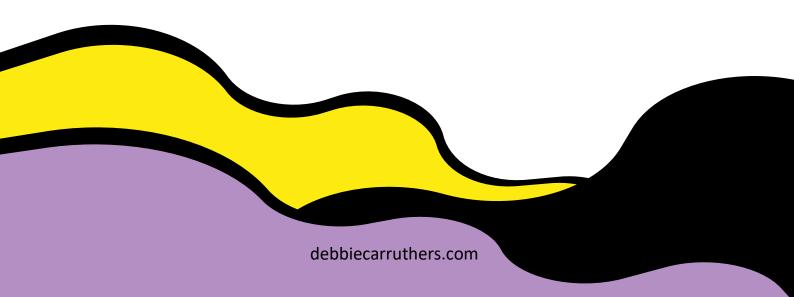
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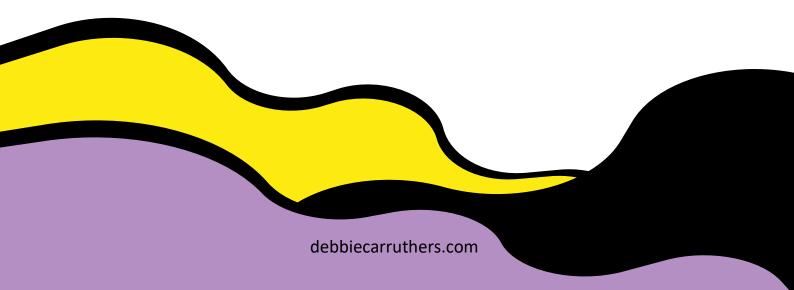
Any opinions or statements are the author's own.

The author acknowledges the Barramadigal People of the Darug Nation as the traditional owners of the land on which this guide was written.

Gender neutral pronouns have been used unless otherwise relevant.

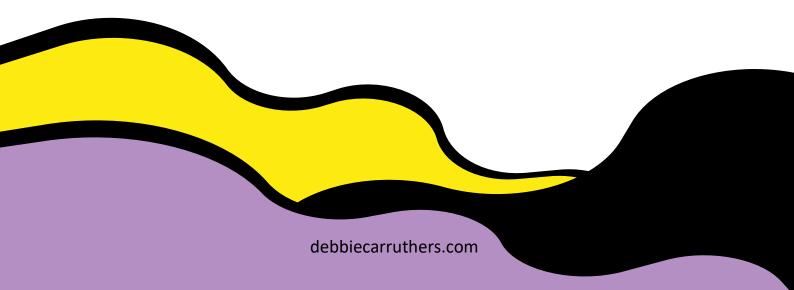


For Mum and Dad, who taught me to love and serve others, in and beyond the classroom walls.



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About the Author

Debbie Carruthers is a teacher with experience teaching in primary, secondary $Page \mid 1$ and tertiary settings. She has a particular interest in high school transition.



Debbie has a bachelor's degree in Health Science, plus post-graduate qualifications in Education and Psychology. With over 20 years of experience as an educator, she has taught extensively in both primary and secondary schools and was course coordinator in the Master of Education (Primary) at UNSW.

With a background in PDHPE, Debbie is passionate about wellbeing. Her particular interest in the middle grades was sparked early in her career when she took on the role of Year 7 Advisor, transitioning students into high school from neighbouring primary schools. Later, she moved into primary teaching, Debbie was part of

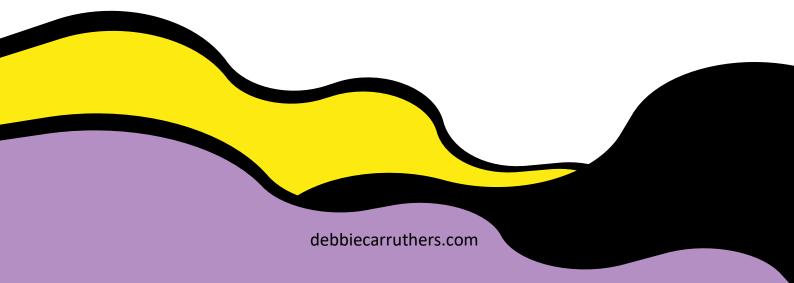
a team from a cluster of schools working on a major school transition project. This involved introducing and leading initiatives to improve the high school transition experience for students and their families.

As a parent herself, Debbie recognises the importance of teachers and parents working as partners in education. She has listened to the needs and concerns of friends and colleagues regarding transition to high school and wants to help ensure the experience is positive for a many people as possible.

Debbie is the author of middle grade novel, Surviving Year 6. She lives in a Northwest suburb of Sydney and has written this guide within that socio-cultural context.



Get your signed copy of the novel at https://www.debbiecarruthers.com/book/



Introduction from the Author

Year 6; a time when attitudes shift, behaviours change and bodies morph; for kids as well as their parents and carers.

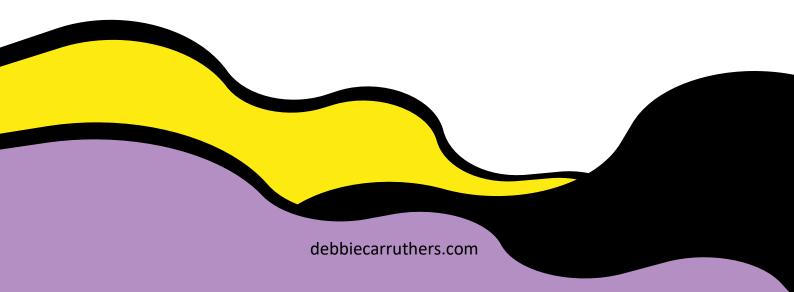
After six long years of patiently working their way up the social order, your child, along with their friends and peers, is finally relishing their place on top. They are ready for a year packed with camps and excursions, leadership opportunities and fundraising events, graduation assemblies and farewell dinners. It will be your child's final hurrah in the primary school setting.

Within a few short months, they will have to start the climb all over again when they head to high school. This is accompanied by a plethora of emotions for everyone involved. These emotions manifest themselves through a range of words and actions.

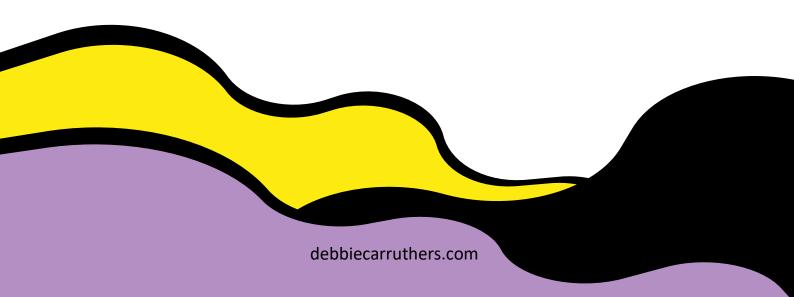
It is understandable to feel overwhelmed or ill-equipped for the year ahead. There is a widely unmet need for support at this critical stage in this transition. Your child is not alone in this, and neither are you.

This resource is designed to help answer some common questions, alleviate anxiety and provide you with information to get you started. If you have further questions which are not addressed here, consider asking a neighbour, contacting a high school directly, or booking a paid consolation via debbiecarruthers.com.

Remember, helping a child survive year 6 comes with challenges. Be kind to yourself. Be kind to the teachers too. They are responsible for as many as thirty children, all riding this roller coaster with their own families.



YOUR CHILD



Individuals in a Collaborative Environment

No matter the school, the environment or the class, each child has a unique set of personality traits, experiences and learning preferences. A parent knows, loves and values their child better than anyone.

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Classroom teachers get to know each and every individual student as early as possible, but their ability to do so, particularly in a traditional classroom setting, has limits. While it is the responsibility of one teacher to make adjustments to teaching practices as required, it is impossible to strictly follow personal learning plans for thirty individual students. Parents can communicate with the teacher at some stage during the first few weeks. It may be helpful. After an initial meeting, it is helpful if parents put their trust in their child's teacher and try to let go.

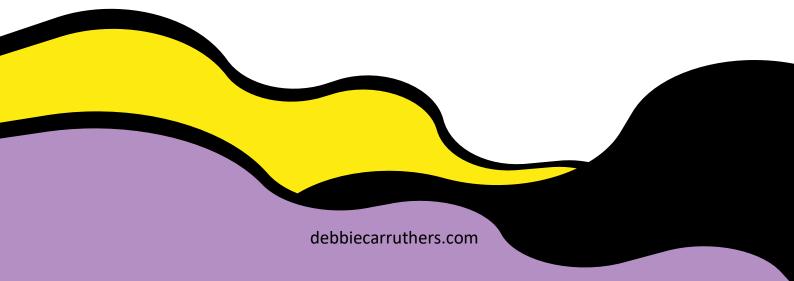
A Child's Physical Needs

Technology has advanced and parents are working longer and harder, but kids have not changed as much as people think. All children need adequate sleep, exercise, hydration and nutrition. It is helpful to educate ourselves on how to ensure we are meeting these needs.

A child's basic physical needs include adequate hydration, sleep, nutrition and physical activity. It is your responsibility as a parent to ensure you are meeting the physical and emotional needs of your child. This can be difficult and frustrating.

Hydration

Your child should be drinking six or more cups of water each day for their brain and body be hydrated enough to function properly. It helps to maximise their learning potential. Water is the best option, as it contains zero sugar, caffeine, and artificial chemicals. Parents are encouraged to send a full bottle of water to school with their child each day.



Sleep

Much of a child's physical development occurs while they are asleep. This means adequate sleep is even more important in growing children than it Page | 5 is in adults. Puberty is a time when it is especially vital.

Some advice for this would be:

- Help them maintain a healthy sleep routine by going to bed at the same time every night and waking up at the same time every morning.
- Turn off screens well before they go to bed.
- Do not allow screens in their bedroom.
- Promote sleep at night through exercising and ensuring adequate exposure to sunlight during daylight hours.
- Avoid sugar and caffeine, particularly close to bedtimes.
- Try not to let them develop a cycle of regular afternoon naps. They should be getting adequate sleep through the night.

Sleep is particularly important for the brain. An adequate amount helps the brain with processing, discarding, and storing information.

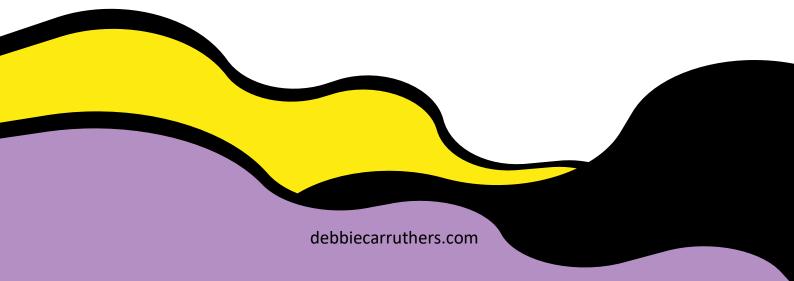
Nutrition

Children need a well-rounded, balanced diet, with an array of different nutrients to learn, grow and thrive.

The best way to do ensure children are consuming most or all nutrients is to eat a colourful diet. This does not mean eating a handful of jellybeans or a bowl of rainbow



ice-cream. It means eating berries and bananas, beans and butternut.



These some of the essential nutrients required each day. Too much or too little of any of these can cause health problems.

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- <u>Carbohydrates</u>, for energy, although proteins and fats are also sources of this. Kids should avoid the sugar variety.
- Protein, to build and repair body cells
- <u>Fats</u>, to protect vital organs and transport, some vitamins and minerals around the body. Heavily processed fats are not ideal.
- Calcium and vitamin D, for strong teeth and bones
- Vitamin C for immunity
- Iron to increase oxygen carrying capacity of the blood
- Folate, for cell growth and DNA creation
- A range of vitamins and minerals to play crucial roles in performing various body functions

Often, carb-heavy diets are the easiest and cheapest options. Families are busy and kids are fussy. There is no simple solution to this as circumstances vary across families and each child has a unique temperament.

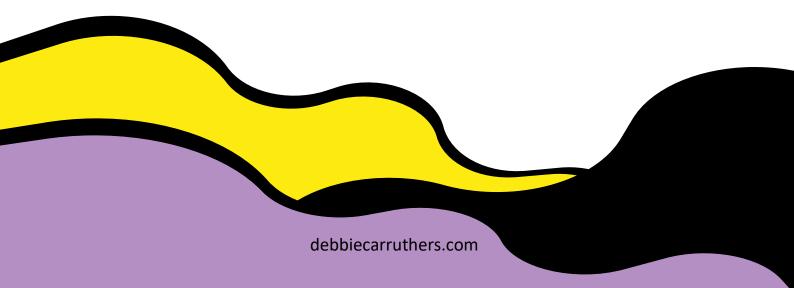
Try these ideas for fussy eaters:

Ask your child to contribute to meal and snack plan for the week.

Take your child shopping with you.

Teach your child to cook. It can be amazing what they eat if they invest time and energy into making and baking the food themselves.

Add a pinch of salt or teaspoon of honey to a dull dish.



Physical activity

Exercise is not just for sporty people or gym members. It should not It does not have to cost money, nor does it have to rely on transport or supervision. It is hard to find the right activity for you and for your kids.

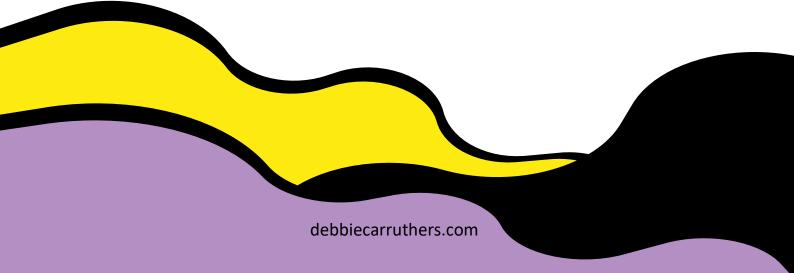
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Regular, moderate physical activity has a long list of benefits for the mind and body. If you're planning to pull your children out of sport in order to make time for study, please reconsider your decision. Did you know that physical activity promotes learning? It switches on the brain to increase attention level levels, knowledge acquisition, and retention.

Some ideas to increase physical activity in your children include:

- Go for a walk first thing in the morning.
- Walk or ride a bicycle to and from school each day.
- Learn an exercise and stretching routine using online videos for instruction and demonstration.
- Take them to the park.
- Invest in a backyard cricket set or even a trampoline.
- Make 4 to 6 PM screen-free time





Puberty Blues

It is a subject which makes many people skirmish just the kids with adults $\frac{1}{100}$ too. We have all been through it ourselves and we realise it is inevitable for our kids. It makes sense to properly equip children for the changes that they are about to face, and yet so many adults are hesitant to help them prepare for this. Their parents who just hope the teacher will look after that topic, but you should know that there are also teachers that hope the parents do so.

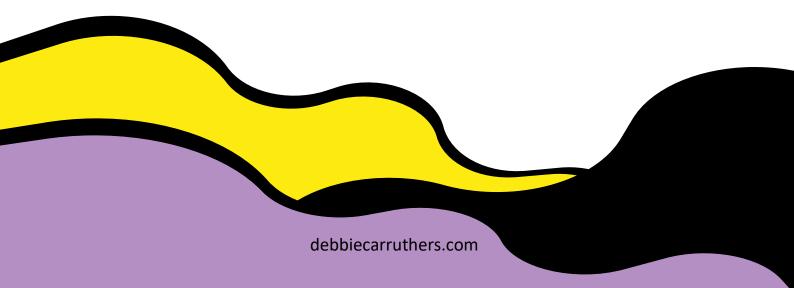


No girl wants to find out the periods exist after she discovers blood in her underpants and no boy wants to approach his parents to ask why on earth he woke up with sticky pyjamas.

At the age of 10 or 12, kids do not necessarily need to know the ins and outs of sexual anatomy and physiology, pardon the pun. It is helpful, however, to expect certain changes to happen in advance of it occurring, and to know that it is a normal part of growing up. They also need to know that their parents are approachable if they find themselves in an uncomfortable situation. There is a range of normal, but some situations require medical care or intervention. If a child is

scared or embarrassed to approach an adult, this can potentially have dangerous consequences.

There used to be a book and video called Where do I come from?, which was quite graphic but in cartoon form that's how many students of the 90s learnt about puberty. These sorts of resources still exist. Some of them will answer questions that kids are too embarrassed to ask.



Parents and Puberty

Parents tell their kids to be brave. Now, it is the parents' turn. Children do not need to know about the birds and the bees before their 12th birthday. They do, however, need to know what to expect and how to respond when it happens.

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An important thing to note is when you talk about the topic, always use proper language, such as testicles and penis or uterus and vagina. This is not solely for educational reasons. It can also be a protective factor related to child protection.

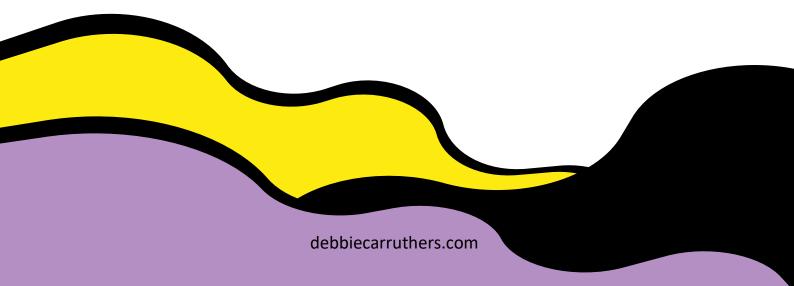
If you have not had this conversation before the beginning of Year 6, do so now. A growing portion of kids have already entered puberty by this age.

Note: Some people are intersex, meaning that anatomically, they possess features of either, neither or both sexes. This significantly affects what happens during puberty. It is up to you as a parent whether you speak with your child about this.

These are the basics that every kid should know before puberty hits.

Some changes are common to everyone during puberty.

- Everybody is unique, but if your child is concerned that something strange is happening to their body, they should know you are a safe person to tell.
- Expect change, regardless of sex, including increased body hair, body odour and acne.
- The age of puberty varies for individuals.
- They may be more emotional for a few months or years.



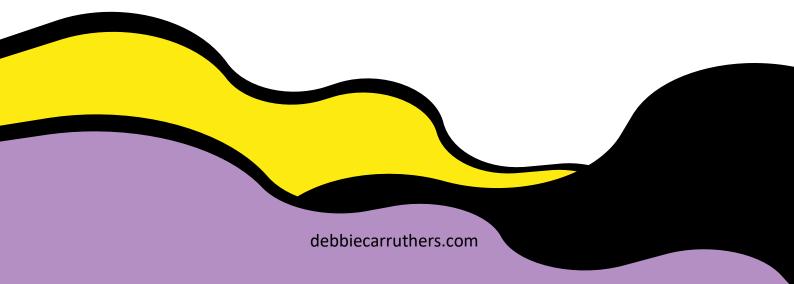
Females -

 It is likely that one day, she will find some blood in her underpants. This is normal. She needs to tell her parent(s) when this happens Page | 10 because it is their job to ensure she has enough sanitary items for her needs.

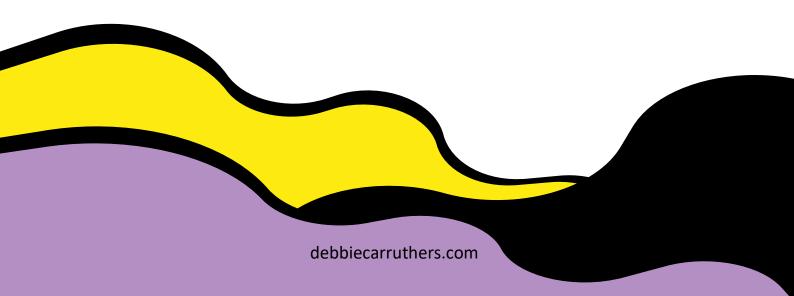
- The bleeding might be a little unpredictable initially but should settle to last approximately a week in every month.
- · Her breasts will be tender as they grow. It is important that you purchase a well-fitted bra. Bra fittings are usually cost- and obligation-free at specialist bra shops and in the underwear section of most department stores.

Males -

- He may find himself with an erection, particularly first thing in the morning. This may be accompanied by sticky pyjamas. It is normal and will settle.
- His levels of aggression may be enhanced, due to higher levels of testosterone at this time in his life. He needs to hear that it is okay to feel the emotions, but they need to be expressed appropriately. This means without harm to themselves or others.



GROWING BRAINS



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The Growing Brain Explained



The Brain and Learning

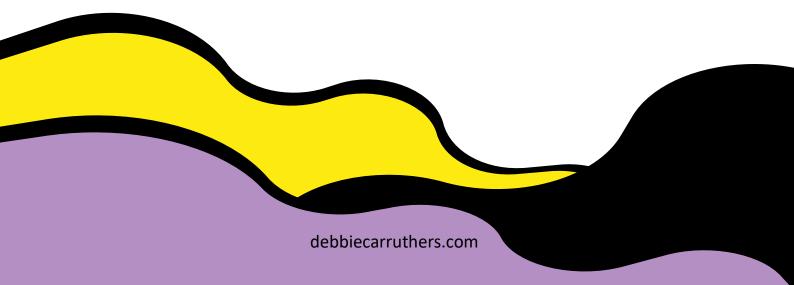
The brain is an incredibly complex organ. Each part of the brain plats a different role in the body. An intricate balance of chemicals and hormones keeps humans alive, conscious and functioning.

In a child, the developing brain is creating all sorts of new neural pathways. Many of these are created as they learn and grow. Optimal learning adequately stimulates different parts of the brain. Exercise wakes up the brain and music can activate it. Creativity and logic use different parts across both hemispheres.

Everybody is unique but some people's brains process information vastly differently to what is expected. Major differences in personality, ability and behaviours can be a result of even the slightest of anomalies in structure or function. This is commonly referred to as neurodivergence.

With or without the formal diagnosis, the learning needs of neurodivergent individuals differ in various ways from mainstream learners. Teachers are expected to create and implement individual adjustment plans. Parents should be actively engaged in the process, including reviews.

Children have different natural abilities, but everyone can learn.



The During and Debay iour

The Brain and Behaviour

The **forebrain**, in particular the pre-frontal cortex, sits right behind the skull Page | 13 at the forehead. It solves problems by taking in information, weighing it against what is already known, and making well-considered decisions. Just as a middle-grader is increasingly confident but not yet mature, this part of the brain does not function so well until it is well-developed. Children and young people are prone to making poor decisions for this reason.

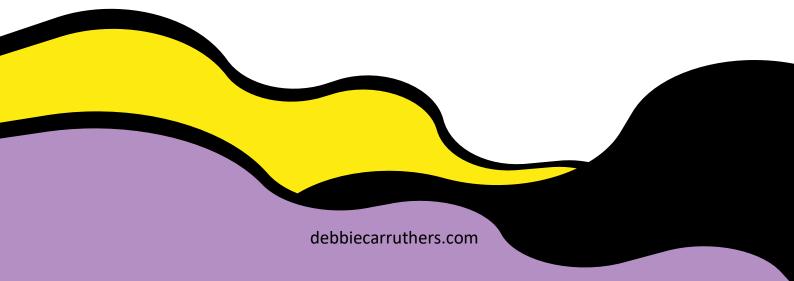
The **brainstem** is the toddler, spontaneous and impulsive. It acts without thinking. Structurally, it is the stalk, running from the mid-brain down to the spinal cord, sending messages to the rest of the body. The brain stem keeps us alive, regulating sleep, body temperature, breathing and heart rate.

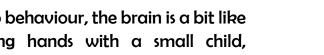


Right in the middle, hidden between the two hemispheres of the brain, is an almond-shaped structure called the **amygdala**. This is pronounced *Amy* with a *g* followed by *dala*, a bit like *dollar*. This is essentially feelings-central, regulating emotional responses based on perceived level of threat. It is the connection point between the forebrain and brainstem.

Effectively, the amygdala keeps the brainstem in check by maintaining its communication channels with the forebrain.

Some situations trigger a neural response which breaks down this system. It is instinctive, for the sake of survival.







When it comes to behaviour, the brain is a bit like a parent holding hands with a small child, walking along a jetty near the beach. In the case $\frac{14}{14}$ of a middle-grade child, it is more like an older and somewhat wiser sibling looking after the toddler of the family. The older sibling is still a kid but is sensible and keeps the little one settled. If all is going to plan, the toddler holds the older kid's hand, everyone is safe, and nobody does anything stupid.

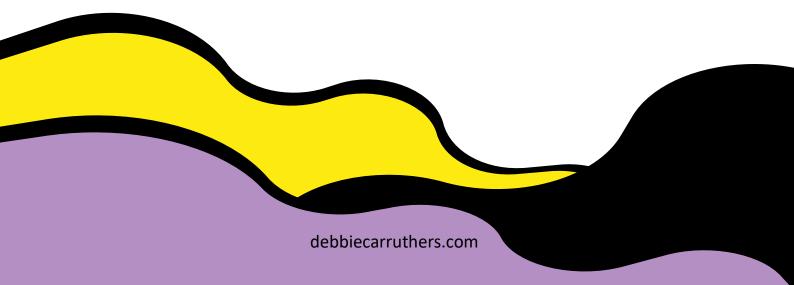
When something happens which causes the big kid to let go of the toddler's hand, there is a

disconnect between the thinker and the doer. The brain of a pre-pubescent individual reacts like a toddler, ready to jump or fall into the sea at the start of a storm.

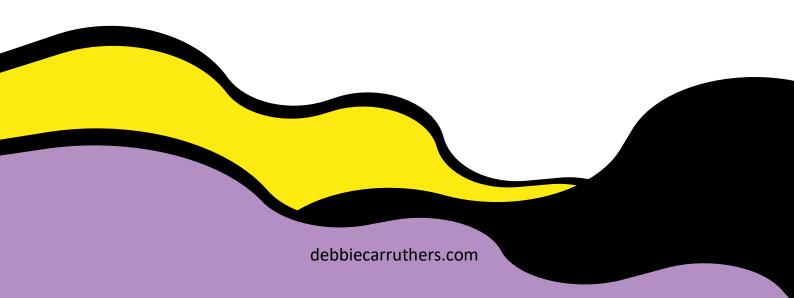
Jumping in with them to is pointless and can even be harmful. Sometimes the kid needs a floatation device to kick back to the shore before a connection can be re-established. During danger. they might be crying out for someone else to help them reach the shore.



A reconnection has to be made between the impulsive and the sensible self before the individual can reason. This suggests that when a child loses it, they need to be given the support as well as the space they need to recover before an adult can talk about it with them.



YEAR 6 KIDS



Understanding Year 6 Kids

With students in sixth grade, there is so much more going on than the kids let you see. With puberty rearing its ugly head, kids are morphing like butterflies as they move towards the complex period of adolescence.

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You may think you are losing your child, but you are not. They are stepping away to navigate the world. If you are there to listen, offer support or cheer them on, they know. Your child may think you are old, uncool and even embarrassing, but the ongoing gestures are appreciated. Be patient and let them know you love them. They will come back.

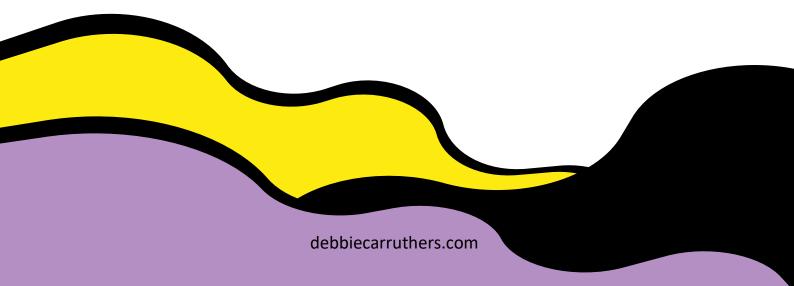
Collectively, students in their final year of primary school have a bit of a reputation for being overly

confident, sometimes smelly preteens, who ignore instructions. They often roll their eyes, grunt and speak rudely to adults.

The perceived show of disinterest is usually a facade, a mask covering layers of insecurity and anxiety. It is otherwise a display of temporary confidence. After all, they are the tallest and strongest kids in a school where they feel safe and accepted. This will soon pass when they make their way to high school to be dwarfed by giants.

Head of the Pack

Just like all creatures in the animal kingdom, any group of people look to one of their number to show them the way. Ideally, the strongest, most dominant person in a classroom would not be a defiant child, but the classroom teacher. In reality, respect for authority is a rare entity these days. Parents want to protect their own child but should also encourage them to show respect to teachers and other adults.



Drama, Drama, Drama

You may notice early on that there tends to be more social drama in year 6, and this is not limited to girls. This is possibly because of the plethora Page | 17 of emotions associated with finding their place on the social hierarchy. They begin to question authority as they become increasingly aware of how they are seen by peers.

Social Media

Kids are increasingly connected. The world is evolving, and we should be aware of how these changes affect children.

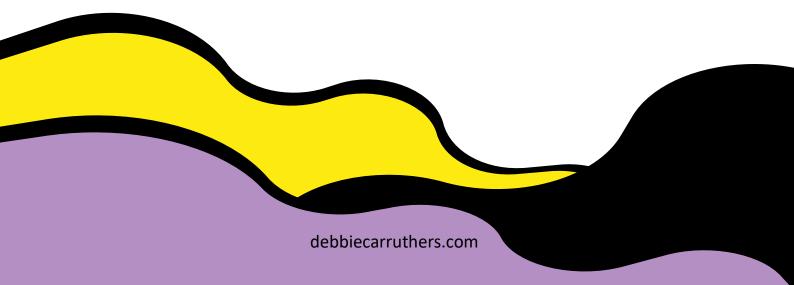
A large majority of conflict between year 6 students within school hours stems from interactions on social media outside school hours. Although they are still too young for social media, in more ways than one, many students use online platforms to connect and interact with their peers, most often with permission from parents and carers.

Bullying

This is an important issue, but the term bullying is widely misused.

Two children are having a fight is not bullying. It may have been sparked from ongoing bowling that is not bullying. One child responding somewhat aggressively to the annoying and inappropriate yet towards him by another is not bullying. It is much like the famous saying, don't poke the bear.

By widely accepted definition, bullying is a repeated behaviour involving a power imbalance. An imbalance of power could potentially mean someone is older, stronger, more intelligent or more talented. It could also mean a group of children against one or two children who are powerless to make it stop.



Bystanders

There are people who see bullying but are not in a position to intervene. Others enable bullying behaviours through their presence. If one student $\frac{1}{Page \mid 18}$ is the head of a pack of kids following them around as they reach havoc on others the group of followers empowers them, encouraging and enabling them to continue the inappropriate behaviour. These followers, or bystanders, can be held responsible, even online.

Most schools and teachers say that they don't tolerate bullying. Parents sometimes feel otherwise, claiming that Teachers do nothing about it. This is not entirely true. Often, teachers spend lunch breaks following up a case but cannot find enough evidence to enforce consequences.

Be mindful that almost no bullying occurs where teachers can see or hear it, so no matter whether they believe a statement, and usually they do, they have to rely on witnesses and evidence in order to respond adequately. It is an unfortunate and unfair reality.

The most effective way to address bullying, other than teacher supervision, is to build resilience in children and give them the confidence to stand up for themselves or walk away. Empowering victims disempowers bullies. This is not only immediately effective but makes a big difference in a long-term for individuals and groups.

Other People's Kids

We all want the best thing for your kids. People may have a different idea of what that best thing is or the best way to get there. Everyone needs to get things off their chest and sometimes you are friends from the school guy or other parents seem like a good outlet. Avoid conversations that are unhelpful or unproductive. When you come across somebody else in one remind them that we're all in this together.



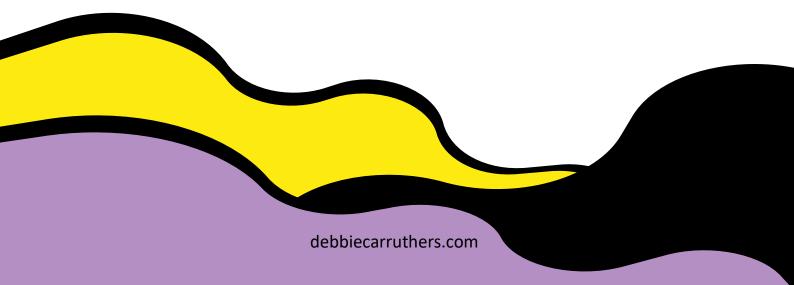


There will always be kids who demand more of the teacher at the expense of other students. This can waste learning time and never seems fair for diligent learners in the class. Teachers go home exhausted every afternoon, trying to address the unmet needs of students living in a vast array of circumstances.

There is almost always an underlying reason for stubborn, disruptive or attention-seeking behaviours.

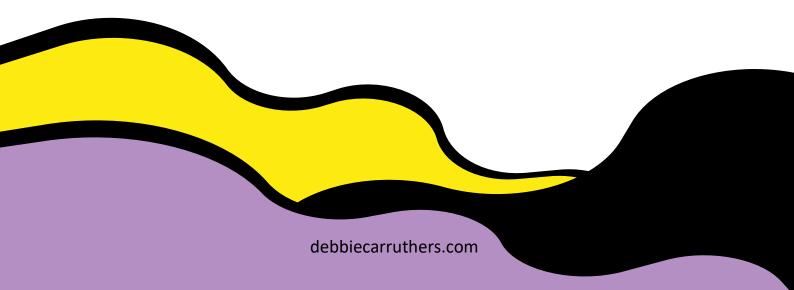
These students may arrive late to school because they had to walk themselves there. Their lunchbox is often empty because there was not food at home. Their school shirt may be dirty, ripped or a size too small and if they wear a hat or jacket, it is always the wrong one. Their shoes are worn-out, sometimes with holes in them.

In the playground, they get into fights with students and they are forever being reprimanded by other teachers who speak to them with utter disdain, always expecting the worst from them and trash-talking them in the staff room, demanding consequences. The senior executives are all too familiar with these infamous students who frequent their offices. The paper trail grows each day.

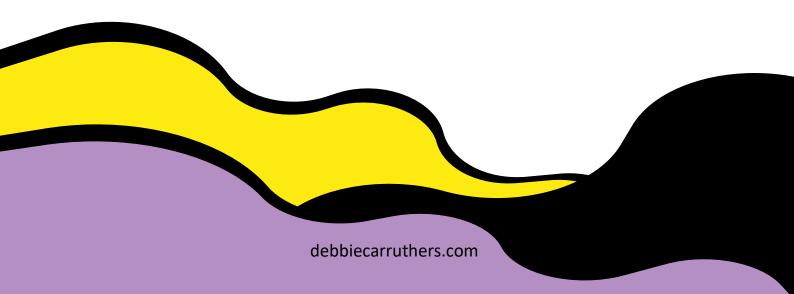


The classroom teacher, after numerous tearful, sleepless nights, has tried everything to manage the individual student. Parental contact is repeatedly attempted but rarely with any reply. There are seating plans, behaviour plans, warnings, notifications, insistence on normal routine, Page | 20 high expectations and the removal of privileges.

None of this works because what this child needs is someone to trust. someone who actually cares about them and shows grace - undeserved and unrequited love; someone who celebrates the individual and acknowledges that learning looks different for this child. With this realization comes real change. The other students may not see or understand but the teacher is gently tending to a seed that will continue to grow well beyond those classroom walls or even those school gates. The teacher won't see the end result, nor will the parents.



ALL ABOUT YEAR 6



School leadership positions

Prefects, captains, school leaders, whatever they may be called in a local context, most commonly comprise of year six students. Elections for these Page | 22 will usually be held at the end of your five but can in some cases be held at the beginning of Year 6.

Schools will communicate dates and requirements to both parents and students. Selection processes a different in each school. It is common for some or all nominees to present a speech to their peers often Years 3 to 6 students and teachers, or in the case of elections being held at the end of year, five years 2 to 5 teachers and students.

There might be some level of assistance from parents, but it is important that children prepare and write their speeches somewhat independently. Here is some advice for any child wanting to be elected for student leadership.

DO:

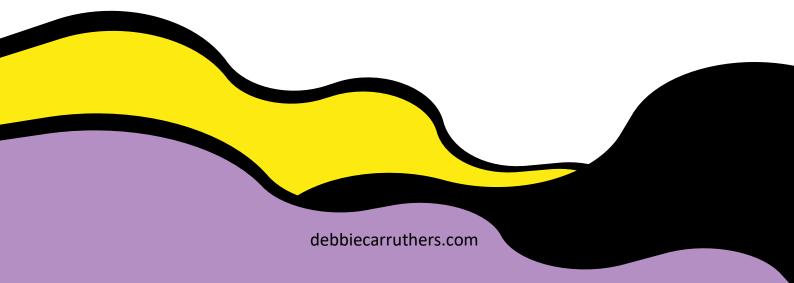
Consider whether you're willing to take on the responsibilities associated with the leadership role.

Introduce yourself to younger students. Let them know who you are. Write and practice the speech in advance, in front of family. Be courageous.

DO NOT

Apply if your behaviour does not reflect that of a student leader. Befriend younger students just until the vote.

Have parents or siblings write your speech or borrow it from the Internet. Make promises that you can't keep or pretend you are someone you're not.

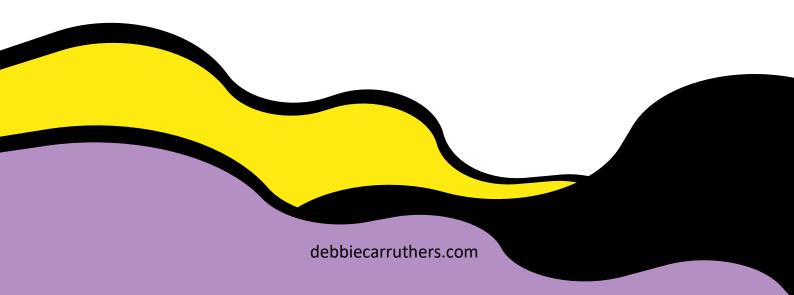


Special Events

One of the reasons Year 6 is a special year is because the kids get to participate in all sorts of exciting events in addition to regular school Page | 23 events. Some of these events might include fundraiser events, a special camp, orientation to high school activities, a graduation assembly, end of your dinner and clap out ceremony. These vary significantly from school to school. They come at a financial cost to families. They also events that will create lifelong memories for children. If cost prohibitive speak to the school about payment options.

They might pretend they are embarrassed, particularly parent child dance at the end of the night, but it means a lot to them when parents can attend.





Homework

There are three main reasons year six teachers set homework.

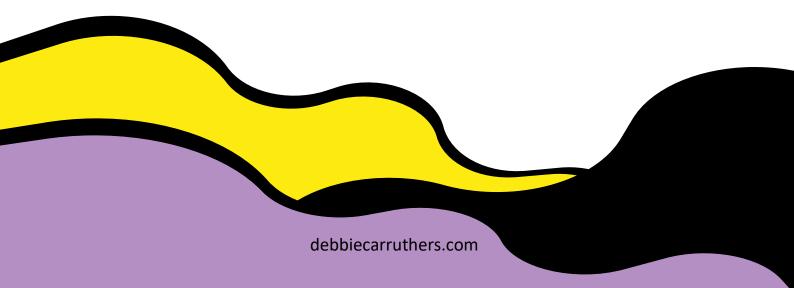
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- 1. Consolidation of learning This assumes that homework boosts educational achievement, a position which contradicts research. Teachers are responsible for delivering the curriculum, not asking
- 2. Meeting school requirements
- Preparing students for additional homework in high school Often, homework merely comprises of unfinished schoolwork that must be completed at home. In other settings, homework is limited to studying for, or completing formal assessments.

It is commonly accepted that high school students receive a high volume of homework. Sometimes, homework merely comprises of unfinished schoolwork that must be completed at home. In other secondary settings, homework is limited to studying for or completing formal assignments and exams as part of a whole-school assessment schedule. These schedules are designed to spread student workload and avoid burnout, with varying levels of success.

Some teachers set up to hours of daily homework to encourage students to practice and apply what they do in class each day, in order to consolidate and reinforce their learning. Others insist that homework be prioritised over after school jobs, sport and other commitments. It is common for people insist that children in primary school do homework to build it into familiar, everyday routines.

Other parents and teachers value the current wellbeing of the child over the long-term career outlook. They want to avoid unnecessary increases in student workload until necessary, and increase time for creative, imaginative or physical play.



Key Staff Members at school

Whether it be an inquiry, complaint, or words of gratitude, you will want to contact the school, but with whom should you ask to speak?

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Classroom Teacher

This is generally your main point of contact, at the school. There is much that you do not see and sometimes one quick phone call is enough for a valid explanation. Avoid starting at the top.

Assistant Principal in charge of year 6

You only really need to speak to the AP if classroom teacher suggest you do so or if the classroom teacher is not being helpful and you need to speak to someone else.

Deputy and Principal

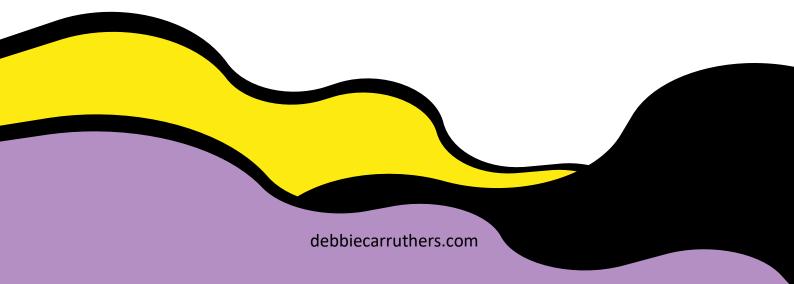
Only even when you are unsatisfied with the response from the AP, would you consider contacting anyone from executive.

School Psychologist

There is a formal process to follow in order to get a child into the school psychologist. Usually requires a diagnosis from a paediatrician or paediatric psychologist. Your school first point of contact the classroom teacher.

Regional Director

Is a rarity for any parent to have a genuine need to contact their director. Doing so without good reason causes trouble for everyone, so this is a major law breach, avoid doing this.



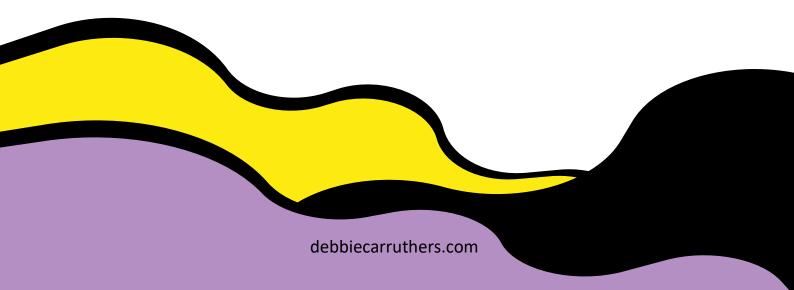
Teacher Workload

Teachers work longer and harder than you may think. Most have to complete professional learning, plan lessons and mark in their own time. Page | 26 This is only the start of the work they do that you don't see. Many of the classroom resources are financed from the teacher's personal bank accounts. It is likely that any photos of your kids and their work are taken on teachers' personal phones and uploaded in their own time, well after the students have left school for the day.

On a school camp, teachers have to be parents, nurses, cleaners and counsellors for 72 hours straight, usually without receiving a cent more pay. They clean up vomit, calm anxiety attacks and stop pillow fights at midnight, and they have left their own family behind to be there.

Report writing can add an extra week of full-time work on top of their regular workload over a couple of weeks, as can parent-teacher interviews. There is often no such thing as overtime, nor time-in-lieu to make up for working longer hours. Be wary of making complaints at these times, as your child's teacher may be running on an empty tank.

given the task of helping kids navigate their way through the final year of primary school are likely to have an increased workload compared to some of their peers. Kids need twenty-four-hour supervision on camps and there is no additional time off class to compile year books. Teachers don't get paid extra for these extra responsibilities.



Parent workload

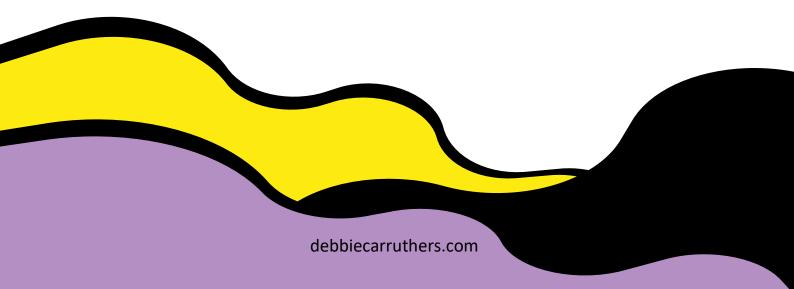
Overall, parent's hours of work increase throughout primary school, with few having the ability to help in classrooms, attend regular assemblies or

cheer kids on each week in sporting games. Much of the involvement of a parent of a child in primary school things includes which will discontinue as they move into secondary schooling. It is a very real possibility that your child will not want you at many school events throughout high school, so make the most of this time.

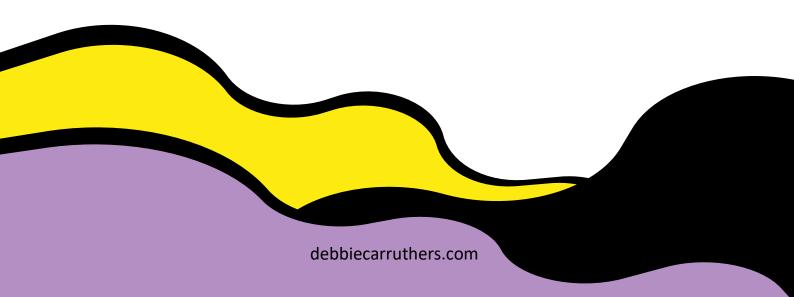


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This is a year of lasts. Your child will have their last book character parade and Mother's Day breakfast. They will have sports carnivals, a camp, fundraisers and other final events. These are all inconvenient to attend to, but kids usually appreciate the effort you make to attend the most important ones of all. Their graduation ceremony, farewell dinner and final clap-out are key events that provide memories to treasure for a lifetime. Your attendance at these means a lot to your kids so if work prohibits it, make a point of celebrating them when you get the chance.



COST COMPARISON



Primary versus Secondary Schools

Costs vary between primary and secondary schools. This is far more significant in private schools. Some independent colleges charge around Page | 29 \$50,000 for a single student's tuition fees in year 7 alone. This is in addition to uniform, some extra-curricular activities and boarding.

Foe many families, even the fees at public schools are prohibitive. Parents can approach the school if they wish to ask for limited financial assistance.

I recorded all costs for one of my children to go to their local public schools in year 6 and year 7. This is the simplified version.

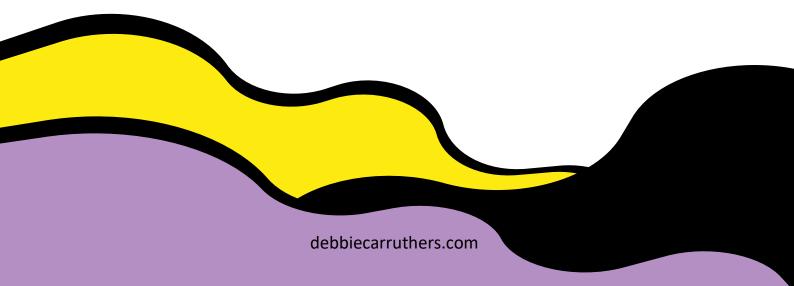
This list is inclusive of voluntary school contributions which every parent should pay if they are in the financial position to do so, as many schools are under-funded. It also includes school photographs, which some parents do not purchase.

It does not include sport representation above the local competition, nor food purchases at the school canteen. Also excluded, are any gifts or donations, apart from voluntary school which donations, are effectively compulsory school fees in the public system.

	\$ Co	sts	
AC	1	2	3
Х	4	5	6
-	4	5	6
+	7	8	9
=	\$	0	%

Some families pay additional costs for before and after school care, band or other optional activities and clubs associated with school, none of which are listed here.

These are the real, recorded costings for my own son in year 6 and year 7. These would vary for other people's children.



Expenses in a NSW Public School

Year 6	Year 7	
Year 6 School contribution (voluntary) - \$50 Uniform (incl. shoes) - \$250 Lesson resources - \$44 Stationery - \$35 Incursions (ext. providers) - \$133 Excursions, Incl. camp - \$412 School events - \$230 Sport - \$215 School photos (class and sport) - \$103	P&C donation (voluntary) - \$50 School contribution (voluntary) - \$90 Laptop with Insurance - \$865 Uniform, including shoes - \$600 Travel pass - \$220 Sport - \$84 Camp - \$360 Incursions (external providers) \$35 Course fees - \$400 Stationery - \$ 77	
End of Year 6 costs - \$84	Stationery - \$ 77 School photos - \$47	
	Swimming and Lifesaving program - \$165	
Total - \$1566	Total - \$3028	

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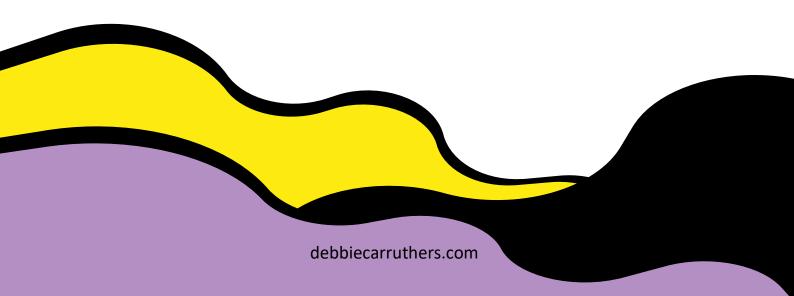
Private Tuition

Many families choose to send their children to private tutoring, either to catch-up to their student cohort or to out-perform peers. This is a private decision for each family as to whether they make this choice.

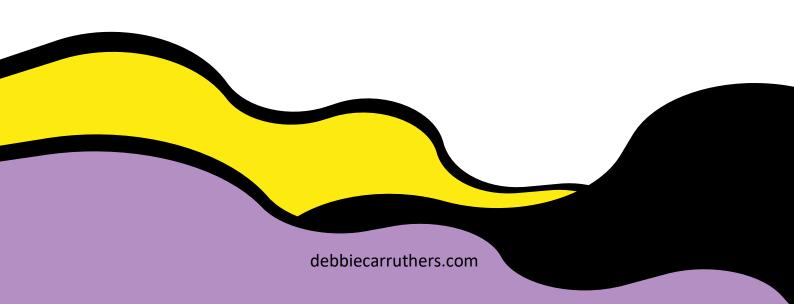
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It is the responsibility of a classroom teacher to plan and implement adjustments to cater for students. In some case cases, they have individual plans for students with additional needs. Keep in mind that a mainstream classroom teacher has up to 30 students in a class, so realistically, a single child may not receive a significant amount of individual attention. It can cost up to \$100 an hour for private tuition, but some parents see great benefits for their child.

It is not the job of a classroom teacher to prepare a child to excel in NAPLAN nor in the selective schools' exam or mathematics competitions. For this reason, some families enrol their children in private colleges, which explicitly teach for the purpose of excelling in those exams.

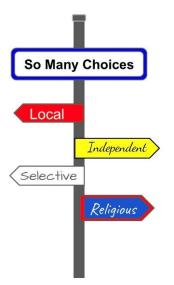


HIGH SCHOOL SELECTION



Choosing the Right High School

It is only a few months until your child is off to high school. For many families, choosing the right high school is a significant family decision. You may want to consider giving your child some ownership by including them in the decision. With nominations due by the end of March, it is important to this address early in the year.



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Single Sex or Co-educational?

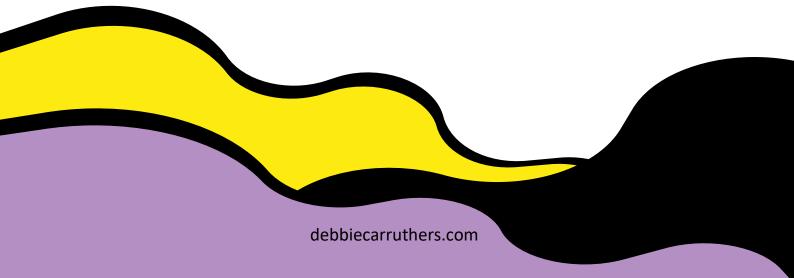
There are benefits to both. Some kids struggle sharing lessons with the opposite sex and others thrive.

One distinct problem associated with having boys and girls together is body image. Many co-educational schools find it helpful to separate girls and boys for PDHPE lessons for this reason, particularly in the middle years. It is also common for single sex schools to have a brother or sister campus with which to combine for various activities.

Coeducational environments can come with distractions. These are often silly or annoying, until about year 9 or 10, when distraction is inevitably replaced by attraction. Nevertheless, it can be equally unhelpful for learning.

There are benefits to coeducation too. Learning how to work alongside people from the opposite sex sets kids up for adulthood. They learn how to navigate the inherent differences in attitudes and behaviours of males and females. It is also a more inclusive environment for those who do not identify with the traditional notion of gender.

No matter your preference, unless you are willing and able to pay for an exclusive private school, it is most likely that you will not have a choice.



Schools and Classes for Learners with Additional Needs

Where there are people, there is difference. Hopefully, schools and parents will have already identified and begun to address the circumstances of those with major differences in learning needs well before year 6.

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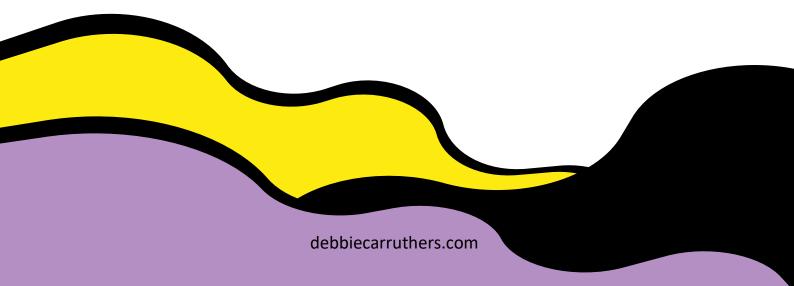
There are various options, in both public and private settings, for students with additional learning needs moving into high school. There are schools catering appropriately for individuals who meet certain criteria, for example, a school for children with moderate to severe autism. In addition, there are classes in some mainstream schools. Staff are trained and experienced in special education.

Placement in these settings is based on needs rather than preferences. Unfortunately, places are limited.

For a child to gain placement in a school, they will need a formal diagnosis from a paediatrician. In addition, the parent or carer may need to meet with the primary school and the secondary school about the application process.

The conversation with the primary school often begins in the beginning of year 5. This is because the child needs to secure integration funding in order to meet criteria for placement. The process usually occurs much earlier than the applications for placement in mainstream learning environments.

If a parent begins this process at a later date, their child may have to move into a mainstream class and wait until a later date for a position to open up in a specialised class or school.



The Public System

Local Public Schools

Public schools are funded and run by the education department in each state government. In Australia, all children are allowed to attend their local public school, inclusive of race, disability and academic level. If you wish to send your child to your local public high school, you will still have to enrol

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Public Schools other than your local will not automatically accept your application. You will need to apply behaviour for an out-of-area enrolment. There are many factors that affect a child's chance of success, including school size, available spaces and your child's and performance.

Local School catchment finders by state and territory:

NSW - https://schoolfinder.education.nsw.gov.au/

Victoria - https://www.findmyschool.vic.gov.au/

Queensland – https://www.qgso.qld.gov.au/maps/edmap/

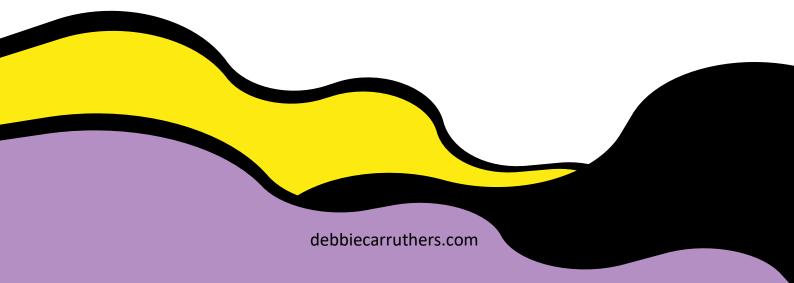
South Australia – https://www.education.sa.gov.au/parents-and-families/enrol-school-or-preschool/find-a-school-zone-or-preschool-catchment-area

Tasmania – https://www.decyp.tas.gov.au/learning/find-your-local-school/

Western Australia - https://www.det.wa.edu.au/schoolsonline/home.do

ACT – https://www.act.gov.au/education-and-training/find-a-school-and-enrol/find-a-school-in-your-priority-enrolment-area

Northern Territory - https://nt.gov.au/learning/primary-and-secondary-students/choose-a-school



Specialist High Schools

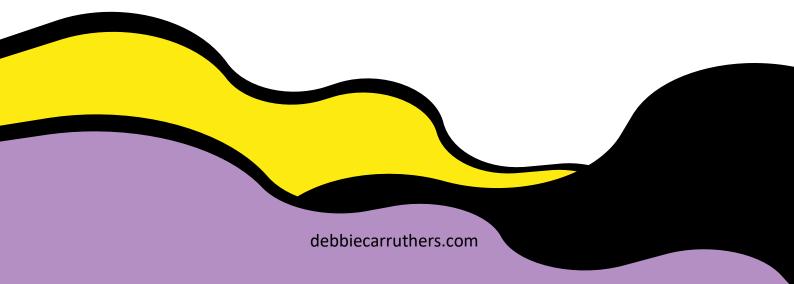
Several specialist options exist within the public and private education systems. Some focus on sport and others on creative and performing arts Page | 36 or agriculture. Many of these accept local students within their catchment area and in addition, offer specialist programs. Students should expect to trial for a position, usually early in year 6, or sometimes earlier. Fees may be higher too.

If one's local high school happens to be a specialist school, there is no need to fret. These schools usually have great facilities due to government investments. As a bonus, they often offer electives for mainstream students from as early as year 7.

Selective Schools

Selective schools have a closed enrolment. Only a limited number of students can attend, as they are designed to extend the highest-achieving academic students. To enrol in a selective school or a selective stream in a local public school, a student needs to submit preferences and sit for a special exam. These exams are held around April and May, depending on the state or territory. Often, results and offers are not posted until much later in the year.

Any student can apply for selection. Practice tests are usually available on the internet. It is important to note, however, that it is not the job of a classroom teacher to specifically prepare children for entrance exams. It is also worth noting that selective schools do not consider your residential address in the application process, except for the state or territory in which you reside. There is little benefit in moving house to be closer to a selective school unless your child receives and accepts an offer of enrolment in advance.



Private Schools

Private schools are not run by the government. They do receive government funding, but they are also funded significantly by school fees, Page | 37 which vary significantly from school to school. Costs tend to climb throughout high school.

Independent Schools

These schools are governed by boards and run internally. This means they can make their own decisions based on their values. Their polices are their own. It is important to note, however, that some of these schools are owned and run by a large, private organisations.

Religious Schools

Private schools are sometimes owned and run by religious organisations. This includes local Christian or Jewish Colleges, Islamic or Catholic Schools and others. Parents who have one of these as a preference are often required to belong to the local parish, temple or mosque. Preference usually goes to kids already attending the K-12 college, then those enrolled in a feeder primary school. In some cases, attending the religious precinct regularly or making donations can increase a child's chance of being considered.

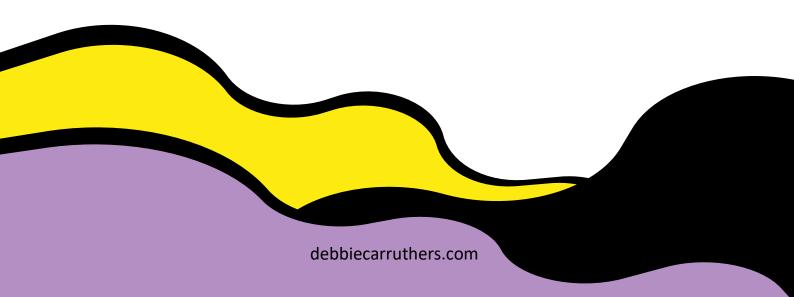
For a variety of reasons, some parents opt to send their child to a religionbased school, even though they do not share the faith.

Distance Education and Home Schooling

Students can be enrolled in a distance education school, follow prescribed lessons and check-in with a teacher remotely. Some parents opt to set their own program by home schooling their children, following a broad syllabus.



ALL ABOUT YEAR 7



Increased Independence

From day one of high school, or even earlier, children begin seeking increased independence from their parents. Some parents jump at the Page | 39 possibility of freedom, while others will feel uncomfortable with letting go. It can be difficult to find a balance between smothering and supporting them.

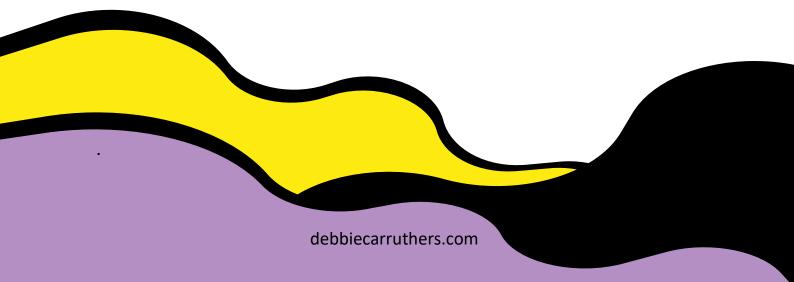
As kids grow up, parents need to trust their children and trust they have done a god job teaching their children to make good choices. Kids tend to want time without their parents around. This is not out of a lack of love, nor an act of rebellion. Let them make age-appropriate mistakes. They need to stretch their wings, within reasonable limits, but will still need some guidance and support.

Subjects, Teachers and timetables

In addition to current subjects, students will be introduced to new subjects in high school; subjects that are often seen for the very first time in year seven. Some examples might be design and technology, agriculture and languages.

In primary schools, students tend to have a single, generalist teacher for most subjects and another teacher for one to two hours per week, mostly for the sake of teacher planning time. The time can be longer some schools and situations. These other teachers often, but not always, visit students in their own classroom. Classes have their own timetables.

Secondary schools tend to have the same key learning areas as primary schools. The students will, however, come across new subjects. In secondary schools, teachers specialise, with qualifications which allow them to teach particular subjects at a more complex level than in primary school. Lessons occur in specialised rooms too.

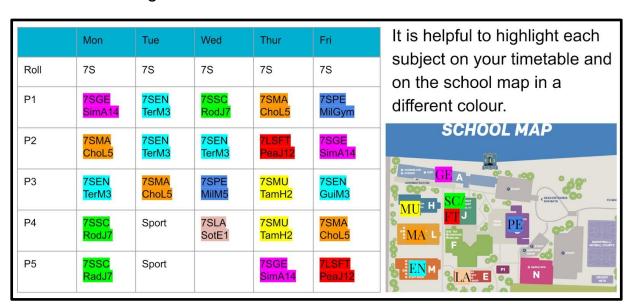


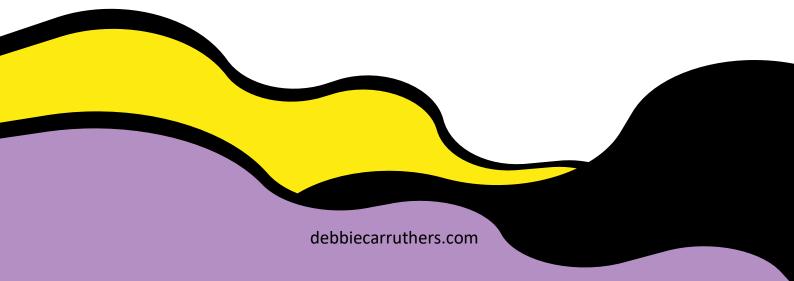
Timetables

Students will usually have a different teacher for each subject in high school. They will move between different classrooms, including some Page | 40 specialist rooms such as kitchen and science labs. A timetable, divided into periods, dictates when and where to go, and a bell rings at set times to alert everyone when each period ends and the next begins.

While it is possible for high schools to show students how to read their timetable, it is a good idea to familiarise your child with an example before they start high school. Many schools will have a fortnightly timetable, which looks more complicated, but is basically two different versions of this one, labelled Week A and Week B. The reason for this is to fit in all of the curriculum.

Here is an example of a weekly timetable. See below for explanations to aid understanding.





Timetables will not usually come colour-coded, and so highlighting by subject might be helpful for packing a school bag each morning, especially in year 7.

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This is what all those letters and numbers mean. Each day of the week is listed in a column, with periods in rows.

Roll Call - Students in this school have a mini-period at the beginning of each day for roll call. This is used for school attendance records. Each teacher will mark the roll throughout the day to ensure all students in attendance at school also attend their lesson.

7SGE SimA14

The student has this class Period 1 on Mondays, Period 5 on Thursdays and Period 2 on Fridays.

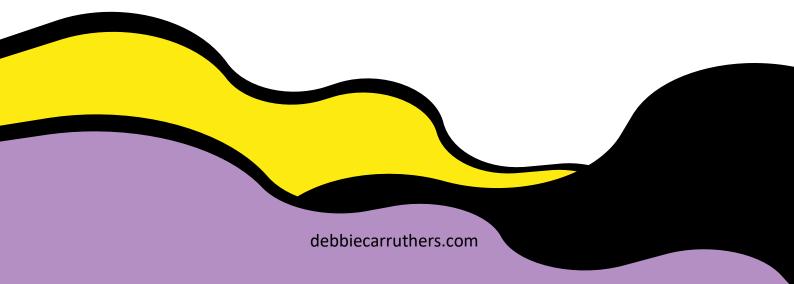
7S is the class.

Geography is the subject.

Mr Simpson is the teacher.

A14 is the classroom, A being the building or block and 14 being the room.

This child's class is 7S for all subjects, except for Food Technology, which is 7LS. The reason for the exception is class numbers are restricted in settings like kitchens for safety reasons. If 7L and 7S each have 30 students, so classes combine and split. Usually, the classes will rotate between three subjects, such as Food, Textiles, and Timber.



Provision of Resources

Along with a list of subject fees, you will often receive a resource list, for which you are responsible. In some settings, students are unable to Page | 42 participate in practical lessons without having paid these fees. In Food Technology, for example, students are not provided with ingredients for preparation and cooking.

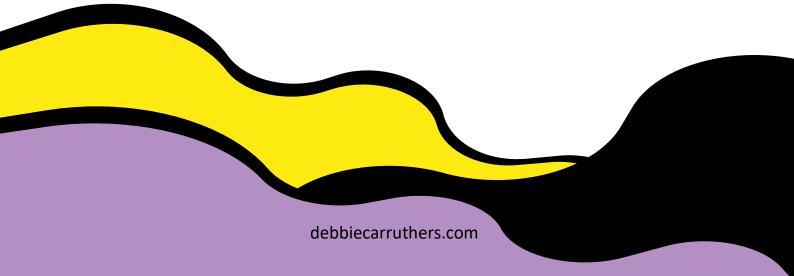
This is some of the standard equipment a student would be required to take to school for year 7.

- School bag
- Pens, pencils, eraser, sharpener
- 2 aprons (kitchen and wood/metal work)
- Exercise books
- Music book, with staves
- 5mm Grid/Graph book for Mathematics

Bring Your Own Device

A growing majority of secondary schools are asking students to bring their own electronic device. The purchase of personal devices may be optional, as some schools have a provisional supply available for lend or hire. may be specified or recommended, as they must meet minimum requirements for learning.





School Uniform

School Uniforms can be expensive for parents and restrictive for students, but they serve a purpose.

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Uni- a prefix (beginning part of word), meaning one.

Form refers to appearance.

Uniform, therefore, means looking the same.

School uniforms are equalisers, at least within each school. In Australia, school uniforms are a norm. A school uniform means belonging, and you can be identified as such.

Public schools cannot strictly enforce the uniform if a parent formally objects, but this

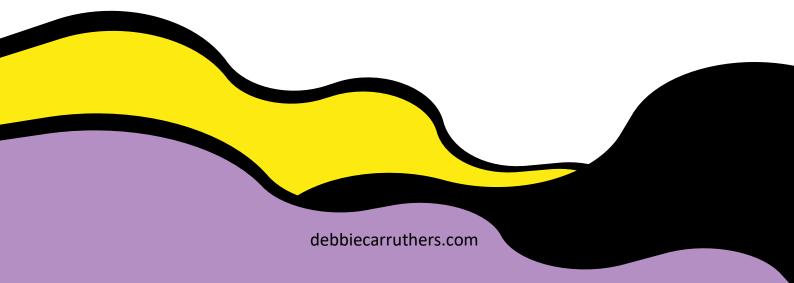
is rare. Schools hold various standards for uniform.



In schools which maintain a strict standard, the height of one's socks may be specified, and blazers and school hats are mandatory while travelling to and from school, as uniform is linked to school status and reputation.

Sports Uniform

Students are required to wear a school sports uniform for physical education (PE) and sport. Most high schools require students to wear the school uniform and bring their sports uniform to put on in the change rooms at the beginning of lessons. This can be embarrassing at the start of year 7 but kids quickly adapt. Sometimes, a limited number of stalls are available for privacy.



Assessment

Students are assessed throughout their schooling. There are three purposes of assessment. These are:

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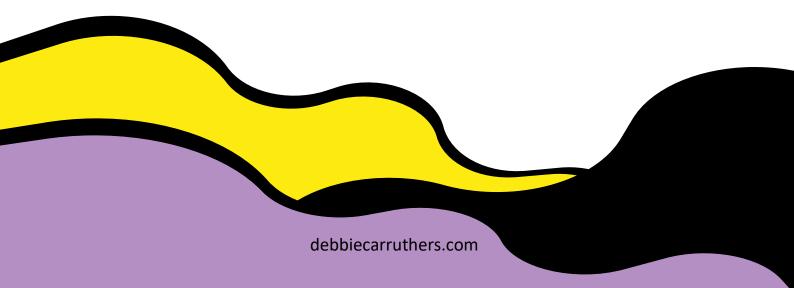
- 1. To see what students already know before they begin a unit of work, in order to inform teaching programs and shape lessons.
- 2. To measure progress along the way and adjust lessons and programs as necessary.
- 3. To reflect on learning and measure levels of achievement for grading and reporting.

While year 6 reports should not matter in high school, to some students, it is important. Many high schools request copies of student reports from the first semester as part of the application process. Poor results or behaviour can cost a child a place in a class or school of their choice.

In secondary settings, a student will usually have 6-8 different teachers assessing them for different subjects. End-of-unit assessment tasks often fall at similar times of year, due to reporting periods and the typical length of units of work.

To overcome this problem, schools have assessment schedules, documents which map out tasks for across different faculties. Despite this, there can be clashes. With plenty of notice, most teachers will be flexible in allowing extensions for reasonable requests from parents.

One major difference between primary and secondary schools is that in the latter, students usually receive an assessment task notification for each test or assignment. It explains a task, usually with 2 weeks' notice. A labelled example is shown on the next page.



SAMPLE SECONDARY COLLEGE ASSESSMENT TASK NOTIFICATION

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Subject	For example, English
Topic	For example, 20 th Century Poets
Teacher	For the child's class
Notification Date	When this is given out to students
Due Date	When it needs to be handed-in

Outcomes

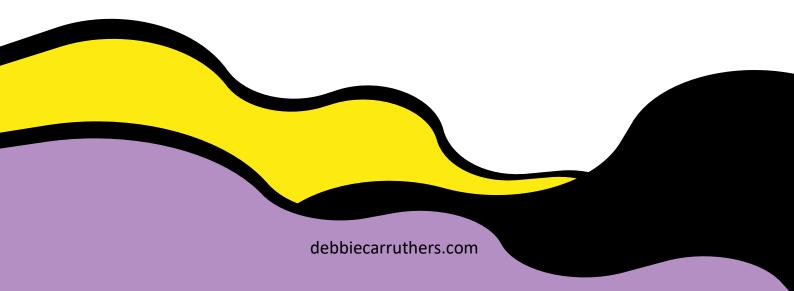
The syllabus for each subject will list the expected learning outcomes for each year or stage group. These are simple statements of what they should know or do.

Task Description

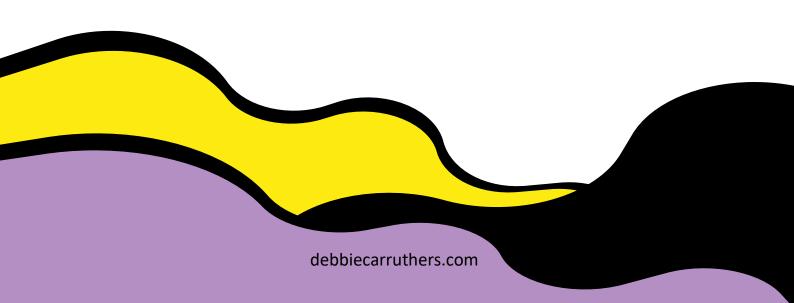
This part outlines what the student is required to do.

Marking Criteria

Students look here to see how their work will be marked. Sometimes there is a marking rubric included or attached. This breaks the task into separate sections or criteria, with a few words describing how a student will achieve various levels of success for each.



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



Is the work more difficult in year 7?

The difficulty level is appropriate for a child's stage of development. A student in year 4 might experience difficulties with year 5 mathematics because it is designed for a year 5 student. In the same way, students in primary school might think that high school work is too difficult until they get there themselves. The volume of work depends largely on individual teachers.

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Is it true that they have five hours of homework every night?

The amount of homework depends on the school, the teacher, the subject, and the level of achievement. If any child is not keeping up with the volume of homework, I should speak to their teachers before it becomes a bigger problem.

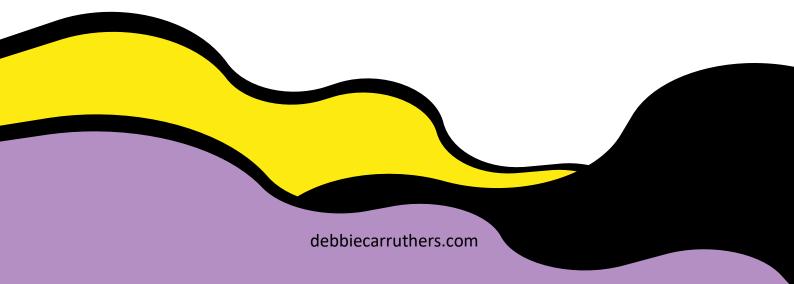
Am I still allowed to attend events and be part of the school community?

Most parents have less involvement in high school. This is partly because they work and do not have the time. Another reason is because high school students do not usually want their parents to be around. There are exceptions to this and certainly presentation assemblies and award nights are examples.

It is a good idea to ask your child and perhaps the school how much they want you to be involved.

How can I make sure my child is in a class with their friend?

The short answer is you cannot. You might feel like they will only have one or two friends at high school with them, but they are probably yet to meet their high school friends.



How can I make sure my child gets their choice of teacher or subject?

You can make sure you stay informed by reading newsletters and emails, and hand in any selection forms as early as possible. Is unlikely that they will get their choice of teacher unless special circumstances exist. Personal preference does not count as a special circumstance.

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Should my child be worried about bullies in high school?

Some of the kids are big, but they're not vaguely interested in year seven kids. They want to hang around their own friends. Almost all bullying is within someone's own period group.

What can I do to help?

- Tell them you love them. Use the words.
- Listen to your child and be aware that another child or adult may have different story or perspective.
- Engage in deep conversation about topics of interest for your child, even if they do not interest you.
- Monitor their screen time and internet use. Instead of allowing apps or content 'because everyone else is using it,' check the suitability first.
- Create an interest in learning. Encourage your children through modelling. You might say, 'I learnt about _____ today. I'd love to hear if you have learnt that at school.'
- Be kind to yourself. You will be a better parent if you are rested.







Surviving Year 6: The Novel Behind the Guide

This parent's guide was inspired by Debbie Carruthers' debut novel, *Surviving Year 6. It is* a heartfelt, funny, and relatable story that captures the triumphs and trials of the final year of primary school.

The novel follows three unforgettable characters — Joey, Sally, and Bella — as they navigate friendships, secrets, and the social complexities of Year 6. Through moments of humour and heartbreak, readers are encouraged to reflect on identity, empathy, and resilience. It is a powerful tool for building social-emotional awareness in upper primary students.

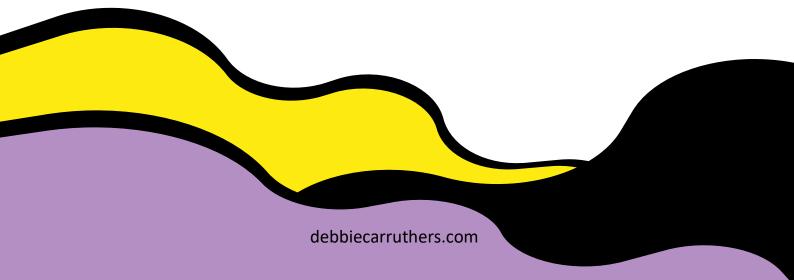
Whether enjoyed as an easy-to-read independent text for kids, or read together, *Surviving Year 6* offers families opportunity to connection through meaningful discussion, which will impact everyone.

My year 6 son couldn't put this book down! He devoured it in 2 days and said, 'It was really good. I liked how it was told from 3 different character's perspectives.'

Yolanda, Year 6 Parent.

Got this for my friend's daughter and ended up reading it myself and loving it! A funny and relatable book for anyone going through those tricky preteen years.

Sarah-Jayne, Amazon Review



Synopsis

Three kids. One year. Everything on the line.

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It's the last year of primary school at Hillwood Heights, and Joey, Sally, and Bella are just trying to make it through in one piece.

Joey is always in trouble, when somebody else started it. Sally is hiding a serious illness because she just wants to be a normal 11-year-old kid. Bella is struggling to keep her perfect image intact.

Then a new kid comes along and everything changes. Tensions are high, friendships shift, and secrets pile up.

Nothing can prepare them for the moment their Year 6 camp takes a dangerous turn. Classmates must work together to save one of their own, giving a whole new meaning to Surviving Year 6.

A laugh-out-loud, heartfelt middle-grade novel about friendship, resilience, and learning to stand together.

Discover how friendships are tested and heroes are made in Surviving Year 6.

Perfect for fans of Jeff Kinney and R.J. Palacio.

Explore the novel, and check out the blog posts at:



www.debbiecarruthers.com/book

Book a speaking engagement for a parent group or a family consultation at:



www.debbiecarruthers.com/contact

