



## PREPARING YOUR CHILD FOR STARTING PRIMARY SCHOOL

Starting Primary School is an exciting time for children and their families, but it can be daunting too – it may be particularly so for some children this year, after having spent a long time away from Nursery, at home with their close family members.

The following information, which we normally deliver through a Parents' Education Workshop this month, will hopefully help you to prepare your child for the transition to Primary School after the Summer break.

### A successful transition to Primary School will enable your child to –

- develop positive attitudes and feelings about school and learning
- establish supportive social ties with staff and peers
- feel comfortable and more secure in their new classroom, and less anxious, lonely or upset
- be interested and motivated to learn and take part in all activities
- achieve and progress their learning each year

### DON'T WORRY...

- Your child doesn't need to be able to read, write or do sums before they start school!

What is more important is that you and your child continue to have lots of fun together in the next few months – share stories, sing songs, play games and talk about *anything* and *everything*!

## Some things to try ...

### Chat to them about starting school

What do they think it will be like?

What are they most looking forward to?

Is there anything they are worried about?

- Look at the school prospectus, information you have received and the school website. Talk about the pictures.
- Find photos of yourself at school and chat about happy memories you have from your school days.
- Visit the school with your child, talk about it when driving or walking past.
- Read books together about starting school or watch stories online.
- If your child seems anxious about starting school, try to focus on the things they will like best – maybe the sandpit, playhouse or making new friends.
- Have some friends who will be starting school at the same time come over to play.
- Practise the morning routine, including getting ready and having breakfast in time to leave!
- Practise the school run so that you are both prepared for the school morning journey.
- Have everything ready the night before, to keep mornings as calm as possible!
- Talk to them about the Nursery School Year being over, the summer break and then starting their new school in September.

## Some things to avoid ...

- It's natural to feel nervous about your child starting school, but remember that your child can easily pick up on your emotions. Try to be relaxed and positive, rather than showing your own nerves.
- Try not to make comments such as "I hated school" or "I was rubbish at school", which might give your child a negative attitude!
- Try not to bombard your child with endless talk about starting school – treating it in a matter of fact way rather than focusing on the "big step ahead" will soothe an anxious child.
- Don't *over-hype* school, as your little one might feel let down or mistrustful if it doesn't live up to their expectations!
- If your child has a particular worry, talk about it with them and let their class teacher know too. Provide reassurance by discussing what to do and who to tell in certain situations.
- If your child has a favourite security toy or blanket, try to get them used to being without it during the day. Talk to the class teacher to see if your child is allowed to bring their toy or blanket, to leave at their peg or in a tray.
- If you have arranged childcare arrangements for your child, talk it through with them. If the childcare arrangement is new, try a settling-in period before the school term starts.

## BE PREPARED!

- Your child will have been developing the social and practical skills with you at home and with us here in Nursery, that they will need for succeeding at school.
- They had been used to spending time away from you and in the company of other children, taking instructions from and communicating with other adults, taking responsibility for themselves and looking after their belongings. *However* they may need time to get used to separating

from you again, after the unusual circumstances we have found ourselves in due to the pandemic. Talk to your child's P.1 teacher if you think your child may find this particularly hard, so they can best support him or her.

- If your child's special friend will not be starting their new Primary School with them, don't worry. Spending time playing in play parks or on day trips when possible over the summer, is good practice for forming new friendships.

- Teach them how to introduce themselves, as well as phrases like,

“ Can I play / join in?”

“Do you want to share?”

“Do you want to play with me?”

“What is your name?”

“My name is \_\_\_\_”

- If you already know a child who will be in your child's class, why not organise a play date with them when it is safe to do so? It will give the children a chance to get to know each other while the parents can talk through any concerns they share about their children starting Primary School!

### As the new term approaches...

- Try to establish the school routine, so that your child gets used to getting up, going to bed and having meals and snacks at the times they will on school days.
- Bath and Stories instead of tablet and TV help children to wind down before bed time!
- Make time in the evening to chat for ten minutes about your day – this can establish a good routine for talking about fun times or worries when they start school!

- Nutritious meals and lots of sleep will help them to concentrate, learn and thrive at school.
- If your child still has a nap you may want to try to start phasing this out. If you can introduce a longer day with an earlier bedtime, it helps children cope with the transition to a longer school day.

## SELF CARE SKILLS

- Some of the worries that children have starting school centre around the “What if I can’t...?”
- It will make life easier for your child in school if you can teach them to –
  - ✓ Go to the toilet
  - ✓ Wash their hands
  - ✓ Dress and Undress
  - ✓ Feed themselves
  - ✓ Use a tissue
  - ✓ Tidy Up

\*Don’t worry if your child is not secure in these self-care skills before they start! There will be staff in School to help them! The above list is just a checklist to make a start on!\*

## THE FIRST WEEK CHECKLIST

### Do you know...

- exactly where to take your child and at what time?
- where to collect them, and at what time?
- what equipment they will need for the first few days? – P.E. kit, book bag, spare clothes and so on
- where to hang their coat and P.E. kit?

- if you take your child to the classroom and settle them, or are they expected to go in on their own?

Does your child know...

- who will be picking them up each day?

**Have you...**

- named absolutely *everything*?!
- taught your child to recognise their first name and shown them where you have labelled their belongings?

### **DURING THE FIRST FEW WEEKS ...**

- Many children settle into school life easily, others will take longer.
- Don't worry if your child is tearful and clingy for a few days – this is quite normal!
- If they do cry when you are leaving, leave *quickly*. If they are finding it hard to let you leave, you staying longer will not make it easier for them!
- We PROMISE... children do settle very quickly when distracted with toys or favoured activities and with a little reassurance.
- Let them have some quiet time or a nap if they need it when they come home from school.
- Have nutritious snacks in the house, or with another carer for them to restore their energy levels when the school day is finished.
- Let your child get used to school life before introducing afterschool activities.
- Keep the first few weekends quiet too, as they will most likely need time to recharge, just as we do when we start something new!
- Keep talking to your child about their feelings about school, and put aside some special time to chat about their day.

- Some children are very enthusiastic about school at the start, but once the reality of going to school day after day sets in, can become reluctant. If this happens with your child, use a calendar with your child to help them to understand when weekends and holidays are coming up. You may want to arrange some treats for them during these times too.
- Try to establish a friendly relationship with the class teacher.
- You know your child best – if there is anything that you think might help your child settle better or sooner, suggest it!

### DON'T PANIC IF ...

- ...your child's behaviour at home changes when they first start school. Don't be surprised if they become more clingy, argumentative, lethargic, excitable or prone to tantrums for a while!
- ...your child won't talk about school! This is VERY common! It is best to let them take the lead – don't ask too many questions but receive news positively when it DOES begin to trickle out!

### AND FINALLY ...

- Please do not waste time worrying about something you are not sure of, or something personal to your child – ask the staff at your child's Primary School, or if you are more comfortable, ask us and we will try to find out for you!
- Call in and see us with your child, when restrictions have eased and they have settled in their new school. We love seeing wee ones coming back in wearing their new uniform!
- Thank you – for your support throughout the challenges of this Nursery School Year, and we would like wish you and your child all the best for your next step!

