

The Familiar Faces Plan

For parents and teachers supporting connection before high school begins.

Every student deserves a familiar face to help them feel safe and seen.

Challenges Behind Acceptance

Introduction

Transitioning to high school is more than changing classrooms — it's changing people, routines, and expectations.

For many students with disabilities, walking into a new environment without a familiar face can increase anxiety and impact their ability to learn, connect, and thrive.

This plan helps parents, teachers, and schools coordinate early connections so students begin Year 7 with confidence, safety, and support.

Why Familiar Faces Matter

Familiar faces provide safety and predictability during major school transitions. For many students with disabilities, connection begins with trust — not independence.

A familiar face can support:

- Reduced anxiety during new routines
- Smoother transitions into unfamiliar environments
- Emotional regulation when things feel overwhelming
- Confidence to try new tasks, join new spaces, and meet new people

Students settle faster when they start the year knowing at least one safe, predictable person is looking out for them.

How to Use This Plan

- Complete this plan together or individually.
- Use it before Year 7 begins.
- Review every fortnight during Term 1, then monthly.
- Revisit earlier if difficulties arise.
- Adjust the plan as natural friendships develop and support needs change.

The Familiar Faces Map

Identify Familiar Adults:

- Teacher aide
- Learning support staff
- Year advisor
- SLSO
- Any other trusted adult at school

Identify Familiar Peers:

- Primary classmates
- Siblings
- Friends
- Family friends or neighbours

Why this matters:

Familiarity helps students feel grounded, confident, and safe in new environments. One safe person can make a big difference in a busy corridor, noisy playground, or unfamiliar classroom.

Activity Sheet A — Familiar Faces Template

Familiar Adults:

Familiar Peers:

How they help me feel comfortable:

My Familiar Faces Profile

Name:

How I know them:

Why I feel safe with them:

When I can see them at school:

What they help me with:

Activity Sheet B — Familiar Faces Planner

Familiar Face	Role	Check-in Time	Notes

Activity Sheet C — Pre-Connection & First Week Checklist

Before School Starts:

- Ask about class placement
- Confirm familiar peers
- Arrange meet-and-greet or walk-through
- Introduce familiar adult
- Share key insights

First Week:

- Morning check-in
- Recess check-in
- End-of-day check-in
- Review support

Scenario 1 — First Day With a Familiar Peer

Mia walked into Year 7 clutching her backpack, scanning the busy courtyard. New uniforms, new buildings, new teachers — everything felt loud and unfamiliar.

Then she saw Lily — someone she had known since Year 2. Lily smiled, waved her over, and said, “Let’s find our class together.”

They walked to roll call side by side. At recess, Lily introduced her to a new group of friends.

By the end of the day, Mia wasn’t hiding behind her bag. She wasn’t confident because the day was easy — she was confident because she didn’t have to face it alone.

Scenario 2 — Starting Without a Familiar Face

Jordan started Year 7 without knowing anyone. No familiar peers, no friends from primary school, not even a face he recognised in the courtyard.

The school grounds felt too busy, too loud, too big. He stood quietly in line, trying not to look overwhelmed.

A learning support teacher noticed and gently stepped in. She checked his timetable, showed him where to go, and stayed nearby during morning transitions.

By Week 3, new connections were slowly starting to form — not because he had familiar peers, but because he finally had people who noticed him.

Conversation Starters for Parents & Teachers

Before school begins:

- “Is there anyone you’d like to reconnect with before Year 7 starts?”
- “What helps you feel safe when you’re in a new place?”
- “Who would you feel comfortable checking in with at school?”

After Scenario 1 (starting with a peer):

- “If you had someone like Lily with you, who would you choose?”
- “What would make it easier to talk to someone new?”

After Scenario 2 (starting without a friend):

- “If you don’t know anyone yet, what would help you feel supported?”
- “Would you like a teacher or support person to check in with you in the morning?”

Where real belonging begins

Candice — Challenges Behind Acceptance

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