



Preparing your child for school

Looking forward to school

You can help your child look forward to school by removing the fear of the unknown. If they already go to nursery or pre-school the move up to 'big school' may be a bit easier, but knowing what to expect will help.

Due to the current Covid-19 pandemic, how we work together to support induction in our school is even more important to ensuring their success. We want to make sure that each and every child feels ready, confident and excited about starting school this September.

Our induction may look a little different to how we have done things in previous years, but please rest assured that your child's teacher and the wider Trust team are doing all they can to make the transition during this unsettling time as simple and supportive as possible.

Talk about school

Always be positive and enthusiastic about all the fun things that will happen at school, use their teacher's name so it feels familiar and talk about the new friends they'll make. You'll find plenty of books at your local library and online that bring the school day to life, and if your child likes sticker books and playing schools with their favourite teddies – go for it!

'Visit' the classroom

In previous years this would have been easier. If your child has already visited their new classroom, spend some time talking about what they saw, played with and enjoyed. The school's Twitter page will also include lots of photos of your child's classroom from earlier this year, and the website will also have some information too.

If we are able to offer taster sessions and welcome meetings later in the term, spend some time looking around your child's classroom together. It's much easier to talk about it at home, reminding them of all the fun toys and outdoor play equipment they'll get to use and the colourful work you saw on display.

Get to know the school

Find out whether there are any social events at the school that you can go to as a family. Across the Learning Academy Partnership, we are very lucky to have some very active PTFAs who plan lots of lovely events throughout the year. Even if there's nothing going on, then just walking or driving past the school often prompts children to start talking about 'my school' before they've even started.

Getting ready for Reception

Equipping your child with some practical skills that will help them feel happy and confident about starting primary school is far more important than trying to get a head-start on academic performance.

Unless you particularly want to teach your child to read or write before they start school (and they want to learn), concentrate your efforts on getting a few basic skills in place. Encourage them to take an interest in the world around them, and to want to do things for themselves. It won't be long before your child's learning letters, numbers and words at school. There'll be plenty of opportunities to support and praise them then.

Practical skills

At school, there are things children are expected to do for themselves that you may still help them with at home. Encourage them to do these things **independently**, but be there for reassurance and support if they need it.

- **Getting dressed (and undressed)**

Make a game out of putting on their school uniform and changing into their PE kit. Then changing back again. You'll soon find out which bits they need to practise. If your child goes to nursery or pre-school, they've probably already mastered putting on their coat. There are some interesting techniques including laying the coat on the floor, putting arms in and flipping it over the head – whatever works for your child. And when it comes to shoes, bring on the Velcro!

- **Going to the toilet, washing and drying their hands**

Make sure your child is happy going to the toilet on their own, their uniform is easy to pull down and up (or up and down), and they feel confident enough to put their hand up and ask to go.

Don't worry if they have the odd accident as they're settling in - it's ok, nobody will be cross with them. It's something teachers and teaching assistants are used to - help is at hand when it's needed. It may be helpful to put a spare change of underwear in their bag for those "just in case" moments.

Talk about how important it is to wash their hands really well after going to the toilet. Try covering their hands with paint (the germs) and getting them to practise washing it all off.

- **Eating with others and using cutlery**

All children in England and Wales are entitled to a free school lunch when they start primary school. If your child will be having a hot lunch, see if you can get hold of a menu so they can choose what they'd like beforehand without feeling the pressure of the dinner queue. If they're having packed lunch, make sure they can open cartons and packets and unwrap a sandwich without help. Get them used to sitting at the table without getting up and down and using cutlery to eat their food.

Educational skills

You may want your child to be able to read and write a little before they start school. That's fine if your child is keen to get started, but it's definitely not a requirement. There are a few things you can do that will help on a practical level; turning them into a game will help with their enjoyment and engagement of them, paving the way for a great start.

- **Help them recognise their name**

It's helpful if your child can recognise their name written down (you can practise this when you're labelling all their stuff!) But really don't worry if they can't, teachers often put a picture or photo by each child's name on their pegs and trays to make it easier for them.

- **Read to them**

Research tells us that reading to your child is the most important way you can support your child's early learning. So make time for bedtime stories.

Social and emotional skills

Just like physical and educational skills, children develop socially and emotionally at their own pace. Providing opportunities to practise these skills early on will help them get used to school life.

- **Sharing and taking turns**

If your child has brothers or sisters, or they've been to nursery or pre-school, they'll be used to this already. But it's always good to check they've understood that sharing is a two-way process!

- **Listening and sitting still**

In Reception class, at certain times your child will be expected to sit still and listen to basic instructions from their teacher. You can help with this at home by sitting together doing a jigsaw, colouring or looking at books.

- **Get them used to being away from home**

The way children start school varies. They may start with half days for the first few weeks, or the older children in the year might start first, and those with summer birthdays join them a few weeks later. Whatever happens at your child's school, try and make sure they understand that once they start, they will have to go back every week, Monday to Friday.

If your child hasn't been to nursery, or pre-school, or been looked after by a friend or family member on a regular basis, have a think about what you can do to make sure they're ok being away from you.

At this unprecedented time, your child's Reception teacher will be doing all they can to ensure your child feels ready, confident and excited about starting school this September. We are also here for you; if you have any questions or if you're at all worried, speak to your child's teacher or ask the school what support is available for your family.