



Preparing your child for school

A Guide for Parents and Guardians...

We have put together the following information as a simple guide to how you can best prepare your child for this exciting time in their lives!

Promoting Independence

Your child will benefit from being as independent as possible when they start school. Teaching staff will always be on hand to help, but children feel a real sense of achievement when they can accomplish things by themselves! Examples include...

Dressing

- being able to put their shoes or wellies on by themselves
- being able to take off and put their jumper/cardigan on independently
- being able to put their coat on and zip it up by themselves

Not only does this help to develop independence and confidence it also means that they can get straight to their playing and learning without having to stop and ask an adult for help!

Personal hygiene

Another important part of being independent at school is being able to use the toilet independently.

- being able to sit on and use the toilet independently
- being able to wash and dry their hands
- being able to wipe and blow their nose with a tissue and how to put it in the bin

Lunch

Having lunch independently may also be new to your child.

- being able to use a knife, fork and spoon if they will be having a cooked meal
- being able to open the packets and containers of food they will be taking if they will be staying for sandwiches

Encourage them to help choose and make their lunches. Maybe they could use their new school lunchbox and water bottle when you go for a picnic in the park? This would enable them to practise opening their food and learn about their likes/dislikes and suitable items for school lunches.

Promoting Independence continued

Your child will also benefit from having experienced being away from you for short periods of time, such as going to a friend's house to play. This will really develop their confidence and independence and stand them in good stead when it comes to saying goodbye on that first morning at school.

Social Skills

Social Skills As parents and carers, you are key to instilling good behaviour in your children from the start.

- Being able to interact appropriately with other children and share resources is a key skill that will help your child when they start school.
- Play dates with other children will help to promote these skills and you could arrange these with future classmates if possible.
- During the play date, you can model social phrases such as 'my turn please' or 'let's share' and join in with pretend play to start the game off and then fade out as children get into character.



Communication and Language

Many parents worry if their child will be able to tell the teacher if they need something or if they will make friends. Good communication skills underpin these abilities.

Your child may be starting school with identified communication difficulties, or you may have concerns that have not yet been addressed.

Please share these concerns with school in any information sharing session (or when completing paperwork) with the school.

We know that parents can have a huge impact on their child's talking and listening development and the summer is a perfect time for trying out simple language boosting activities:

Listening and Attention Skills

Your child will be given many spoken instructions throughout the school day and will need to be able to shift their attention from what they are doing to listening to what the teacher is saying.

- A lovely activity to promote this is to go on a 'listening walk' where your child listens for all the sounds around them in the park or town centre.
- You could also jot down all the sounds your child notices and talk about these back at home to retell the journey based on the sounds they heard.

Understanding Spoken Instructions

Classroom instructions often contain several parts for children to remember. A simple game of 'Simon Says' during long car journeys this summer could really help.

- Give your child an instruction to do, like 'Simon says put your finger on your nose' and see if they can follow your instruction.
- The game becomes more difficult as they are only supposed to follow your instructions if you start the sentence with 'Simon says...' Can your child listen carefully and only follow the instructions when directed?
- The game can be made more challenging by building up to instructions with two or three steps, for example 'Simon says touch your nose, then clap your hands and then put on your hands on your head!'



Narrative Skills

Children beginning school will be encouraged to use language to organise and sequence ideas and events.

- Summer days are perfect for creating a photo journal of activities. Your child can then organise pictures into the correct sequence and retell the story in their own way.
- You can model important concept words like 'first', 'last', 'next', 'before' and 'after', and the correct use of past, present and future tenses of verbs, which typically will not yet be fully developed.'

Vocabulary Development

At school, children will be expected to start extending their vocabulary, so it is a good idea to encourage your child to learn and use new words.

- You could play sorting games when packing a suitcase, as this is a great way to help word categorisation, which is important for vocabulary learning. Items can be sorted into different piles, such as clothing, toys and things for washing ourselves.
- Outdoor 'treasure hunts' work well too.
- Collecting objects found on walks in the park or on the beach, help introduce new types of vocabulary such as describing words. Treasure can also then be used to create feely bags, where objects have to be described by the way they feel before revealing what the object is.