

# Gentle Connection Starters

Creating opportunities before high school begins

Connection cannot be forced, but it can be given somewhere to begin.

## Why this matters

- ☐ Starting high school can feel easier when there is someone familiar.
- ☐ This is not about assigning friendships.
- ☐ It is about creating low-pressure opportunities for connection.

## Noticing possible connections

- ☐ Similar interests
- ☐ Shared hobbies
- ☐ Compatible communication styles
- ☐ Similar energy levels
- ☐ Similar transition worries
- ☐ Gentle or respectful temperaments

Belonging grows best when connection feels mutual.

## Before making introductions

- ☐ Has the student shown interest?
- ☐ Do they have a choice in this?
- ☐ Does this reduce pressure — or add to it?
- ☐ Is this about connection, not management?

Consent protects comfort.

## What to avoid

- ☐ Assigning responsibility between students
- ☐ Forcing interaction
- ☐ Calling it a buddy system
- ☐ Making disability the reason
- ☐ Expecting instant friendship

Connection needs opportunity, not obligation.

# Student & Family Voice

## Would you like a familiar face?

- ☐ Yes, I would like to meet someone
- ☐ Maybe, I would like to know more
- ☐ No thank you

## Interests

- ☐ Sport
- ☐ Art
- ☐ Music
- ☐ Gaming
- ☐ Reading
- ☐ Animals
- ☐ Drama
- ☐ Quiet spaces
- ☐ Outdoors

## How I would feel most comfortable

- ☐ One-to-one introduction
- ☐ Small group
- ☐ Orientation day
- ☐ Trusted adult nearby
- ☐ Just knowing a name first

Choice helps connection feel safer.

## Parent / Carer check-in

- ☐ I am happy for my child to be introduced
- ☐ I would like more information
- ☐ I would prefer this not happen yet
- ☐ I would like adult support nearby

Belonging often begins with one familiar face.