

Let's get ready for school – Families Leaflet

What you do matters...

As parents, your role in supporting children to get ready for school is an important one.



Introduction

Getting ready for school begins at birth! This booklet is designed to help you understand what you can do to get your child off to the best start by using everyday events to teach basic skills that they will need to be 'school ready' and 'life ready'!

Curiosity

Why?

Babies are born learners full of curiosity. Curiosity is the need to learn and explore. A curious child may ask lots of questions too (often the same question), this is a good thing, because the more curious a child is, the more they will learn!



How can you help?

Support your child to develop their curiosity by following their lead if they show an interest in something. Answer their questions simply or ask them questions to stimulate their thinking. Show them that the world around them has lots of interesting things happening by talking about what you see around you.



Care needs

Why?

As your child gets older, they will learn to do more things for themselves – from putting on their own socks to getting their own bowl of cereal in the morning. Being able to take care of their own needs is an important part of your child's development. Most children will have the basic self-care skills mastered around their fourth birthday. Being able to take care of these needs independently will help a child to feel confident and in control.



How can you help?

Support your child to develop these skills by encouraging them to try and recognise their attempts to learn by telling them how proud you are.

Children need to be toilet trained where possible when they start school and be independent with dressing skills. Be flexible about the mess in the bathroom or the uncoordinated clothes. Try not to step in too quickly when they are learning new skills, they sometimes take time to master!

In time your child will get better at meeting their own needs and become more independent with lots of encouragement – rewarding all your hard work!

Confidence

Why?

When children feel confident and believe in themselves, they are more willing to take on new challenges, a key ingredient for school success. Self-confidence and a 'can do' attitude is also important for getting along with other children. Self-confident children see other people like them and expect relationships to be satisfying and fun.



How can you help?

Support your child to develop their confidence by establishing routines so that they know what to expect to feel safe and secure. Give them chances to practise things and small problems to solve so they can recognise how good success feels! As they get older, give them responsibilities such as feeding pets or laying the table. Also encourage them to ask for help when they feel they need it too!

Self-control

Why?

Self-control is the ability to express and manage feelings in appropriate ways and is essential for success in school. It enables children to cooperate with others, to cope with frustration and to resolve conflicts. Young children learn these skills through interactions with others and guidance from you.



How can you help?

Support your child to develop self-control by teaching them acceptable behaviours such as looking after their toys or putting rubbish in the bin. Also, by letting your child know that their feelings are understood you can help them to learn to calm down and regain control. Play turn taking games with your child, as waiting helps them to develop self-control too!

Choices

Why?

Giving children choices is also important for helping them feel in control. A child who is unable to control themselves may struggle to get along with other children, to fit into routines and accept boundaries when at school.

How can you help?

Support your child to learn and make choices by giving them two acceptable options and letting them choose – for example, “Would you like to brush your hair or brush your teeth first?”

If a decision is really yours, don’t offer a choice. Say, “It’s bed time” not “Are you ready to go to bed now or do you want to go later?”

Co-ordination

Why?

It's often assumed that children will develop co-ordination just through their everyday play but to develop skilled and efficient movements, children need the opportunity to practise.

The term 'gross motor skills' refers to the movements of the large muscles of the body. These start developing from birth and usually develop from the middle of the body outwards. A baby first gains control of their head and trunk before mastering control of their limbs. This provides them with the skills needed for sitting, crawling, standing and eventually walking (and running). Good gross motor skills will help your child to develop the fine motor skills that they need for activities such as writing and using cutlery at lunchtime or even doing up their buttons at playtime.



How can you help?

You can support your child to develop their coordination and gross motor skills through playing games with them such as making an obstacle course, both inside or outside. Try using instructions like under, over, up, down to help them develop their understanding. Take a trip to the park and encourage them to practise balancing, jumping and swinging!

Spend time together and have fun helping them to refine their skills. Fine motor skills can be developed through activities such as cutting, sticking and drawing.

Communication

Why?

Good communication is at the heart of all learning. Learning to communicate through gestures, sound and words increases a child's interest in reading. Talking, reading aloud and singing all stimulate children's understanding and use of language. This helps them to become good communicators and eager readers.



How can you help?

Support your child to develop good communications skills by talking and reading to them as soon as they are born, it's never too early! Children will initially understand more than they say, so give them simple instructions to follow. The more you talk to each other the more words they will learn. Speak clearly and in sentences, this will help them to talk clearly to others. Make up or read stories, sing songs and silly rhymes; children love it when you use their names in these. Most importantly, have fun with words!

Remember, what you do matters

Everyday experiences are great opportunities for learning. Children learn best through doing these with people they love and trust and when the learning is fun! You are your child's first and most important teacher and the support you give your child will help them to develop into lifelong learners.

Further information for parents

Family Information Service -

<https://fisd.oxfordshire.gov.uk/kb5/oxfordshire/directory/families.page?familieschannel=0>

Health visitors - <https://www.oxfordhealth.nhs.uk/children-and-young-people/parents/oxfordshire/health-visiting/>

Forces Families - <https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/public-site/armed-forces-oxfordshire>

SEND support and toolkit -<https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/public-site/supporting-children-under-5-sen>

Big hopes big future - Home start <https://www.home-start.org.uk/Pages/Category/big-hopes-big-future>

PACEY - A booklet for parents with lots of great tips, ideas, do's and don'ts, story books about preparing for school. <https://www.pacey.org.uk/working-in-childcare/spotlight-on/being-school-ready/>

Book trust - Starting school has ideas for picture books for children starting nursery or school <https://www.booktrust.org.uk/>

Words for life - Rhymes and songs to share and lots of fun activities to do together www.wordsforlife.org.uk/songs



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