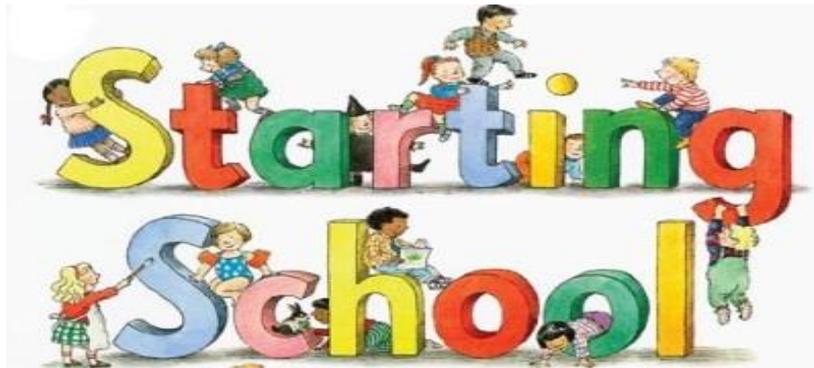


## Getting ready for school



It's nearly time to start school and it is understandable for parents and children to be a little anxious. However, there is lots you can do to best prepare your child for this exciting time in their lives.

### Promoting independence

Your child will really benefit from being as independent as possible when they start school. Of course teaching staff will be on hand to help, but children feel a real sense of achievement when they can accomplish things by themselves.

Examples include:

- ✚ Washing and drying hands
- ✚ Wiping nose and putting the tissue in the bin
- ✚ Put on and fasten coat and shoes
- ✚ Using the toilet independently
- ✚ Dress and undress ready for P.E

### Social skills

Being able to interact appropriately with other children and share resources is a key skill that will help your child when they start school.

Examples include:

- ✚ Take turns when playing simple games and sharing toys
- ✚ Join in with games and activities with other people

### 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. Encourage your child to listen to stories, songs and rhymes, and to ask and answer simple questions.

## 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. 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' is great for your child to follow. Give them two part instructions, "Simon says put your finger on your nose and clap your hands."

## 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. Outdoor treasure hunts are a great way to introduce new types of vocabulary such as describing words. Treasure bags or feely bags where objects have to be described by the way they feel before revealing what the object is.

## Narrative Skills

At school, children will be encouraged to use language to organize and sequence ideas and events. You could create a photo journal of events and activities over a period of a few weeks and then sit with your child and ask them to organize the photos into the correct sequence and retell the events in their own way. You can then model important concept skills like, 'first,' 'last,' 'next,' 'before,' 'after', and the correct use of past, present and future tenses of verbs.

## Reading and Writing

Teachers do not expect children to know their alphabet or to be able to write sentences when they start school. A good foundation in sound awareness skills, such as rhyming and identifying what sound a word begins with, would be helpful. Use the short videos we have uploaded onto Family to practise the sounds and identify new rhyming words.

Encourage your child to develop an interest in lots of different forms of text, whether that is labels on your food, street names when you go for your walks, text on posters etc. Consider reading books about 'Starting School,' with your child. A list of recommended books is included in this pack. Use these to discuss all the fun activities your child will be doing at school.

'Name Treasure Hunts' can be a fun way of getting your child to recognize their name. Most children will recognize their own names from the activities we do at nursery, but this is a fun activity to expand on this. Write your child's name and those of other family members on

pieces of paper and hide them around the house. Encourage your child to find them all. This is a good way to introduce other simple words and encourage your child to look carefully at each letter.

A good foundation to being able to write is to develop your child's fine motor skills. This is because good fine motor skills enable your child to hold a pencil firmly as they write. Threading is a great way to develop fine motor skills, whether it is with beads or buttons or making necklaces out of dried pasta. Weaving wool around a cardboard template or strips of card through each other are also other simple activities you could do at home.

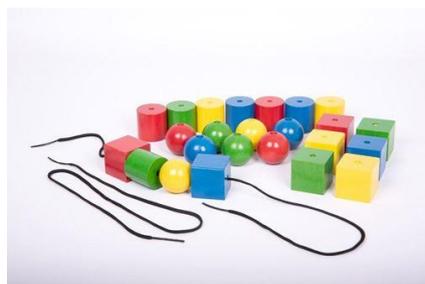
When your child is ready and interested in writing, encourage them to write simple words or sentences. Initially, begin by focusing on your child's name as this will also help with reading and name recognition. Encourage them to write their name on greeting cards or artwork they have done. Ensure that you appropriately use upper and lower case letters.



## Mathematical Development

### Counting verbally

Being able to count verbally to at least 20 will be of great benefit to your child starting school. Practise counting up to 20 and backwards too. One to one counting can be done incidentally throughout the day, for example counting steps as your child climbs the stairs. You can count anything, e.g. count the lampposts you see on your walks, how many houses have white doors, how many pieces of fruit are left in the fruit bowl, how many pencils fit in the pencil case etc. Encourage reliable one to one counting by showing your child how to point to each item as they count, or to move the items as they count, so they do not count each item more than once. This will help your child to understand what numbers mean. Ask



them to find the same amount of different items, e.g. find three spoons, three bricks, three bananas. You can also sing counting songs and number rhymes.

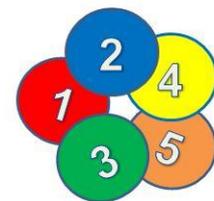
### Shape, size and quantity

You could go on a shape hunt to see how many circles, squares, rectangles and triangles your child can find, e.g. square windows, circular plates, rectangular posters etc.

You could look for patterns too. Talk about the shape and the size of objects, e.g. big car, little car, round ball, square table, rectangular book and ask your child questions such as "Can you pass me the biggest box?" or "Which is the smallest shoe?" Play with blocks and encourage your child to think about size, colour and shape. Also play with containers and ask your child, "How many socks can you fit in the box?" "Which container holds the most or the least, sand/water?" etc.

### Number recognition

A number hunt is a fun way to look for numerals on doors, on clocks, cars, signs, at the shops or on the television. You could also play 'I spy' but with numbers.



## Other things to bear in mind

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, crayons
- ✚ Cutting and sticking materials together
- ✚ Building models with recycled materials like cardboard boxes or with construction toys such as Lego
- ✚ Listen to and move to music, and explore sounds made by instruments and 'noise makers' (for example uncooked rice in an empty yoghurt pot)

Remember that everything your child wears and takes to school should be named, this includes coats, scarves, gloves, hats and shoes. Consider buying iron on name labels as a quick way to name everything at once or use a permanent laundry marker. When naming shoes, also help your child to know which shoe goes on 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!

Most schools offer 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.

It may help your child to choose a small toy they would like to take with them to school (ensure that it is named). This can act as a comfort for your child and also encourage them to talk to others. Please check your child's school rules before agreeing this can happen.

## Starting school book list

You might like to read some of these books with your child to prepare them for the first few days at school.



***Starting School*** by Janet and Allan Ahlberg

***I Am Too Absolutely Small for School*** by Lauren Child

***Topsy and Tim starting School*** by Jean Adamson

***Starting School*** by Caryn Jenner

***Going to School*** by Anna Civardi

***Come to School Too, Blue Kangaroo!*** By Emma Chichester Clark

***Billy and the Big New School*** by Laurence and Catherine Anholt

***Chu's First Day at School*** by Neil Gaiman

***Harry and the Dinosaurs Go to School*** by Ian Whybrow

***Lucy and Tom Go to School*** by Shirley Hughes

***Where's My Peg? My First Day at School*** by Caryl Hart

***Lucky Wish Mouse: Starting School*** by Clara Vulliamy





**Max and Millie Start School** by Janet and Allan Ahlberg

**My First Day at School** by Roger Priddy

**Spot Goes to School** by Eric Hill

**Betsy Goes to School** by Helen Stephens

### Getting Ready for School Checklist

You might find the checklist below useful, although every child develops at a different rate, so please don't worry if you can't 'tick' everything off the list.

| I can.....             | I can.....               | I can.....      |
|------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------|
| Recognise my name      | Hold my pencil carefully | Put on my socks |
| Write the first letter | Draw a face              | Find my shoes   |
| Copy my name           | Colour in carefully      | Put on my shoes |
| Write my name          | Name the colours I use   | Do up my shoes  |

| I can.....            | I can.....              | I can.....               |
|-----------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|
| Count from 1 to 5     | Sing simple rhymes      | Find my coat             |
| Recognise each number | Sing and clap to a song | Put my arms into my coat |
| Place 1 to 5 in order | Tap a beat              | Do a zip up to the top   |
| Write 1 to 5 in order | Move to music           | Do buttons               |

| I can.....                           | I can.....                  | I can.....              |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------|
| Eat with a knife and fork            | Tidy away my toys           | Say please when I ask   |
| Pour myself a drink                  | Clear away things I've used | Say thank you           |
| Taste different foods                | Put my clothes away         | Ask to go to the toilet |
| Wash my hands before and after meals | Help at home                | Wait my turn to talk    |

| I can.....                      | I can.....               | I can.....                       |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Clean myself                    | Use the stairs hand rail | Cut along a line                 |
| Wash my hands                   | Hold hands on the street | Make 'snips' into paper          |
| Dry my hands                    | Take turns when playing  | Cut out a shape                  |
| Go to the toilet when I need to | Share toys with a friend | Cut out shapes to make a picture |



Finally remember that during the first few days, some children may be a little tearful when you collect them from school. This is usually because they are rather tired after a long day and when they see you again, they realise they have missed you.

It is natural to want to ask your child about their day, but you may find that your child is reluctant to answer questions. This is very common and is generally because they have been so busy all day that they may just need to switch off for a while and have some quiet time. It is best not to bombard your child with questions, but instead, let them slowly share their day once they have had time to relax a little.

Tiredness can also affect your child's behaviour. You may find they seem a bit grumpy or irritable when they get home. This usually settles after a few days.

Some children may be extra hungry and thirsty when they come home from school. You may wish to give your child a snack and drink after school.

Starting school can be a big change for some children, but also the beginning of an exciting journey. All the experiences and activities at nursery and at home will have prepared them well.

Feedback from parents and teachers about children who started school last year was that those who had attended our nursery were very well prepared. They were amazed at how quickly they settled into school life.