



The
Castle
School

Welcome to Year 7!

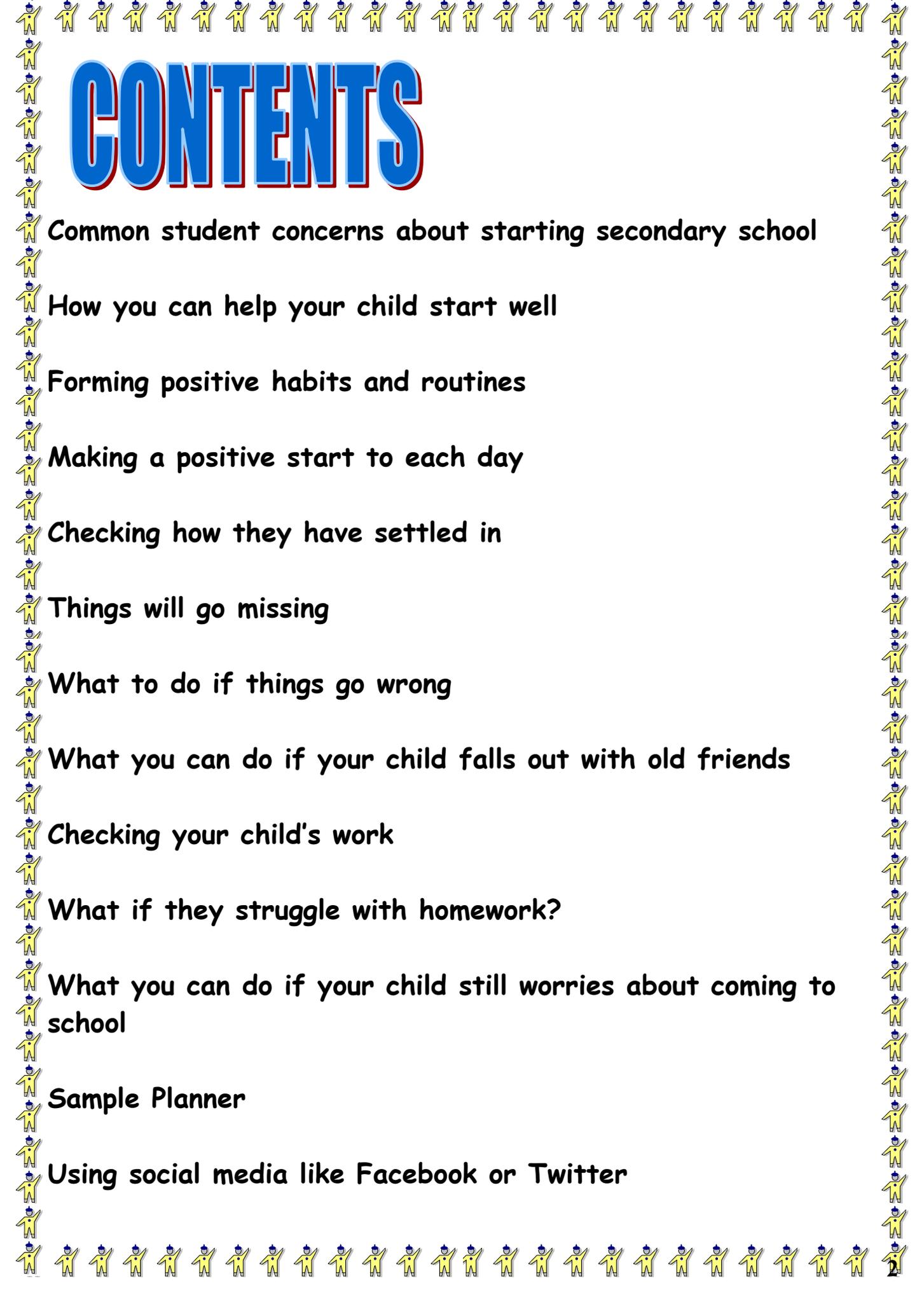
*A General Guide for
Parents and Carers*

AGR

Reading this booklet will help your

Space for a name

child settle into secondary school.



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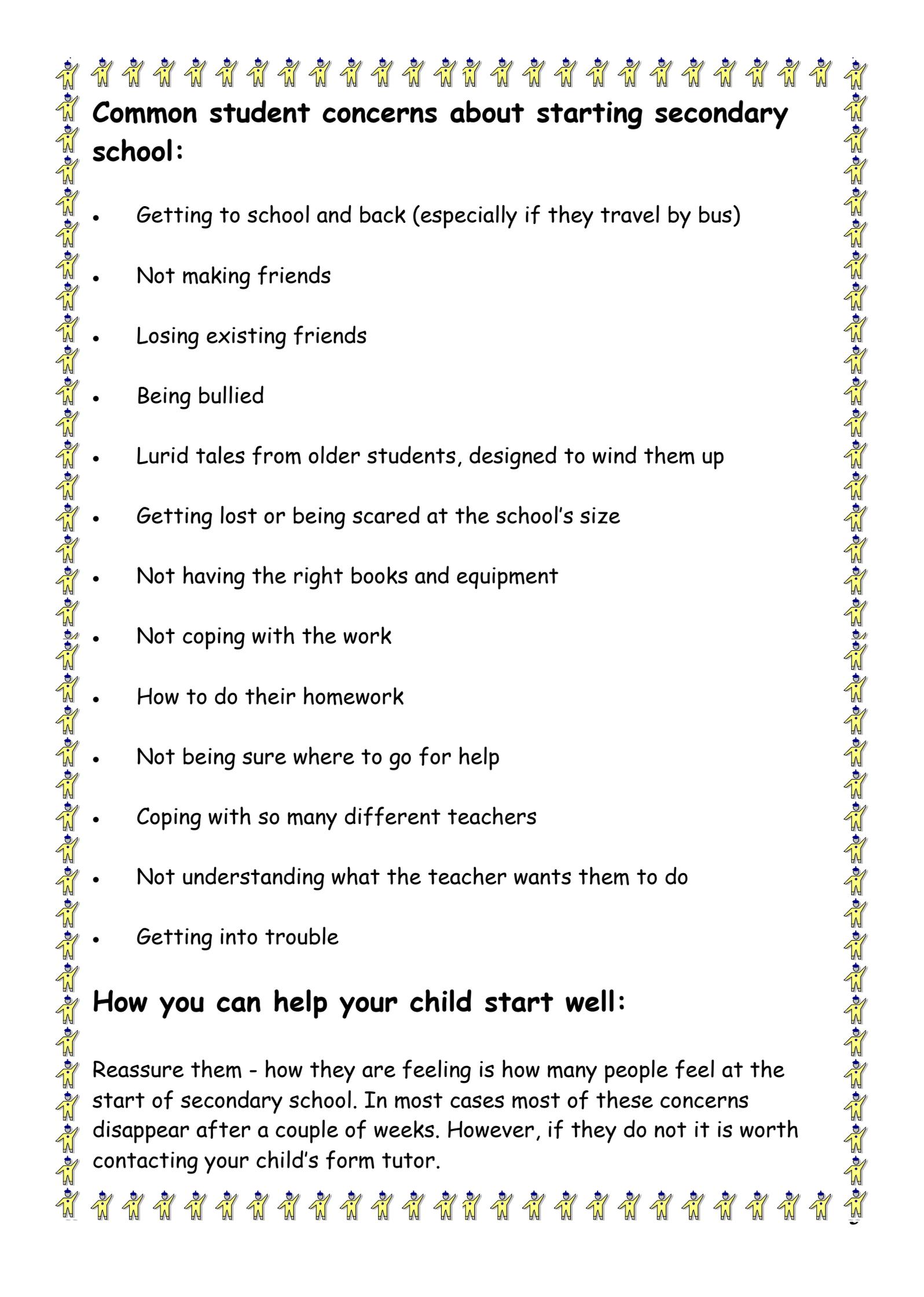
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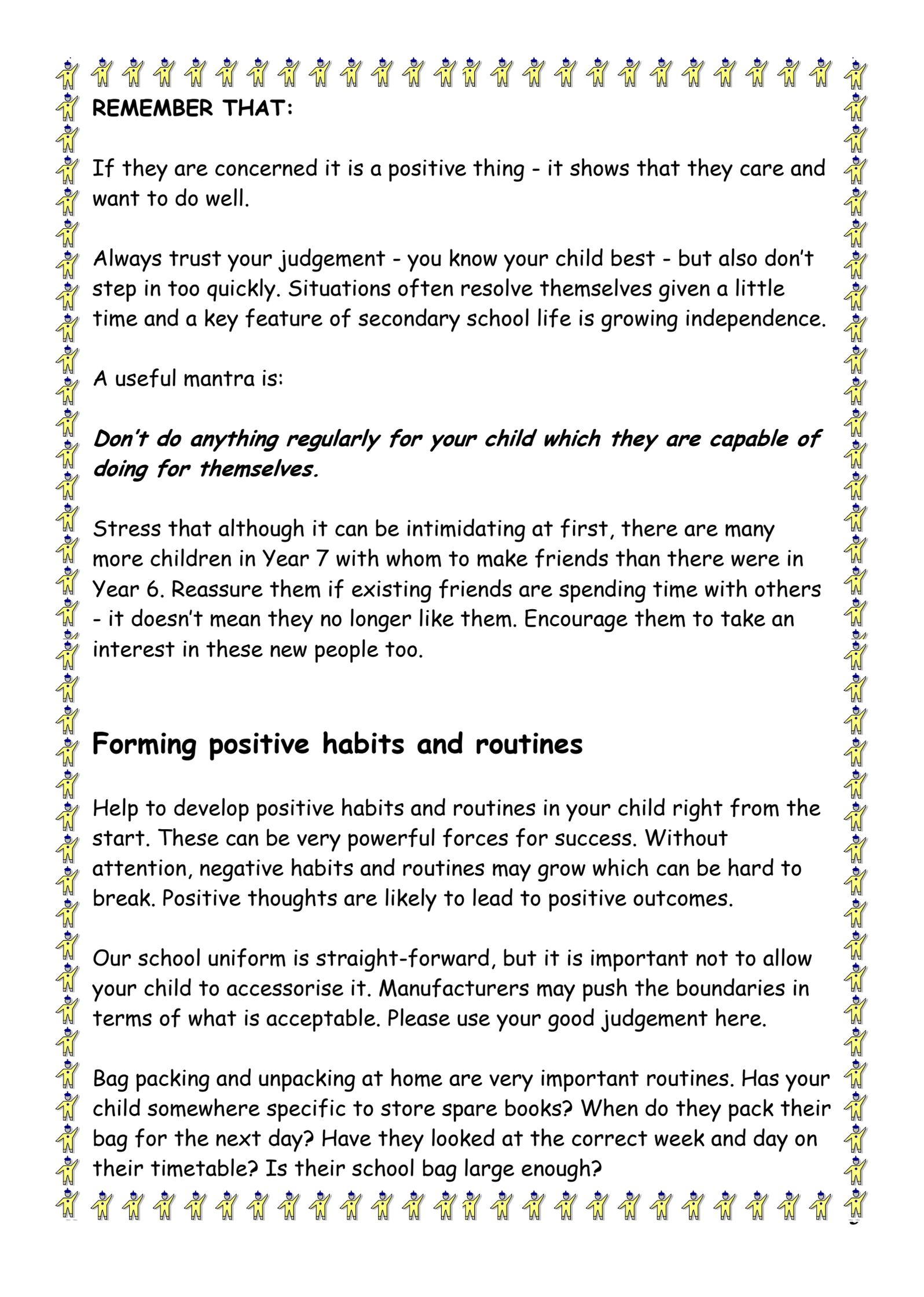


Common student concerns about starting secondary school:

- Getting to school and back (especially if they travel by bus)
- Not making friends
- Losing existing friends
- Being bullied
- Lurid tales from older students, designed to wind them up
- Getting lost or being scared at the school's size
- Not having the right books and equipment
- Not coping with the work
- How to do their homework
- Not being sure where to go for help
- Coping with so many different teachers
- Not understanding what the teacher wants them to do
- Getting into trouble

How you can help your child start well:

Reassure them - how they are feeling is how many people feel at the start of secondary school. In most cases most of these concerns disappear after a couple of weeks. However, if they do not it is worth contacting your child's form tutor.



REMEMBER THAT:

If they are concerned it is a positive thing - it shows that they care and want to do well.

Always trust your judgement - you know your child best - but also don't step in too quickly. Situations often resolve themselves given a little time and a key feature of secondary school life is growing independence.

A useful mantra is:

Don't do anything regularly for your child which they are capable of doing for themselves.

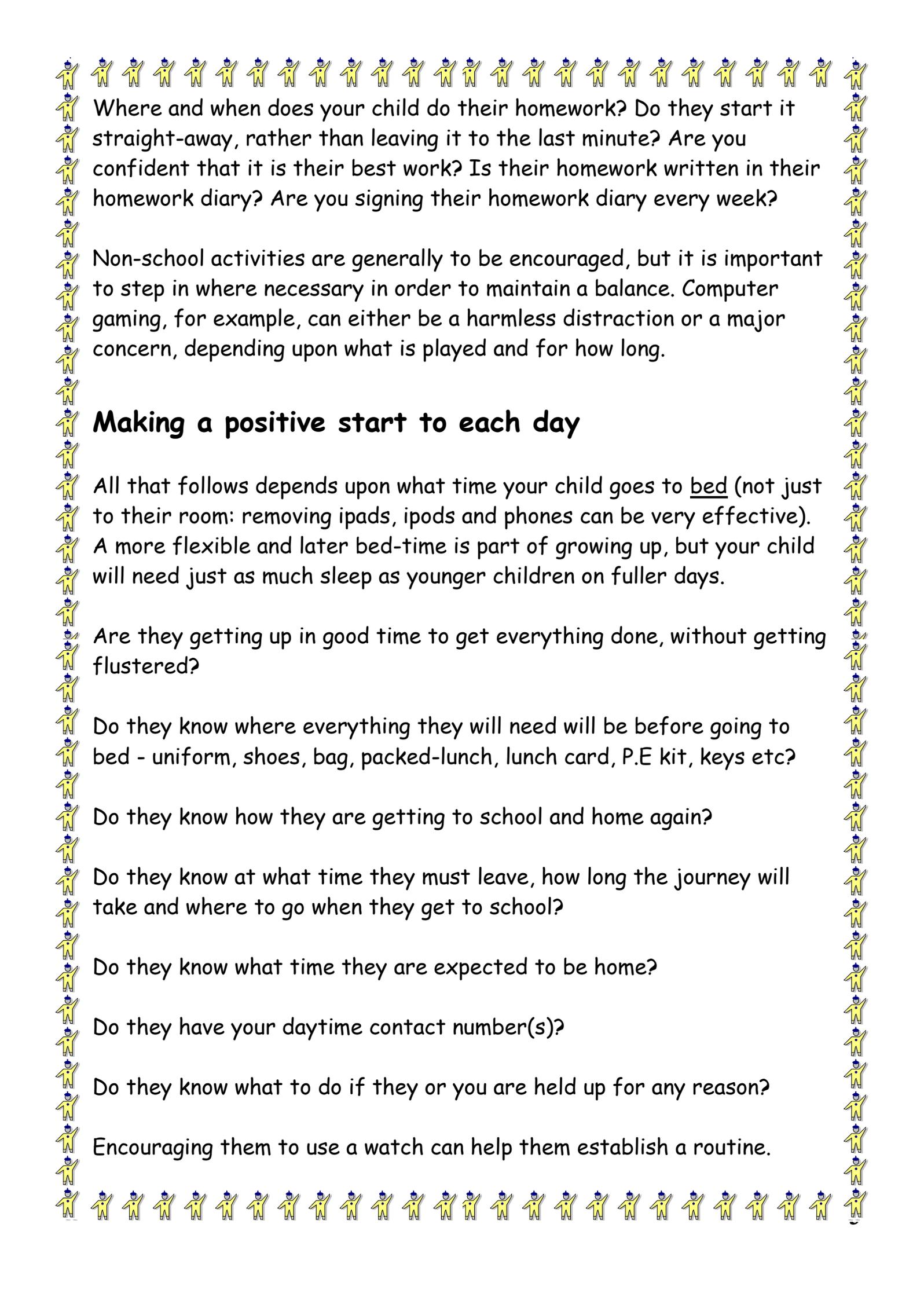
Stress that although it can be intimidating at first, there are many more children in Year 7 with whom to make friends than there were in Year 6. Reassure them if existing friends are spending time with others - it doesn't mean they no longer like them. Encourage them to take an interest in these new people too.

Forming positive habits and routines

Help to develop positive habits and routines in your child right from the start. These can be very powerful forces for success. Without attention, negative habits and routines may grow which can be hard to break. Positive thoughts are likely to lead to positive outcomes.

Our school uniform is straight-forward, but it is important not to allow your child to accessorise it. Manufacturers may push the boundaries in terms of what is acceptable. Please use your good judgement here.

Bag packing and unpacking at home are very important routines. Has your child somewhere specific to store spare books? When do they pack their bag for the next day? Have they looked at the correct week and day on their timetable? Is their school bag large enough?



Where and when does your child do their homework? Do they start it straight-away, rather than leaving it to the last minute? Are you confident that it is their best work? Is their homework written in their homework diary? Are you signing their homework diary every week?

Non-school activities are generally to be encouraged, but it is important to step in where necessary in order to maintain a balance. Computer gaming, for example, can either be a harmless distraction or a major concern, depending upon what is played and for how long.

Making a positive start to each day

All that follows depends upon what time your child goes to bed (not just to their room: removing ipads, ipods and phones can be very effective). A more flexible and later bed-time is part of growing up, but your child will need just as much sleep as younger children on fuller days.

Are they getting up in good time to get everything done, without getting flustered?

Do they know where everything they will need will be before going to bed - uniform, shoes, bag, packed-lunch, lunch card, P.E kit, keys etc?

Do they know how they are getting to school and home again?

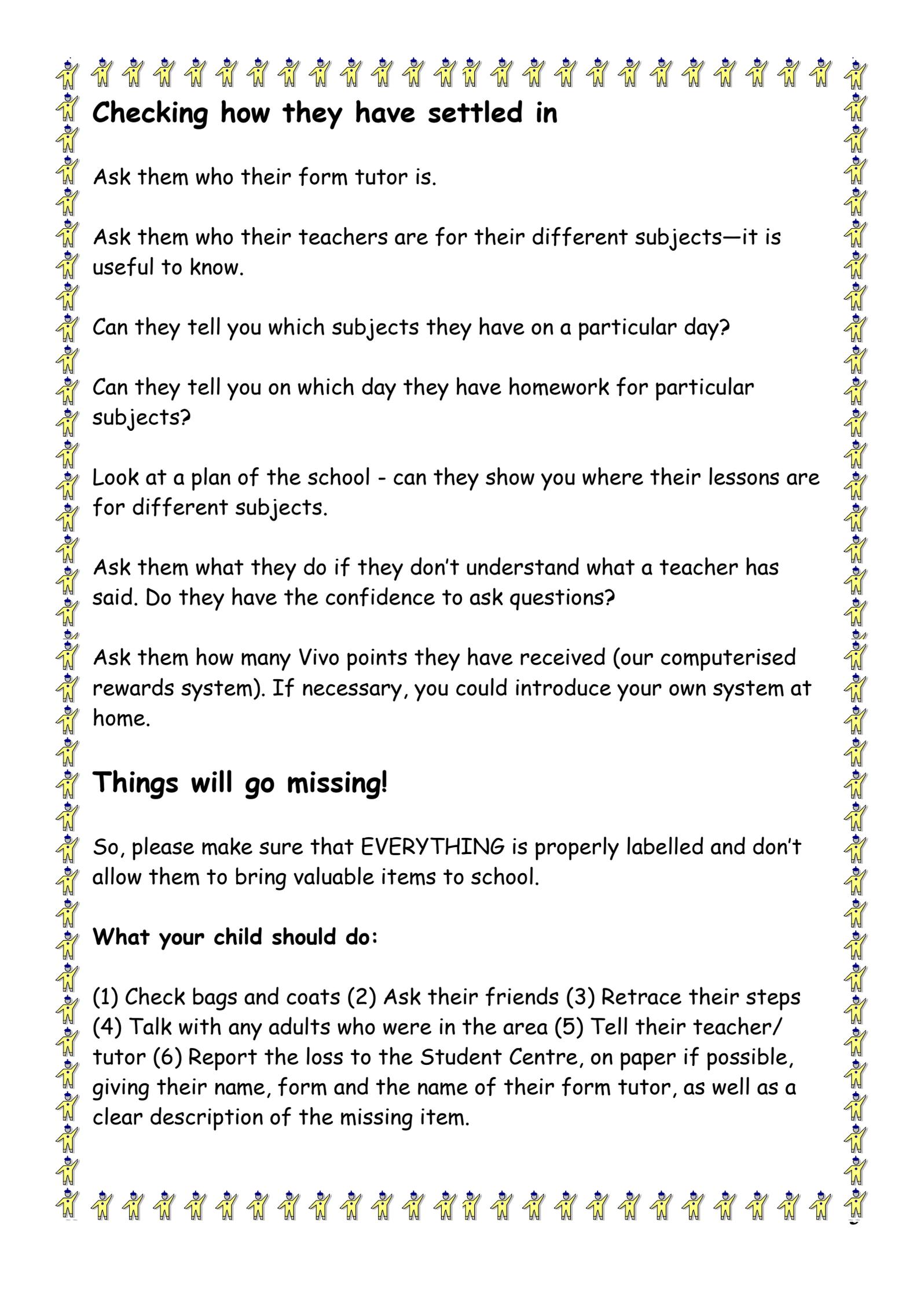
Do they know at what time they must leave, how long the journey will take and where to go when they get to school?

Do they know what time they are expected to be home?

Do they have your daytime contact number(s)?

Do they know what to do if they or you are held up for any reason?

Encouraging them to use a watch can help them establish a routine.



Checking how they have settled in

Ask them who their form tutor is.

Ask them who their teachers are for their different subjects—it is useful to know.

Can they tell you which subjects they have on a particular day?

Can they tell you on which day they have homework for particular subjects?

Look at a plan of the school - can they show you where their lessons are for different subjects.

Ask them what they do if they don't understand what a teacher has said. Do they have the confidence to ask questions?

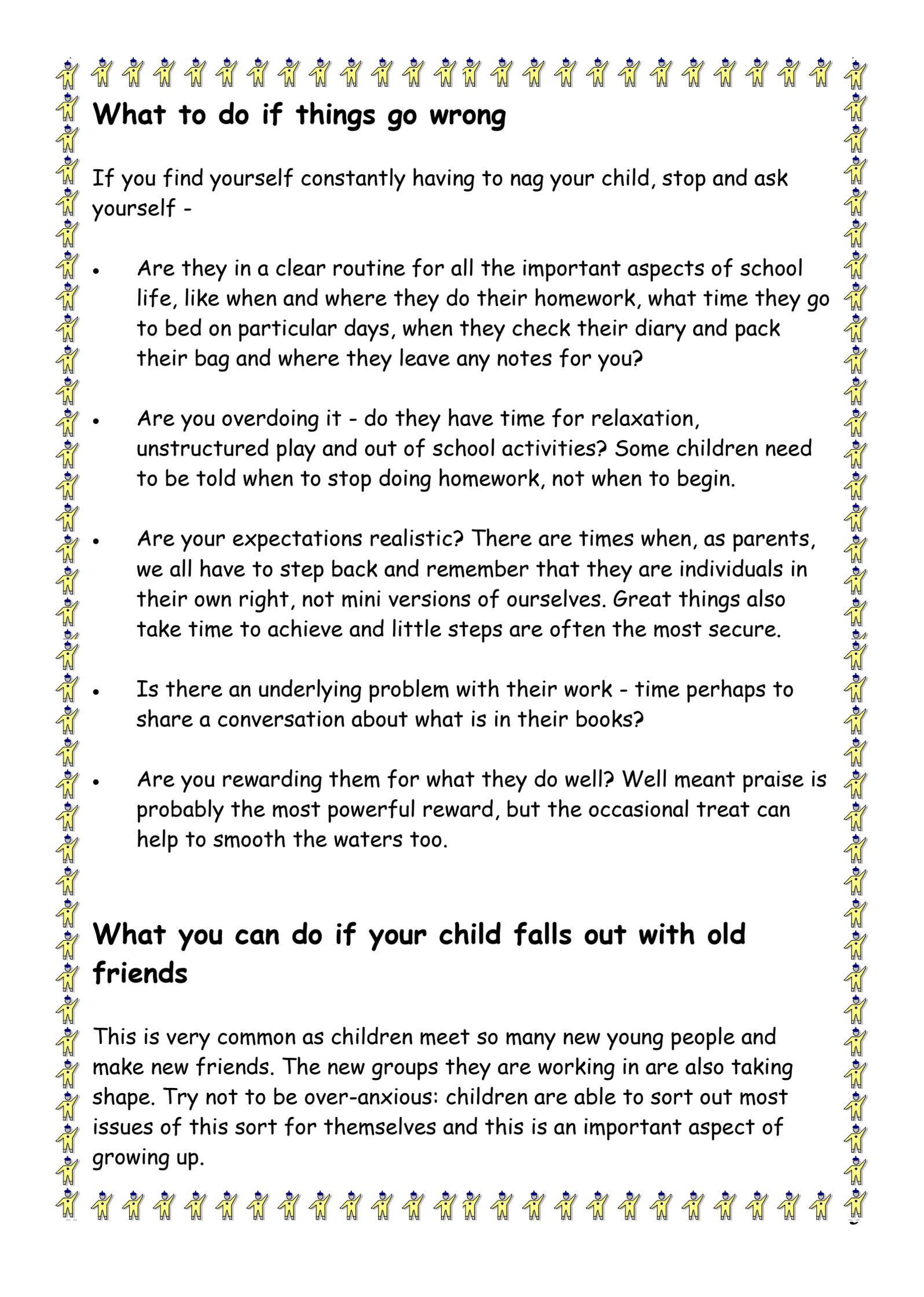
Ask them how many Vivo points they have received (our computerised rewards system). If necessary, you could introduce your own system at home.

Things will go missing!

So, please make sure that EVERYTHING is properly labelled and don't allow them to bring valuable items to school.

What your child should do:

(1) Check bags and coats (2) Ask their friends (3) Retrace their steps (4) Talk with any adults who were in the area (5) Tell their teacher/ tutor (6) Report the loss to the Student Centre, on paper if possible, giving their name, form and the name of their form tutor, as well as a clear description of the missing item.



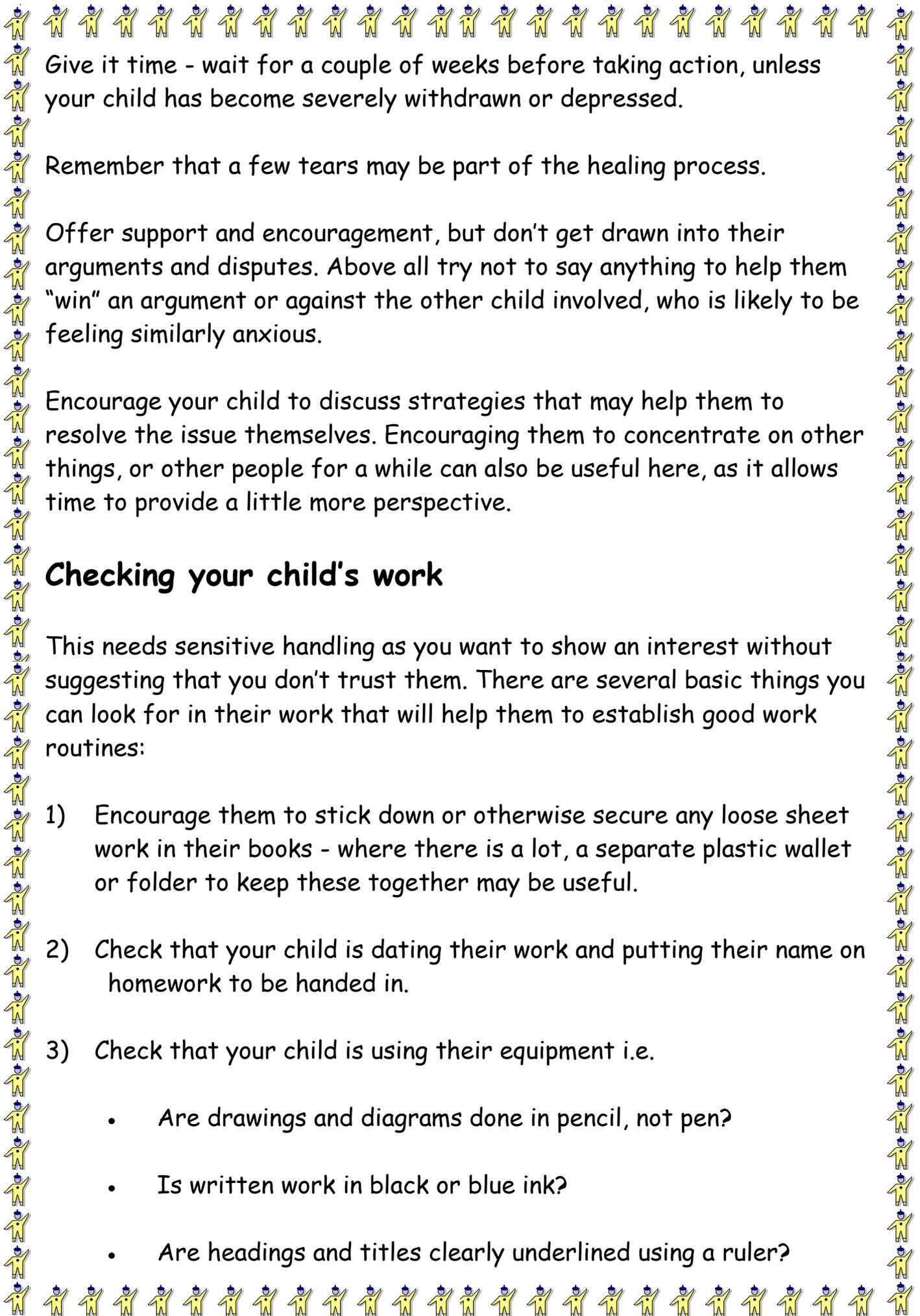
What to do if things go wrong

If you find yourself constantly having to nag your child, stop and ask yourself -

- Are they in a clear routine for all the important aspects of school life, like when and where they do their homework, what time they go to bed on particular days, when they check their diary and pack their bag and where they leave any notes for you?
- Are you overdoing it - do they have time for relaxation, unstructured play and out of school activities? Some children need to be told when to stop doing homework, not when to begin.
- Are your expectations realistic? There are times when, as parents, we all have to step back and remember that they are individuals in their own right, not mini versions of ourselves. Great things also take time to achieve and little steps are often the most secure.
- Is there an underlying problem with their work - time perhaps to share a conversation about what is in their books?
- Are you rewarding them for what they do well? Well meant praise is probably the most powerful reward, but the occasional treat can help to smooth the waters too.

What you can do if your child falls out with old friends

This is very common as children meet so many new young people and make new friends. The new groups they are working in are also taking shape. Try not to be over-anxious: children are able to sort out most issues of this sort for themselves and this is an important aspect of growing up.



Give it time - wait for a couple of weeks before taking action, unless your child has become severely withdrawn or depressed.

Remember that a few tears may be part of the healing process.

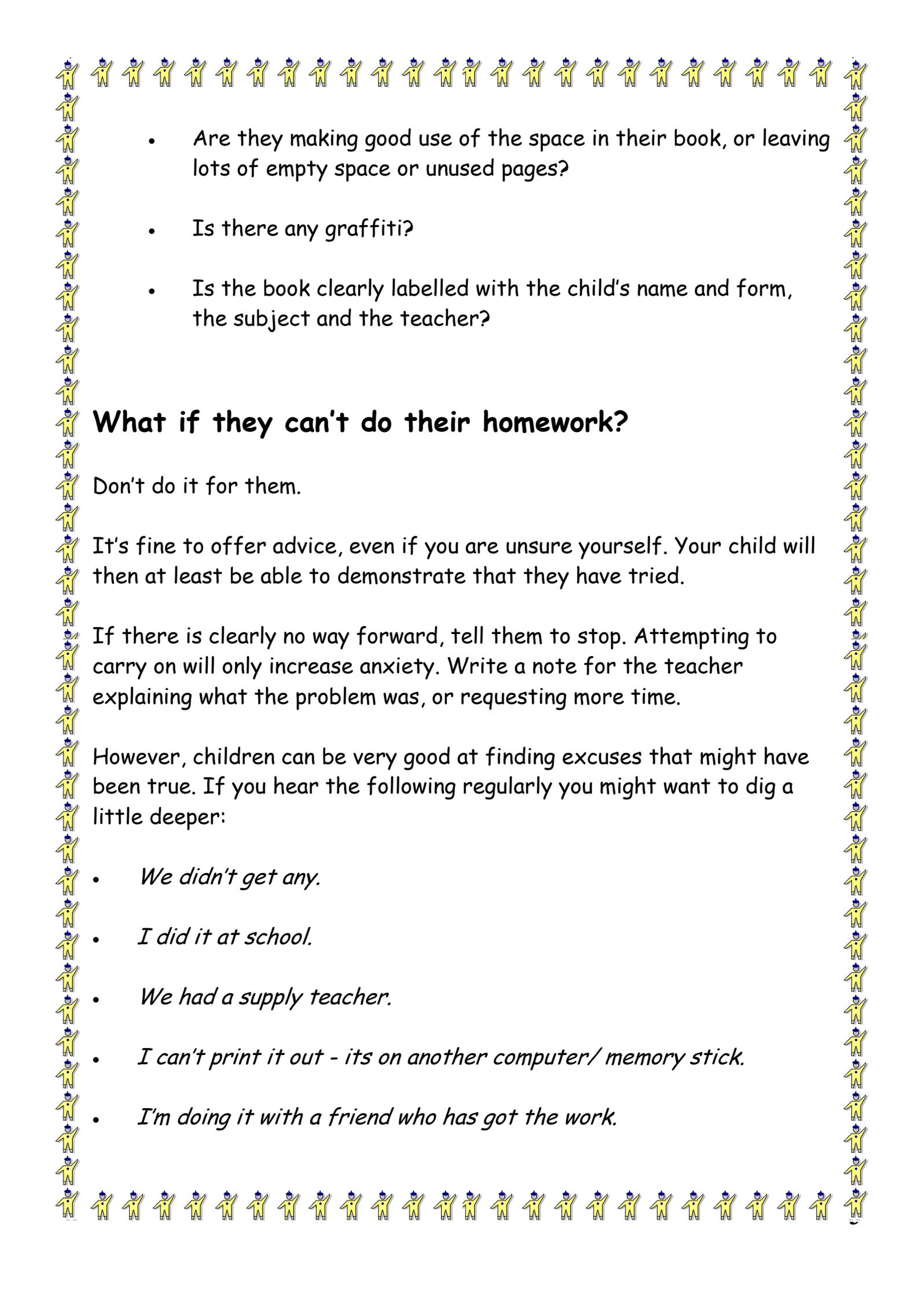
Offer support and encouragement, but don't get drawn into their arguments and disputes. Above all try not to say anything to help them "win" an argument or against the other child involved, who is likely to be feeling similarly anxious.

Encourage your child to discuss strategies that may help them to resolve the issue themselves. Encouraging them to concentrate on other things, or other people for a while can also be useful here, as it allows time to provide a little more perspective.

Checking your child's work

This needs sensitive handling as you want to show an interest without suggesting that you don't trust them. There are several basic things you can look for in their work that will help them to establish good work routines:

- 1) Encourage them to stick down or otherwise secure any loose sheet work in their books - where there is a lot, a separate plastic wallet or folder to keep these together may be useful.
- 2) Check that your child is dating their work and putting their name on homework to be handed in.
- 3) Check that your child is using their equipment i.e.
 - Are drawings and diagrams done in pencil, not pen?
 - Is written work in black or blue ink?
 - Are headings and titles clearly underlined using a ruler?

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- Are they making good use of the space in their book, or leaving lots of empty space or unused pages?
 - Is there any graffiti?
 - Is the book clearly labelled with the child's name and form, the subject and the teacher?

What if they can't do their homework?

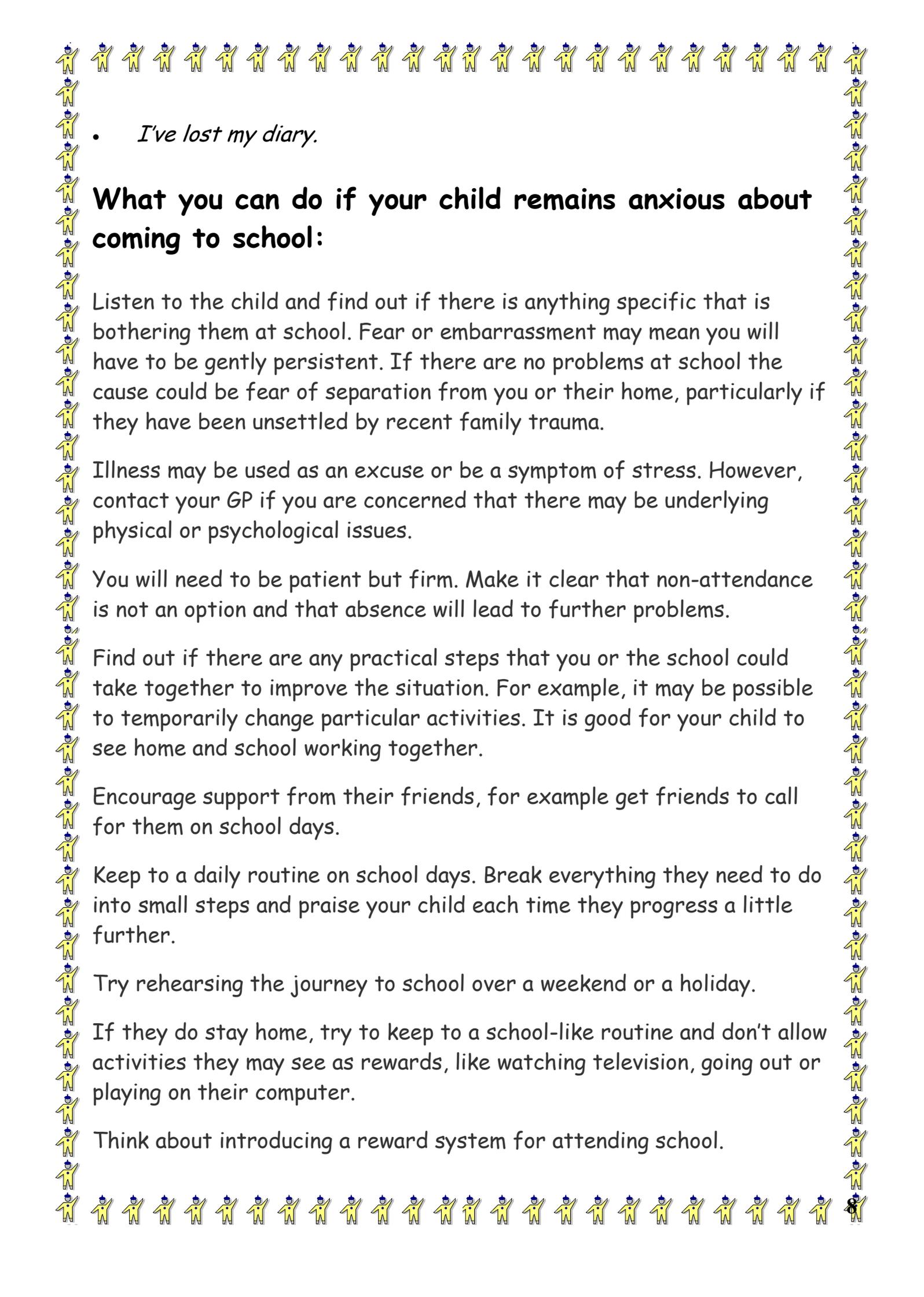
Don't do it for them.

It's fine to offer advice, even if you are unsure yourself. Your child will then at least be able to demonstrate that they have tried.

If there is clearly no way forward, tell them to stop. Attempting to carry on will only increase anxiety. Write a note for the teacher explaining what the problem was, or requesting more time.

However, children can be very good at finding excuses that might have been true. If you hear the following regularly you might want to dig a little deeper:

- *We didn't get any.*
- *I did it at school.*
- *We had a supply teacher.*
- *I can't print it out - its on another computer/ memory stick.*
- *I'm doing it with a friend who has got the work.*

- 
- *I've lost my diary.*

What you can do if your child remains anxious about coming to school:

Listen to the child and find out if there is anything specific that is bothering them at school. Fear or embarrassment may mean you will have to be gently persistent. If there are no problems at school the cause could be fear of separation from you or their home, particularly if they have been unsettled by recent family trauma.

Illness may be used as an excuse or be a symptom of stress. However, contact your GP if you are concerned that there may be underlying physical or psychological issues.

You will need to be patient but firm. Make it clear that non-attendance is not an option and that absence will lead to further problems.

Find out if there are any practical steps that you or the school could take together to improve the situation. For example, it may be possible to temporarily change particular activities. It is good for your child to see home and school working together.

Encourage support from their friends, for example get friends to call for them on school days.

Keep to a daily routine on school days. Break everything they need to do into small steps and praise your child each time they progress a little further.

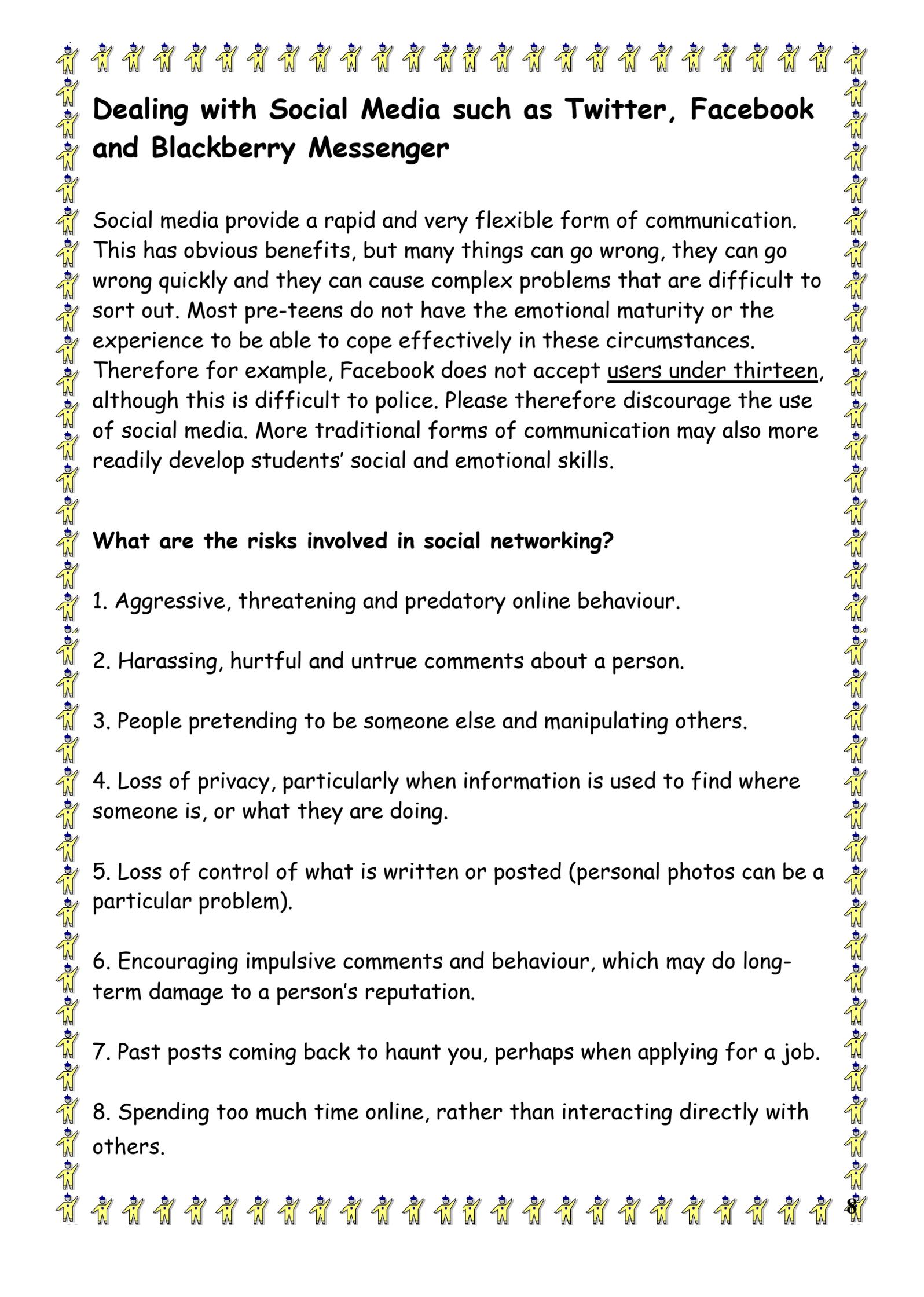
Try rehearsing the journey to school over a weekend or a holiday.

If they do stay home, try to keep to a school-like routine and don't allow activities they may see as rewards, like watching television, going out or playing on their computer.

Think about introducing a reward system for attending school.

Example Planner:

Task	MON	TUES	WED	THUR	FRI
Before school:					
Wash/shower					
Getting dressed					
Breakfast					
Lunch money/ card					
Check timetable					
Check bag the night before					
Leave house at					
Catch the bus/ taxi/lift etc.					
After school:					
Hang up school uniform					
Empty school bag					
Pass on any notes or letters					
Books, kit, ingredients in for the next day					
Check for homework					
Complete homework: 1. 2.					



Dealing with Social Media such as Twitter, Facebook and Blackberry Messenger

Social media provide a rapid and very flexible form of communication. This has obvious benefits, but many things can go wrong, they can go wrong quickly and they can cause complex problems that are difficult to sort out. Most pre-teens do not have the emotional maturity or the experience to be able to cope effectively in these circumstances.

Therefore for example, Facebook does not accept users under thirteen, although this is difficult to police. Please therefore discourage the use of social media. More traditional forms of communication may also more readily develop students' social and emotional skills.

What are the risks involved in social networking?

1. Aggressive, threatening and predatory online behaviour.
2. Harassing, hurtful and untrue comments about a person.
3. People pretending to be someone else and manipulating others.
4. Loss of privacy, particularly when information is used to find where someone is, or what they are doing.
5. Loss of control of what is written or posted (personal photos can be a particular problem).
6. Encouraging impulsive comments and behaviour, which may do long-term damage to a person's reputation.
7. Past posts coming back to haunt you, perhaps when applying for a job.
8. Spending too much time online, rather than interacting directly with others.