

Starting School – Practical tips for Parents & Carers

Starting school is a big milestone in your child's life and can be both an exciting and anxious time for the child and parents/carers. Below are a few tips that can help to make this new transition as smooth as possible for your child. Remember all children are unique and will deal with new experiences differently; some will easily settle into their new environment and routines while others will take a lot longer and may require an extended settling in period. Take things at your child's pace and try not to compare them to other children, with your support and the school staff, they will settle.



During the summer period **talk to your child about them going to school** and about some of the new things they will be doing. Think about positive things to tell them about this new experience and share happy memories about your time at school or when you had a time of change. Share books with them about starting school (see book list below).



If the school has sent a **welcome book with photos** of your child's teacher/key person, class etc. share this regularly with your child, taking time to listen to any concerns or questions they may have.



If possible, take **regular walks to the new school**, so they become familiar with the route and the school building. This will enable you to know exactly how long the journey will take so that once your child starts at school you can ensure you will leave home in plenty of time to avoid a rushed and stressful journey.



If your child will wear a **uniform**, allow your child to practise putting this on and off themselves, if they have to wear shirts it is best to buy short sleeved ones, as this will make it easier when changing into PE kit and when putting on aprons for messy play activities.



Where possible, **avoid belts, buckles and laces** and choose clothing with elasticated waists, shoes with velcro and slip on plimsolls for PE, as this will support your child's self-help skills, increase their independence and self-esteem.



Ensure all clothing has your **child's name** on or something that will distinguish their clothing from other children's and show your child what to look for on their clothing. To help them to distinguish the right shoe to the left draw (in permanent marker) half a smiley face or butterfly outline inside the shoe/plimsoll so that when placed alongside each other they will match up.



If your child is going to have **packed lunches**, then choose a lunch box/bag that can be easily opened by them. If having school meals, ensure that they are able to use a knife and fork, give them lots of opportunities in the weeks before school starts to practise these skills and give them lots of praise and encouragement for their efforts.



Can your child use the **toilet** independently and **wash their hands**? Encourage your child to do this at home in the run up to school. If your child still requires support with this or is in nappies, don't worry or put unrealistic expectations on your child, but ensure the school is aware of this so that they can be properly prepared before your child starts.



Whilst at home, try to practise and promote **social and communication skills** with your child (e.g. turn taking, following instructions, listening to a story, participating in activities, finishing tasks, following a routine consistently, sharing etc.). Try to talk to your children about their feelings and support them to express their needs clearly by asking them to tell you what they need more frequently.

Engage in a **variety of activities** with your child to support them to develop a variety of new skills and embed existing skills (e.g. memory games – ‘I spy’, ‘I went to the shops and I bought...’; ‘Simon says’; ‘What happened next’ – your child keeps adding to a story and you take turns to create the story; ‘Do you recall?’ – ask key questions after reading a book or watching a TV programme; ‘What can you hear?’ – ask your child to close their eyes and describe what they can hear; ‘Traffic lights’ – you associate actions to specific colours – e.g. green for go and red for stop, amber for turning around, blue for sitting on the ground etc.; ‘Deliberate mistakes’ – change the words when singing songs and nursery rhymes that your child knows well – e.g. ‘Humpty dumpty’, ‘The wheels on the bus’ etc.



If your child has any **additional needs** or you have any **concerns** regarding your child starting school, contact the school as soon as possible to arrange a meeting or phone call if you have not been contacted by the school before the summer holidays.



Starting School or Nursery - Books to share with Children

Most libraries will stock these books or your child's current setting may have a copy you can borrow. There are a number of bi-lingual books about starting school which your local library may stock or can order in for you. For more information on your nearest library go to

Family Information Service - Westminster City Council

<https://www.westminster.gov.uk/family-information-service> or

Family Information Service - Royal borough of Kensington & Chelsea <https://www.rbkc.gov.uk/kb5/rbkc/fis/home.page>

CBeebies have a Topsy & Tim starting school video along with information for Parents

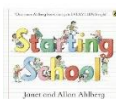
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/cbeebies/grownups/starting-school-experiences>

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/cbeebies/grownups/your-childs-first-day-at-school-nursery>

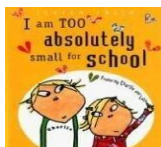
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d-nRGs7qSvs> Topsy and Tims First Day at school CBeebies video

Books with an asterisk (*) can be found on You tube as a video clip of the story being read aloud.

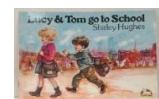
- **Starting School** Janet & Allan Ahlberg *



- **I am Too absolutely small for School** Lauren Child *



- **Lucy and Tom go to school**..... Shirley Hughes*



- **Harry and the Dinosaurs go to school..... Ian**

Whybrowe *



- **The First Day at SchoolToby Forward**



- **Spot loves NurseryEric Hill**



- **Ladybird Start School – My new playground Flap book**

