

Preparing Your Child for School A Guide for Parents and Guardians...

The period before a child starts school for the first time can be an anxious time for parents. 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—You can help the children practise the following:

- Taking shoes on and off—Velcro makes this much easier!
- Help to get themselves dressed and undressed (this will help greatly in PE lessons!). Eg: taking on a off trousers/shorts/skirt/dress/t-shirt
- Practise helping to help take off their jumper or pull arms out—jumpers are tricky!
- Helping to put on and take off their coat. Can they do the zip themselves?
- Practise using the toilet independently, including washing and drying their hands.
- Practise to blow/wipe their nose on a tissue and put it in the bin, washing hands after.
- Practise using a knife, fork and spoon when eating a hot meal (particularly important if they are going to have hot school meals). Beginning to cut softer foods to eat.
- If having a packed lunch, practising opening containers and packets.

Social Skills—it is good to practise the following:

- Sharing resources (toys)
- Talking to other children appropriately eg: my turn please

Communication and Language—to help develop this you can:

- Encourage your child to tell an adult if they need something.
- Spend time listening and talking to each other at home. Children soak up the language around them.
- Keep it simple if needed, using too many words can cause overload.

Narrative Skills—encouraging the following will help:

- Encourage the children to talk about what they have done and retell what they did or a story in their own way.
- Adults need to model this lots—talk about your day or something you have done. Use words like first and use correct past/present/future tense. Eg: First I went to the park.

Listening and Attention Skills—to help develop listening you could:

- Listen to each other at home.
- Show them how to listen to instructions. Children may be very focused on the activity or game they are playing, see if they can stop and listen to you when you begin to give an instruction.
- Go on a listening walk nearby and talk about what the children can hear, help them to become turned in to the environment around them.

Understanding Spoken Instructions—you can help children listen and follow instructions by:

- Play games such as Simon Says eg: Simon says put your finger on your nose. Develop this by adding more instructions eg: Simon says touch your nose, then clap your hands and then put on your hands on your head!

Vocabulary Development—to help develop this you could:

- Explain new words to children when you come across them—don't assume they know what you mean or what a word is! If they are interested, talk about and look at new words.
- Outdoor treasure hunts are great for this too. Collect objects on walks and talk about what you find. You can introduce new words to describe the things you find.

Reading and Writing Teachers do not expect children to know their alphabet, hold a pencil properly or be able to write letters when they start school

You could help your child by doing the following, if and when they are ready only:

- See if they can hear rhyming words—sing rhyming songs, read books with rhyme in them and talk about words!
- Practise listening and hearing ‘sounds’ in words—play Simon Says games eg: Can you **h**-op, can they hear the word you are making?
- Listen and share lots of songs and books
- Share a love of books and encourage the children to show an interest in print around them eg: labels, signs
- Encourage the children to look at and recognise their name—even just the first letter
- Practise ‘finger gym’ type activities to help develop fine motor skills—this is important before writing! See separate sheet for ideas to build finger strength
- Encourage them to ‘draw’ and make marks on paper. Get the children to talk about what they are eg: (a line) “that is my house”

Maths Teachers do not expect children to know lots of number or be able to write them when they start school.

You could help your child by doing the following, if and when they are ready only:

- Have lots of fun counting verbally! If confident they can try this forward and backwards!
- When at home or out, encourage children to count things around them eg: how many bricks, stairs, cars, trees etc Show them how to point or move each object when they count
- Listen and share lots of counting songs—these are really useful at developing children’s understanding of number.
- Allow them to begin to hear shape names and together spot shapes around them eg: a clock is round—circle
- Encourage the children to spot patterns around them.
- When you are playing together, begin to talk about the size and shape of objects with them eg: big car, little car, round ball, square table.
- When out and about or at home, encourage the children to spot numbers in their environment. Eg: On the TV, the oven.

Other things to think about...

- Use every day experiences as learning opportunities, for example take your child with you to the shops. They can learn about: reading and writing as you write and follow a shopping list; practise their listening and memory skills and extend their vocabulary by helping you to collect named items; learn about numbers, counting and money when helping you to pay for items; learn about their local environment on the way to and from the shops and so on.
- Encourage your child to help you with simple jobs around the home, for example gardening, tidying up, baking and cooking. This will help them to develop coordination and listening skills as well as independence and self-confidence.
- Explore different ways of being creative, for example: colouring and drawing with pens, pencils and crayons, painting; cutting and sticking materials together; building models with ‘junk’ materials like cardboard boxes or construction toys like Lego; exploring sounds made by instruments or ‘noise makers’ (for example rice in an empty yoghurt pot) and listening to and moving to music.
- Remember that everything your child wears or takes into school needs to be named – this includes coats, scarves, gloves, hats, shoes.. Also help your child to know which shoe goes on to which foot by drawing half a picture (like a smiley face) into the left shoe and the other half of the picture into the right shoe – when the shoes are placed correctly the picture will look complete! Ask your child to help name their uniform/clothes and school equipment like drinks bottle and lunch box. This will aid name recognition and help them to identify which things are theirs! (Picture labels are great for this and anything with your child’s name on in school will have a picture associated with it too)
- Children will always be offered a fruit as a snack during the day. Encourage your child to try a range of different fruit to explore their likes and dislikes and also practise peeling bananas and oranges.
- Encourage your child to be active. Help them to explore climbing equipment in a local park, play running games, practise riding a bike or a scooter and play simple games with a ball.
- At the beginning of the Autumn Term we offer a home visit which allows your child’s class teacher and teaching assistant to visit you and your child in your own home setting. This enables your child to meet their new teacher in a setting where they feel more secure and relaxed. Don’t worry about these meetings – it is just a chance for staff to begin to get to know your child, collect any further information about your child and answer any questions you or your child has. More information will follow about this.