‘You just have to learn to adapt’ – Parents perceptions and experiences of their child starting school

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Research has tended to focus on children’s experiences of starting school but how does it affect parents? This paper will address this question by highlighting the changes and experiences that parents may go through when their child becomes old enough to start formal schooling. Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) ecological model was employed to gain a clearer and richer insight into this educational transition from the point of view of parents and care-givers. The research focussed upon documenting the experiences and level of participation of parent’s during the first year of their child starting formal schooling. An important finding that emerged from this project was that this journey can be a negative and ‘lonely’ experience for some parents. Therefore, this paper will conclude that a system needs to be put into place that will help parents cope with this transition, with a design that will ultimately allow them to learn to adapt to their new roles with greater ease than is currently occurring with the UK.