

Starting School



This booklet is designed to help you by suggesting ways you can help your child be ready for starting school.



Finding out about school

Starting school is a big step for children and it takes time to get used to it. Take a walk past school so that your child gets used to the route. Point out the entrance, school gates, playground etc.

Read stories about school for example:

Starting School—Janet and Allan Ahlberg

Spot Goes to School –Eric Hill

Rosie's First Day at School—Rosemary Stones

Talk about school using 'school' language. For example hall, dining room, P.E, cloakroom and explain to your child what these words mean.

Use correct language with your child as they handle their uniform e.g. P.E kit, pumps

Talk about when you went to school –the friends you made, the things you liked best, the games you played and the teachers you remember. Maybe find a photograph of you when you were at school.

The first few weeks

Keep to routines that allow your child to rest and have free play after school.

Keep to bedtime routines. Tired, grumpy children are harder to manage. On average, children of four years of age need around 11 1/2 hours of sleep each night.

Finally, if you do have any worries or concerns, do not be afraid to talk to your child's teacher—we are here to help!



The first day

Set your alarm early for the first day. Even the most organised families need extra time to get ready for the big event.

Your feelings will guide your child's emotions. If you approach your child's first day with confidence that they will be fine and use positive words about school, their anxieties will be reduced.

Saying goodbye at school may be very emotional for you both but try to send your child off with a smile and a wave along with the reassurance that you'll be there to collect them later.

At the end of the day

Make sure you are a little early to collect your child at the end of the first few days, even a few minutes late can seem like an eternity for a waiting child.

Your child will probably be tired and hungry so a snack and some quiet time will be just what they need. Some children will want to talk about their day as soon as you pick them up. Some children however will want a bit of time to themselves before sharing their news.



Practising for school

There is lots of practising you can do with your child to make sure they are ready for when the big day comes. If you can do this in a fun and gentle way, it will make the transition to school that little bit easier for them.

Even if you know your child can manage these things perfectly well it will help your child to feel confident if they have practised at home.



Toileting

Make sure your child knows they can go to the toilet whenever they need to. They also need to know they can ask for help when they need it, however it is helpful to think about how you can make things easy for your child.

For example, choosing trousers/skirts with elasticated waists.

Many four year olds still call a parent to have their bottom wiped however they won't be able to do this at school. It is important to teach them to do it themselves with confidence.

Shoes and Clothing

Show your child how to tell the left shoe from the right shoe (you can mark them with an arrow) and practise putting them on and taking them off. Avoid shoes with laces.

Practice getting dressed and undressed into school uniform and P.E. kit. This is a good chance to make sure it all fits. It will also help with getting ready in the morning.

Put your child's name in everything and explain that their clothes are labelled so they can be sure which jumper/skirt/t-shirt is theirs.

Practise leaving clothes folded and kept together when taking them off. This will help your child to find their own clothes and will also help them to start to take responsibility for their own possessions.



Lunch

If your child will have packed lunches have a few practice pack-lunch days. Pack a lunch as you will for school. Make it fun by having it in the garden or having an indoor picnic. Make sure they can open and close the box themselves and unwrap their food and manage their drinks bottle or carton.

If your child will have school dinners, practice that instead. Get them to come up to you in the kitchen, collect their lunch on a tray and practice carrying it over to the table. It would also be helpful to practice using a knife and fork.

