

Helping your child in the year before school.

Pointers for parents.







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Helping your child in the year before school

This section has been written to answer some of the questions Mums, Dads and Carers ask about how they can help their children get ready for school and what they can do at home to help.

You will find lots of ideas that you can choose from. Some ideas you will be aware of already, while others may be new to you but all will provide your child with experiences that can help with a smooth transition to primary school.

Interested and supportive Mums and Dads are the key to well-being and success in school.

Did you know?

Research shows Dads matter.

'In particular, a father's interest in a child's schooling is strongly linked to educational outcomes for the child.'

The Impact of Parental Involvement on Children's Education DfES Report 2003

The love, security and experiences you provide and the support you give your child are what makes the difference. Attending a good nursery or preschool also contributes to good progress in school.

You will probably already be thinking about choosing a school for your child. Some help and guidance in making this big decision is given in the booklet *Finding a school*.

Once you know which school your child will go to you can help by getting to know as much as possible about the school your child is going to attend.

Meanwhile there is much you can do that will give your child a good start.

Every family and child is unique and grows and learns in different ways.

All families are different.

Want to know more?

National Families and Parenting Institute
www.nfpi.org.uk

Adoptive family

From 31 Oct 2003 adoptive families have had a new right to ask their local authority to assess their needs for adoption support services, including financial support.

www.adoptionuk.org

Step family

www.stepfamilies.co.uk
www.bbc.co.uk/parenting/family

One parent family

www.oneparentfamilies.org.uk
Lone Parent Handbook 2005-6.
To order **tel. 0845 450 0404**.

Separated or divorced

Surrey Family Mediation
Tel. 01306 741777
www.surreymediation.co.uk



As parents and carers you can help by understanding the stage your child has reached and by encouraging the next stage in development.

You may find it helpful to attend a local parenting course or workshop to share experiences and gain some new ideas.

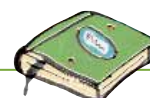
Books to read

Beyond Toddlerdom by Dr Christopher Green
ISBN 0 09 18162462

The Secret of Happy Children by Steve Biddulph
ISBN 0722536690

Raising Boys by Steve Biddulph
ISBN 0007153694

Raising Girls by Gisela Preuschoff
ISBN 000720485X



Want to know more?

For details of parent workshops in your area

- **Surrey Parenting Education and Support Service**
Tel. 01372 227391
- www.surreycafis.org.uk
- Consult the local Adult and Community Education brochure available at your local library



All children learn through the experiences we give them and by the examples we set. They learn best when we praise them for the efforts they make even when they don't get it quite right.

Talking and Listening

The way we communicate with children shows them how we would like them to communicate with us and other people.

Communication is a two-way activity. It involves understanding as well as speaking. Communication includes not only what we say and how we say it, but also our body language, our facial expressions and, for children who have delayed language /speech or hearing difficulties, the signs, pictures or symbols we use with them.

Making the time for one to one communication is one of the most important things parents can do to help their child.

Children learn when we talk to them about the world around them. Talking and listening lay the foundations for learning to read.

If your home language is not English, it is best talk to your children in your own language if it is stronger than English. You will be able to explain and describe things in more detail in your home language. It is really important to continue to develop your children's home language even when they are learning English. If your children develop a strong home language they will learn English more quickly.

When talking together, give your child your full attention. Give him time to have his say. If he makes an error of grammar or pronunciation, it is better to repeat back what he said in the correct form, rather than to correct him openly, for example, CHILD "We singed a new song"
– YOU "You sang a new song did you?"

Commenting on what he says gives you the chance to introduce new words, e.g. "You saw a funny car?"
– Perhaps it was a taxi."

When you ask questions, encourage more than a Yes or No answer. "What shall we do after tea?" rather than "Shall we go for a walk after tea?" or "Where do you think the cat's gone?" rather than "Has the cat gone outside?"





Books to read

It Takes Two to Talk by Ayala Manolson with Barb Ward and Nancy Dodington ISBN 0921 145020

You Make the Difference by Ayala Manolson with Barb Ward and Nancy Dodington ISBN 0921 145063

Make sure you have your child's full attention before you ask him to do things. Say his name and wait until he looks at you before you begin to speak.

It helps if children feel confident communicating with other people, both adults and children. Try not to speak for them when someone asks them a question and don't worry if they don't reply.

Encourage them to ask others for help if they need it. - "Why don't you ask Nan to help?"

Things to do

- Mealtimes are a good time for talking. Sit down together when you eat, turn off the TV and talk.
- Stay and chat for a few minutes when you put them into bed.
- Talk and listen to them in the car.
- Join in 'pretend' games and talk like the bus driver or doctor.
- Saying nursery rhymes together is a useful way for a child to learn about sounds.
- Watch TV together and talk about what is happening.
- Look at books together and talk about how the boy might be feeling or what might happen next.





Building confidence

Confident children make positive learners.

We build their confidence through our relationship with them. It is by spending time with and being accepted by a loved and loving adult that a child's confidence and self-esteem grows. Words of praise warm a child's heart and give him the confidence and courage to explore, to try new things and to want to please.

A smile, a hug, a word of encouragement work wonders for a child's self-confidence.

Show him you like him doing things with you by:

- Asking him to do a regular job with you such as putting the shopping away or cleaning the car
- Inviting her to sit and watch the football with you

Make him feel loved and valued by:

- Telling him/her s/he's special
- Giving 5 minutes special time for a rough and tumble, a story or time to play a game together
- Putting their drawings on the fridge
- Saying more than "Well done." Tell them why you are pleased with them. "Well done, you put your shoes on yourself".
- Giving them positive pictures of themselves, like "You gave Jo a turn on the bike. **You are kind.**"

A Self-Esteem checklist for Mums and Dads

(Adapted from *Parents First* by Garry Burnett and Kay Jarvis Crown House Publishing)

How many of the following do you do regularly?

- Tell your child that you like him because.... As well as saying, "I love you."
- Listen carefully when your child wants to talk to you.
- Show that you're interested in your child's abilities and development.
- Tell your child how much he has done to make you feel proud of him.
- Plan activities and holidays that meet the needs of all the family.
- Support your child in developing the skills he needs to become more independent.
- Ask your child for help in a variety of ways.
- Remember to praise for the small as well as the big things.
- Ask for, and listen to, his views and opinions and show respect for views that differ from your own.
- Allow your child to make mistakes without criticising him.
- Say, "I'm sorry" and "I don't know" rather than pretend you have all the answers.



Coping with feelings

Things don't always go the way we want them to.

Having the words to express our feelings helps us to manage the powerful emotions we feel.

Some words for warm feelings	Some words for uncomfortable feelings
Excited	Angry
Proud	Sad
Happy	Unhappy
Relaxed	Worried
Peaceful	Scared
Surprised	Tired
OK	Lonely
Thankful	Frustrated
Pleased	Miserable



Young children find it hard to control their anger and frustration, when things go wrong, when they can't have their own way, when they lose a game, or when they can't quite manage things. You can help your child by staying calm yourself and by describing his feelings. Let him know that you understand how he feels and make it clear to him that it is OK to feel angry but not OK to hurt other people.

After an outburst wait until he is calm again before you talk to him about how he feels and about other, better ways to behave. Then help him with whatever it is that he can't manage to do. Praise him as he begins to control his tears and his temper.

Children's fears and bad dreams are very real. It is important to label these feelings and to reassure them.

Don't belittle a fearful child or overreact to his anxieties. It can be hard to get the balance right. Encourage her to think for herself about what would make her feel better before making suggestions yourself.

Give them the names for feelings when you look at books: "That little boy looks sad/ excited/angry/ bored" so they can begin to talk about their own feelings.

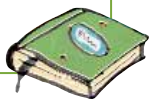
Books to read with your child

Angry Arthur by Hiawyn Oram
ISBN 0099196611

Where the Wild Things Are by Maurice Sendak
ISBN 009408392

Sad, Jealous, Afraid, Angry by Janine Amos
published by Cherrytree

All Kinds of Feelings by Emma Brownjohn
ISBN 185707596X



Learning through play

Most children will have had lots of positive play opportunities at preschool and at home.

At this age it is still through play that children learn best.

A wide range of play activities will help to develop children's language, thinking and understanding of the world. They need to experience playing on their own and with other children, playing inside and out, playing with toys and playing imaginatively.

Books to read

Learning Early by Dorothy Einon
ISBN 1840280921

Play and learn by Dorothy Einon,
Hamlyn ISBN 0600611019

Entertaining and Educating Young Children
by R.Gee and S.Meredith published by Usborne
ISBN 0746001339





If children have brothers and sisters, or have been to a nursery or playgroup, they will be used to playing together, sharing and taking turns, but they may still need your help in inviting friends to play at home.

At school your child will be close to other children, sharing books, crayons and equipment. Some children share things easily, others find sharing hard.

If they find sharing difficult, it can help if you join in when other children come home to play, encouraging them to share and take turns.

Children enjoy real-life activities as well as playing.

Some things for Dads and Mums to do with their children

- Washing the car
- Cooking
- Feeding pets
- Playing all sorts of ball games
- Making a pretend shop with things from your kitchen cupboard
- Building a den out of boxes or under the table
- Singing and dancing
- Playing card games such as Snap



Playing games

Playing games helps children learn to take turns and develops concentration.

Party games like “Ring a roses” and “The farmer’s in his den” can be fun to play at home. If you don’t know the words or tune there are lots of CDs or tapes available to buy or borrow from your local library or you can ask your child’s nursery for the words.



Board games need to be simple.
(Check the box for suggested age group).

Try your local

- Charity shop for board games
- Toy Library
(ask at your library for details)



It is best to start playing games with just two people, a child and an adult. Games with too many people mean that children have to wait too long for a turn.

Explain the rules carefully before you begin to play. Keep it simple. Plan to end the game before he gets tired or bored and give some warning about when you will finish, for example, when everyone else has had one more turn.

Winning is very important to young children and losing can seem a disaster. You can help your child to cope by talking about losing before it happens. It is important to ignore any fuss he may make and to praise his efforts to control his tears or anger.

Playing and working alone

Children thrive on having their parents join in with their play but in the classroom they need to be able to play and work on their own as well as working with others.

If you want your child to learn to play by herself, put out toys for two activities so that she can choose. Help her to get started before getting on with what you are doing.

Check that all is well from time to time.

Let her help with simple jobs around the house and garden. Encourage her to finish what she is doing before starting something new.

At school she will be expected to put her own things away. Even quite young children enjoy putting things away if you do it together and treat it as a game.

Children need to know where things are kept. It helps to have boxes for toys and pegs and drawers which children can reach themselves.

Labelling boxes begins to help children recognise words and letters.



Understanding the school playground

Many reception classes have a separate time or space for the class to spend playtime in the early weeks.

There will be a range of toys and playground equipment to play with. The school may have a buddy system where older children befriend the younger ones. Nearer the time it will be important to find out exactly what the arrangements are at your school so that you can talk about them together.

Many parents worry about behaviour in the school playgrounds. Reassure your child that there will always be a responsible adult outside with them.

Schools work hard to help children develop friendships and treat others with respect. Any too boisterous play or disagreements between children are quickly dealt with and class teachers are alerted to any child having difficulties.

Parents need to encourage their children to tell the adult in charge or their teacher about any unkindness. All schools take bullying very seriously and have a policy on how they prevent and deal with it.

Schools often use Circle Time as an opportunity for the children to talk about things that happen in the playground and to discuss issues such as making friends and sharing as well as about things like name-calling and teasing.

It helps if your child is used to playing in the park or playground. It helps too if he is used to being around bigger children. Playing alongside other children in open spaces such as the local park helps him feel confident.

Unfortunately, it is never safe to leave children of this age without adult supervision.

Want to know more?

See also booklet *Safe and healthy children* for more information about Circle time



If you sit on a bench and watch him while he plays, he will learn to join in with other children and manage without you always at his side.





Getting ready for lunch at school

Children who have a school meal or packed lunch will be expected to sit at a table with other children and stay seated until they have finished.

They will be expected to use a knife and fork to eat their lunch. Of course, they will be given help if they need it, but your child will feel more confident if she practises at home.

To help prepare her you can:

- Talk to her and read stories about lunch at school, about sitting with a lot of other children and about trying new foods.
- If you are planning for her to have a packed lunch, play at having lunch at school.
- Invite a friend to play and give them both a packed lunch in a box 'just like school'. Be sure to give them the sort of food you plan to give them for school.

Schools vary in the arrangements they make. You will be told the arrangements for lunch at your school in the information pack that will be given to you in the summer term.

Books to read with your child

Starting School by Allan Ahlberg; Janet Ahlberg
ISBN: 014050737x

Going to School by Anna Civardi
ISBN: 0746066600



Going to School by Grace Hallworth; Richard Brown
ISBN: 0521559359

Developing Independence

The first thing that children do when they come indoors both at home and at school is to take off their coats.

Later they will also have to dress and undress for PE with their classmates. Your child will feel more confident if he can manage without much help.

You can help if you:

- Choose clothes that are easy to put on and take off.
- Avoid fastenings at the back.
- Choose tops that fit easily over the head, and trousers that your child can pull down easily.
- Buy shoes with Velcro fasteners or buckles.

School uniform will be talked about later in the section *When your child has a school place*.

Children also need to be able to cope in the toilet. If your child is not yet toilet trained it is a good idea to try now, unless you have had advice to the contrary.

Book to read

Potty Training in one week by Gina Ford
ISBN 0091912733



- Teach him to go on his own at home.
- Remind him to use toilet-paper and flush the toilet, and to
- Wash his hands afterwards.
See also the booklet *Safe and healthy children*.
- When you are out shopping or visiting friends, encourage him to use the toilet so that he becomes used to different situations.



Leaving you

Many children have been to playgroup or to a childminder, and so will be used to you leaving them and to being without you for a few hours.

For a few children, going to school is the first time they have been separated from Mum or Dad for any length of time. If so you can prepare her by leaving her at a friend or relative's house to play or for tea. This way she will get used to being left and to being looked after by someone else. Leave her for just a short while to start with. Even if she is used to being away from you starting school is still a big step.

Talk to her about going to school, about saying good-bye and, most important, about who will be waiting for her at the end of school.

A book to read

Help Your Child to Succeed by Bill Lucas and Alistair Smith Published by Network Educational Press Ltd ISBN 1855391112

A book to read to your child

Owl Babies by Martin Waddell and Patrick Benson ISBN 0744531675



Looking at books together

Before they begin to read children need lots of experience of talking and looking at print all around them.

Enjoying books is a good start for learning to read.

At school, children listen to stories read to a group of children or the whole class. They also look at books quietly on their own or with a friend.

At home you can encourage an interest in books and stories by reading to her and looking at picture books together as well as encouraging her to look at books on her own.

Something to try

- Put on special voices for the different characters
- Encourage your child to pretend to read by telling the story from the pictures
- Play with puppets together



You can talk about the story and what is happening in the pictures.

Do this in your home language if that is stronger than your English. Listening to a story or rhymes on a tape or CD at bedtime or on a car journey can also be fun. Children love to sing along.

Enjoying and learning rhymes develops children's language, their memory and their awareness of sounds. This is an important step towards reading.



Moving towards writing

At nursery children will have lots of experience in using paints, crayons and pens to colour and draw.

Children need this experience before they begin to write and you can help by providing large sheets of paper for your child to use with crayons, chalks and felt pens.

Your child may use both hands to start with. Some children take a long time to settle on using their right or left hand. Do not worry if your child is left-handed: schools make provision for this.

Children also need to understand what writing is for. Let them see you write shopping lists and letters to Gran or Ama. Give them some paper and a pencil to make their own 'list'. This will only be scribble or unrecognisable marks to begin with. At first, children call their scribble 'writing' and it is important that you let him 'read' to you what he wants it to say and praise him for his efforts.

When he begins to make shapes that look a bit like letters he will be ready to be shown how to make letters correctly.

Do check that he is holding the pencil comfortably between the thumb and first finger. Encourage him to rest his other hand on the table as he writes.

Something to try



- Leaving off the last word in the line of a rhyme for your child to finish, for example "Jack and Jill went up the _____."

Noticing words all around us is another step on the way to reading.

Point out labels, street names and road signs and your child's own name. You will find that she will soon notice the first letter of her name in other words and proudly say, "That's an L for Lisa." Encourage her to use the letter sound as well as its name.

More things you can try



- Have magnetic letters on your fridge for children to play with.
- Stick an alphabet frieze along a wall by their bed or somewhere they pass often.
- Visit your local library. It's free and its fun! Many libraries have a weekly story time for younger children.
- Make use of the Treasure box you have been given.

Encourage other family members to read stories or to sing or say nursery rhymes to her. If you are of a different cultural background teach her your own songs and rhymes. She will be encouraged to share these at school.

Did you know?

You can buy in any shop selling stationery a pencil grip that fits round the pencil. This helps the child establish the correct pencil hold.

Do:

- Ask your school which style they like children to learn. (Some schools do joined-up writing from the beginning.)
- Use lower case letters NOT capitals. Show her how to write Jane not JANE.

Getting ready for maths

Maths is all around us. As children play they learn about shape and size, time and space, matching and measuring, as well as numbers and counting.

Children learn to sort when they put the spoons and forks away. They learn about size as they put on Daddy's shoes and find they are too big.

They learn about time when you talk about yesterday and tomorrow and when you say you'll be home at 6 o'clock.

Children count, add up, measure and compare as they climb the stairs or find a piece of string long enough to tie up the parcel.

They learn to recognise numbers from the front door and when they see them on birthday cards, the lottery card or the TV channel.

More things to do



- Count steps as you go up and down
- Ask them to give you three spoons from the drawer
- Say or sing number rhymes
- Use words like bigger, more, and less to describe things
- Provide coins for sorting



Exploring our world

Science and technology sounds very serious but finding out about the world around us is the beginning of science.

Children are very curious and like to find out how things feel, look, taste and smell. They learn about the world as they

- Splash in a muddy puddle
- Dig in the garden
- See oil dripping from the car
- Taste a lemon.

They see how things change when they help to make a cake or watch their shadow on the ground. They learn as they watch things grow and when they look after animals.



Things to do

- Point out the leaves falling from the trees
- Watch washing blowing in the wind
- Use words like 'under', 'over', 'behind', 'hotter', 'and strongest'.
- Mix ingredients for cooking



Children frequently ask "Why?" You can also encourage them to ask "What if?" You may not always know the answer but you can try and find out together, saying, "I don't know. Shall we try to find out?"

This approach lets the child know they are not always expected to know the answer.

We can encourage children's curiosity in how things work and how they are made. This is the beginning of technology. It involves taking things apart as well as making things.

Children like to make things out of odds and ends – paper, string, bits of wood etc.

Car boot sales are a good place to find things to take apart, like clocks or torches.

Things you can encourage

- Playing with Lego and other construction toys
- Watching you fix things
- Helping mend a puncture
- Showing them how to change the ring tone on the phone

All these activities help them understand how things work.

Behaviour

Boundaries, Routines and Discipline

Helping children to behave in ways that you want relies heavily on the time you spend developing a relationship of love and trust with your child.

It also needs calmness and consistency from you in the way you respond.

Children's behaviour can be challenging but having boundaries, routines and a few family rules can help a child feel more secure.

Books to read



- *The Parenting Puzzle* by Candida Hunt
ISBN 0954470907
- *How to Talk to Kids so Kids will Listen and how to Listen to Kids so Kids will Talk* by Adele Faber and Elaine Mazlish
ISBN 038057009
- *Encouraging better behaviour: a practical guide to positive parenting* by Eileen Hayes obtainable from **NSPCC Tel. 0207 825 2775**
- *Beyond Toddlerdom* by Dr Christopher Green
ISBN 0 0918162462
- Parenting magazines in the newsagent
- *Raising Boys* by Steve Biddulph
ISBN 007153694

Dads and Mums help when they:

- Back each other up over matters of discipline
- Are consistent from day to day
- Agree a few family rules
- Set an example
- Explain the reason for a rule, for example explain why we must wear seat belts in the car
- Have routines, such as "We always clean our teeth after breakfast." or "We always tidy up the toys at the end of the day."

At times children's behaviour can be very challenging. If the going gets tough and you feel yourself losing your cool try the following:

- Breathe slowly and count to 10.
- Remind yourself that you are the adult and can set your child a good example.
- Go into a different room and think about why you are angry - is it really justified?
- Phone and talk to your partner or a friend. Sharing the problem can help get things in perspective.
- Try humour. It is sometimes the best response.
- Leave the room to scream if you need to – it's better than shouting at the children.
- Go outside for a breath of fresh air/ have a bath/ make yourself a cup of tea and imagine yourself on some paradise island for five minutes. It can give you the lift you need to start again.

From *Stress, a guide for parents* - NSPCC



Where to go for help

Life can have its ups and downs.

Most of us seek advice and support from our family and friends when we meet new challenges or the going gets tough. It is helpful for all parents to have opportunities to discuss everyday family issues such as how to manage bedtime routines, help with homework or sibling rivalry and to find out more about children's development. There are occasions when our children's development can worry us. We may just want reassurance that some behaviour is 'normal' or 'just a phase'. We may want to learn more about how to be an effective parent or we may need ideas or advice on how to deal with particular behaviour.

Sometimes family and friends are unavailable or we may need advice or support beyond that our family and friends can offer. Below are some pointers to source of information and advice for some of the difficulties that can arise during this phase of life when children are in the early years at school.

For someone to talk to other than family and friends

- **Familyline Surrey – 0808 800 5678**
- **Parentline Plus – 0808 800 2222 or www.parentlineplus.org**
- Once your child attends school you may find your school has a Family worker who can be contacted in school.

Did you know?

The word 'discipline' comes from the word disciple meaning to guide.

All schools use positive approaches to discipline.

Schools praise and encourage good behaviour and correct children when necessary. Encouraging positive behaviour is based on respect for each other and understanding the boundaries or rules and agreements.

If children are used to following routines and rules life runs more smoothly.

At school there will be regular times for doing things like washing hands before lunch or having singing or story-time. Your children will be used to routines at nursery but you can help by setting up some regular routines at home. For example hanging up their coats when they come in and picking up toys at the end of the day.

There will be expectations of children at school such as sitting down when asked, being kind to others, looking after equipment. Adults will be there to support and encourage and you will be able to find out from school what will be expected of your child.

Many schools have simple classroom rules so that the classroom is a safe and happy place for everyone. These will be explained to you and the children. Most children will be used to this from home and preschool and will adapt easily.

Children of this age believe Mum and Dad are right and though they may sometimes defy you, 'My Mum says' or 'My Dad says' is the law. It is therefore important that you back up the teacher and let your child know that in school it is the teacher who is responsible and that they should be encouraged to cooperate.



When your child has a school place

Getting to know your child's School

You can get information from:

- The school prospectus/brochure
- The Information pack
- Your visit to the school
- The school's Open Day for Dads and Mums

Schools must have a prospectus to give to parents who are seeking a place for their child. This must include information on:

- The Admissions Policy
- The names of the head and Chairman of Governors.
- The school's values and aims
- Whether it is connected to any particular religious faith
- What religious education is given and the rights parents have to withdraw their children from religious worship and lessons
- What help is available for children with special needs
- The school's National Curriculum assessment results

The Admissions Policy sets out the rules the Local Authority use to decide which children have priority to go to a particular school.

The Chairman of Governors is the person who leads the group of people (Governors) who are appointed to advise the head-teacher on the management of the school.

Want to know more?

Go to www.DfES.gov.uk



Each school also usually gives out an Information Pack. This is often given out in the summer term and contains all the practical details about school life:

- The times of the school day
- Holidays
- Lunch-time arrangements
- Uniform
- All the arrangements for your child's start at school.

It will also explain school policies and rules.

After reading it you may want to ask questions, and you can contact the school to do this.

You may be asked to sign the Home-school agreement that sets out the school's responsibilities and your responsibilities as a parent.



Schools usually offer visits to the classroom for you and your child to meet the teacher and to become used to the classroom. The school may also suggest that a teacher visits you at home to learn more about your child.

Many schools have links with the local preschools and arrange a group visit for all the children moving on or for staff to meet and discuss the children who will be starting at the school.

Want to know more?

- Ask at your nursery/playgroup what transfer arrangements there are with the school you have chosen.
- Talk to the new school about links with the preschool.
- If your child has special needs ask if the people who help your child can meet to plan the move to school.
- See also the booklet 'Life at School'



At the meetings at school

Always ask for more information if you have any concerns.

Some things to find out on your visits to the school:

- The arrangements for children going to the toilet. Make sure he is shown where it is. Schools understand that some families from different cultural backgrounds have concerns about privacy so do talk to the teacher if this applies to your child.
- What your child should do if you are not there to meet her at the end of the day (this is something many children are anxious about and you need to know exactly what the procedures are to be able to reassure your child)
- The arrangements for lunchtime and how children can let people know about their likes and dislikes. Make sure that the school knows about any special dietary needs your child may have.

Things to discuss with school

Your home language if it is not English

Make sure the teacher is aware if your children's first language is not English or if they come from a different cultural background. Let her know of anything your children may find confusing or difficult in school. There is a service that can give schools advice on how to help children whose home language is not English get the best out of school.

Twins and multiples

Twins and triplets or more may need to be in the same class or in different classes. This is best discussed with the school well before school starts.

Want to know more about helping twins and multiples?

See www.tamba.org.uk or phone Freephone Twin line 0800 138 0509



Special Educational needs

Children with Special needs are supported in all schools. (See also the booklet *Finding a school-What if my child has Special Educational Needs?*)

If your child's needs have already been identified the preschool is likely to arrange a meeting with parents and a member of staff from the new school during the summer term to ensure a smooth transition. If this does not happen it will be important to find out what arrangements are being made for your child by asking for a meeting at the school with the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO) or with the head-teacher before the start of term. It is also helpful to send any reports you may have about your child's development and special needs to school before their meeting.

If you think your child may have special educational needs that have not been identified you should speak to the SENCO at your child's preschool or, if your child does not attend any preschool provision, discuss your concerns with the school to which she will be going.

Want to know more?

Go to www.surreycc.gov.uk/sen or phone **Surrey's Contact Centre on 08456 009 009** for leaflets describing the Special Educational Needs process



Need support?

Contact **Partnership with Parents**
www.pwp.ses@surreycc.gov.uk
or phone **01737 737300**

Special family situations

It is always helpful for the school to understand any special family circumstances your child is experiencing such as a recent bereavement, an absent parent, or the family being in temporary accommodation.

Things to do in the weeks before school

Talk to your child about school. Be positive even if your own experience wasn't very happy.

Picture books for you and your child to look at together

Starting School by Allan Ahlberg; Janet Ahlberg
ISBN: 014050737x

Going to School by Anna Civardi
ISBN: 0746066600

Going to School by Grace Hallworth; Richard Brown
ISBN: 0521559359

Going to School by Jim Pipe
ISBN: 0749648406

Going to School by Sally Hewitt
ISBN: 1845381742



Walk past the school whenever you can so the route becomes familiar and so that you can both see and comment on what is going on. Comment on things like parents waiting for their children, play equipment in the playground and anything else you see happening.

Making friends

Friendships are important for you and your child. Many children move to school with other children they know. If your child knows very few children it is helpful to:

- Talk to other parents on the school visit to see if you could get together during the holidays. It can be at the local playground or park if you feel unsure of inviting them to your home. (Remember other parents may be in the same position of not knowing many people there.)
- At the School Open Day ask staff to introduce you to other families who live near you.

Remember

Children of this age fall in and out of friendships very quickly so listen to your child and help him decide what he could do.

Avoid intervening too quickly



Uniform

Uniform with the school logo is usually sold in the school office. It can often be bought second-hand through the school or at reasonable prices, without the school logo, in the supermarket.

Choose clothes that are easy to take on and off.

Choose Velcro fasteners for shoes. If you have a choice between t-shirts and shirts think carefully before you decide. Shirts may look smart but few four year-olds are speedy at doing up buttons.

If a tie is essential try to find one that is ready-tied on elastic.

Buy uniform in good time so that:

- You can name everything (Remember to name bags and boxes for lunch as well)
- There is time to practise taking it on and off and it does not feel new and unfamiliar on the day

Lunch box

If your child will be having a packed lunch at school, buy a lunch box that is easy to open. Check that she can open all the different containers you may put in her box, like yoghurt pots, packets or drink cartons.



Getting up in the morning

To make life easier:

- Get into a routine a week or so before school starts
- Set out clothes for the morning
- Set the alarm to give you plenty of time to get ready calmly
- Get in the habit of having a good breakfast
- Remember to clean teeth



The Journey to school

- Check your route to school and find out how long it will take you to get there at school time when the roads are busy.
- Find out if your school has a 'walking bus'
- Do the journey with your child before school closes in July so he is used to getting up and getting dressed in time.
- Do the same for the journey home. It will be important to be on time to collect him
- Plan to leave the house in good time
- Chat positively on the journey
- Remind him who will be there to collect him when school finishes.

Did you know?

A 'walking bus' is a group of parents, organised through the school, who volunteer to escort children to school on foot. There are various pick-up points on the route.

Adults and children all wear reflective jackets to increase safety.

Saying goodbye to nursery

This can be a wrench for you and your child. It means leaving a familiar place and trusted adults to start a new life. There may be some regrets at the end of an era as well as excitement about the next stage of life. It is not unusual either to feel some apprehension about the challenges ahead.

It is a big step into the world of school. It will help your child move confidently into school if you:

- Encourage him to talk about his feelings
- Let him know that it is OK to have some regrets and anxieties
- Answer his questions
- Find out as much as possible together about his new school
- Read stories together about starting school
- Say a proper goodbye to the people he is fond of at preschool
- Keep in touch with some of his friends.



Coming home from school

School days can be very tiring at first. Most children are very tired by the end of the school day and can be cross and grumpy. Giving them a healthy snack often helps. Your child may want to spend time close to you or to be left quietly on her own.

Only you will know what she needs most. Try to make some time to be with your child after school but don't expect her to tell you all about school at this time.

An early bedtime can help. Getting into the habit of having a calm routine at bedtime well before school term starts can make this time less stressful.

Want to know more?

Go to the booklets:

- *Safe and healthy children*
- *Finding a school*
- *Life at school*

Read *The Understanding Childhood* series of leaflets ISBN 1 900870 or view and print from www.understandingchildhood.net





Helping your child in the
year before school.



Other booklets
in this series:

Finding a school.

Safe and healthy children.

Life at school.



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