

Preparing children for school



Preparing for school focus – I am nearly ready to start school!

Starting school anxiety often kicks in when children are being taken shopping for uniform, shoes, coats etc that they must wear every day at school in just a few weeks' time. They are used to choosing their own clothes, putting on shoes they want to wear... many won't have worn a uniform and might feel uncomfortable in tights or a tie. We will support home by planning lots of role play activities – pretend school rooms and visual timetables detailing the school day. We will look at a range of **starting school books** which can help to develop children's confidence.

A **one-page profile** is a page of information to share with the child's next teacher and focuses on the child and the things the child wants to share. You might find it useful to put one together with the child, involving parents as appropriate - parents can then pass it on to the reception teacher.

Useful **checklists for starting school** and information about **healthy packed lunches** will also help parents prepare for their child's first day.

Throughout August you will also be working on –

- Letters and Sounds aspect 6 – voice sounds
- Maths focus –
 - Rhythm and rhyme
- Illustrated maths songs –
 - 1, 2, buckle my shoe
 - Teasing Mr Shark

Preparing your child for school – August

During August most parents are usually busy buying uniform, telling stories about their own school experiences and talking about the changes that are coming during September. It is a very exciting time for parents and all of our school-nearly-ready children!

Here are some of the ways we will be helping you to prepare your child for school during August...

- Giving children time to get used to the idea of moving on – chatting to them, letting the information sink in and then giving them lots of time to ask questions -
 - **We will be reading books about school which will provide your child with plenty of opportunities to talk about what is happening in the stories and tell us about any concerns they might have.
- Talking about the new setting – using classroom rules and including some of their new school routines into their days -
 - **We are already using language from school such as encouraging children to 'switch their listening ears on', praising them for 'good sitting' and 'good listening' and encouraging them to sit cross legged (school legs). We have a visual timetable similar to the one your child will be using in school and we provide daily opportunities for writing, reading and maths exploration.
- Role play schools - the older children are always keen to pretend they are at school and ring the bell, announce the next lesson, talk about literacy and numeracy times, replay playground rules when they are outside etc -
 - **We provide plenty of props and role play opportunities through the day.

Of course, it is important that we do not overwhelm your child by talking too much about school! We will continue our fun activities through the summer, with lots of outings and adventures planned to support their learning while ensuring they have fun.

At home you can really help your child by practicing morning routines. Your child's routines will change in September – no more debates about what to wear, choosing which shoes to arrive in or forgetting bits and bobs! You will need to be really organised and your child will need to be prepared so it doesn't come as a shock that they cannot wear their favourite jeans or trainers!

Why not try...? Putting clothes out and chatting about breakfast choices the night before... and finding a place for book bags and shoes to 'live' so they are not lost in the morning.

If your child tells us about any worries we will pass them on to you – please do the same! Thank you for your continued support.

One-page profile

To help teachers get to know the child, you could help them to complete a 'one page profile' type sheet which shares some of their information -

First Day of School

My name -

My date of birth -

When I grow up I
want to be...

My self portrait

Age:
Weight:
Height:

My favourite
things

Colour:

Food:

Song:

TV programme:

Film:

Book:

My Signature

Preparing for school checklist

Dear parents,

It is really important that you establish a good routine with your child/ren through the summer holidays – children need to be getting up at a reasonable time in the morning, dressing in clothes they have prepared the night before, washing faces and brushing teeth and then getting themselves some breakfast. It can be a mistake to put the television on... we hear lots of moans from children about having to walk away from their favourite programmes to leave the house in the morning!

The week before school starts

- 👞 Check shoes and clothes fit
- 👞 Label everything
- 👞 Take your child for a haircut
- 👞 Think about where coats, bags, shoes etc will be stored
- 👞 Talk about how to keep things tidy with your child
- 👞 Set aside a place for your child to do their homework – and agree a convenient time when you will sit down with them every evening to read their school book together
- 👞 Talk about lunch box contents (if they don't get a school meal) and buy favourites from the shops
- 👞 Read some 'starting school' books and talk about your positive memories of school days

Before they leave the house children need...

- 👞 Uniform on – hair done (girls need it tied up to dissuade 'visitors')
- 👞 Lunch bags packed – if they are not eating a school dinner
- 👞 School bags packed
- 👞 Shoes on
- 👞 Coats – either a waterproof through the summer or a big coat in the colder weather
- 👞 Parents – don't forget you need to be organised as well so put your shoes, coat, purse, phone and car / house keys in places where you will find them easily in the morning rush!

Don't forget to take some photos of the first day of school! It is quite likely that your child will never look that tidy or clean again so capture the moment for posterity.

Healthy lunch boxes – information for parents

You might choose to send your child to school with a lunch box rather than them having a packed lunch. This option should be made available to you at induction.

Top tips from parents...

Where possible let your child help you to choose the food they want to see in their lunch box – they are much more likely to eat it if they have chosen it themselves.

Think about the main food groups when packing lunch boxes – carbs, fruit or veg, milk and protein – your child needs something from each of the groups to ensure the lunch box contains the food and drink that will keep them going through the afternoon.

You are helping your child to make good food choices when you pack their lunch box but you also need to make sure they eat it or they will be hungry and unable to concentrate during the afternoon so go for a mixture of food they choose and food you want them to eat.

Here are some ideas for how to pack a healthy lunch box for your child...

- Drink – water or pure fruit juice (diluted with water)
- Sandwich with meat filling or pasta with meat pieces (or vegetarian alternatives)
- Small box of chopped, peeled fruit
- Chopped vegetables with a little pot of dip
- Yoghurt or fromage frais – something milky, with or without fruit

Ask school whether they are allowed a small biscuit or piece of cake – children need a little sugar boost and those who eat school meals are often given cake etc.

Contents to avoid include

Fizzy drinks

Sugary sweets, biscuits and ~~crisps~~
bars Crisps – they are very high
salt and fat Contents children

cannot open

Glass bottles

Drinks bottles that spill – test it a few times and show your child how to close it properly and put it in the bag right way up so it doesn't leak through the day.

Preparing for school - message for parents!

To help your child settle into their new school life as quickly as possible here are some of the things you might consider buying / preparing for them - don't forget to check the school list...

Name labels (iron or clip on) or marker pens - label all clothes, bags and shoes	Lots of changes of uniform – it will get dirty and lost	The best quality waterproof, windproof, warm coat you can afford – with a hood!
Backpack big enough for water bottle, raincoat, book bag etc	Drinking cup your child has chosen – they are more likely to use what they choose	Velcro fastening shoes your child can put on / take off by themselves
Shoe inserts / stickers for left and right – arrows or half a sticker in each works well	Waterproof reading folder – check with school they might sell them	Lunch box with inserts your child can open – if they are not having a free school dinner
Lots of socks in school colours – they get lost!	Freezer blocks for the lunch bag to help keep the food fresh	Lots of hair accessories in school colours – they get lost as well
Everything on the school list – your child needs the same things as their friends	Fold up waterproof coat for those days when a big coat is too big	Elasticated trousers / skirts if your child struggles with zips and buttons
Key rings to attach to bag / coat / reading folder with a picture chosen by your child	Waterproof name labels for water bottle and lunch box	Reflective tape to stick onto backpack so they stand out when walking in the dark

Top tip - take your child shopping over the holidays and choose a folder with display wallets – you can use it to store all their certificates and special school memories.

Don't forget tissues for you! 😊

Developing children's awareness of the classroom

Preparation is the key to children being ready for school – which is why we make best use of the year from age 3 – 4 gently teaching your child the skills they will need to cope in a busy classroom. Some children manage amazingly well – they skip into school seemingly without a backward glance. Other children have nightmares and their toilet training or general behaviour regresses... we watch some children coming out of school, having seemed fine to their teacher all day, and wailing in their parents arms because something happened during morning break and they have held it in all day!

It is important to see things from the child's point of view – their little life is going through a huge period of change and they need time to adjust. Their feelings matter and it is important to let them go through their emotional turmoil, holding them or giving them a place to sit quietly if they are feeling overwhelmed.

Read books about starting school

There are hundreds of books about starting school – I have talked about some of them in the 'Going to school – transition' activity guide for Childcare.co.uk gold members here -

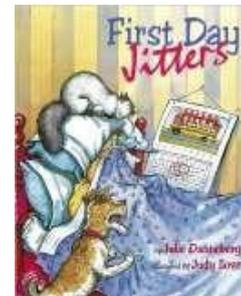
<https://www.childcare.co.uk/information/resources>. Here are some of our favourites...

Usborne sticker books



First Day Jitters by Julie Danneberg (Charlesbridge Publishing, 2000)

Sarah is starting school today... but she is not absolutely sure she is ready. This is quite an old fashioned book but teaches children gentle starting school lessons.

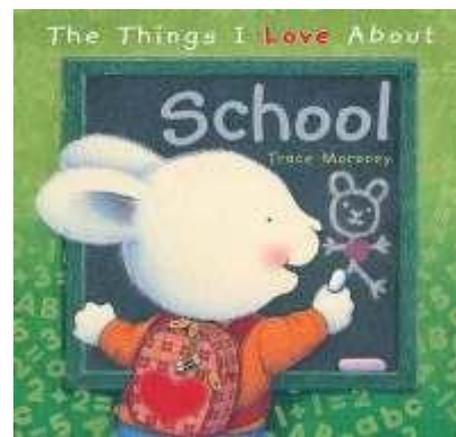


Starting School by Jane Godwin (Penguin)

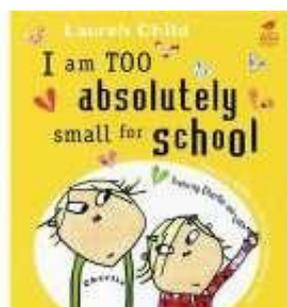
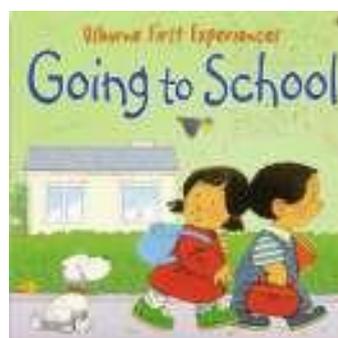
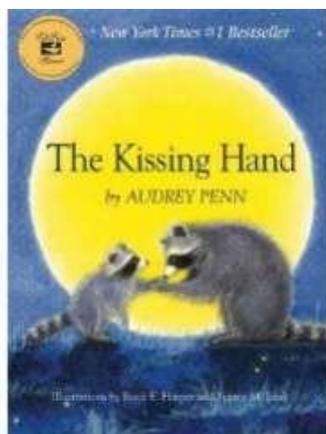
This book is about 5 children who each approach day 1 of school in a different way, with their own thoughts, worries and previous life experiences. The pictures are lovely...

I Am Too Absolutely Small for School by Lauren Child (Candlewick Press, 2005)

Lola does not want to go to school – she says her invisible friend Soren Lorenson is nervous! Her brother Charlis reassures her that school is fun and she will learn lots of new things there.



Other good books to read include -



Letters and Sounds aspect 6 – voice sounds

Planning...

1. Group activity – singing to each other
2. Stories with animal sounds
3. Whose voice can you hear?
4. Describe voice sounds
5. Make a sound book
6. What sound am I making?
7. Voice emotions

What we will do...

- Review sitting and listening
- Review alliteration
- Remind children about not shouting out during storytelling
- Practice sitting with 'school legs'

Steps to listening

- Good looking
- Good sitting
- Lips closed
- Good listening...

Group activity – singing to each other

Sitting in a circle and using our voice to sing a simple tune. Encouraging the children to do the same so they are listening to each other. Using a microphone and copying some sounds.

Introduce challenge – singing a tune which has different pitches and sounds eg loud, quiet, sharp, long, high, low... can the children copy?

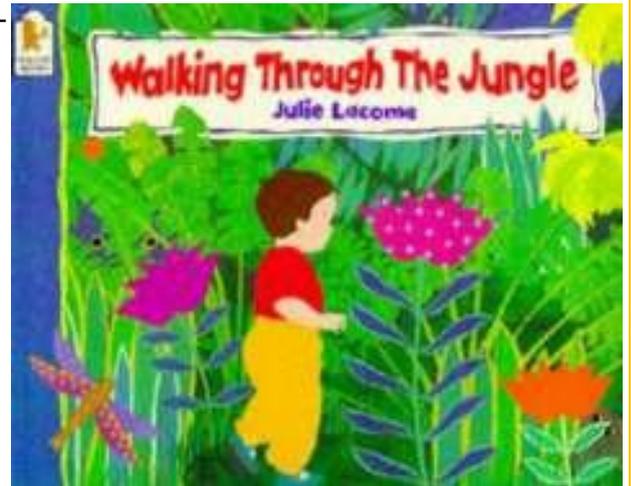
Stories with animal sounds

Reading books about different types of animals – in the jungle, zoo, farm etc.

Using our voice to make the animal sounds.
What do the children think the animals sound like?

Encouraging the children to join in making sounds at appropriate times through the book.

Some children will struggle with waiting until they see the animal and will want to shout out the sound all through the book – we will help them to remember by using visual clues such as cards when it is time to make the sound.



Extension – make up silly sounds for the animals. What if the cow sounds like a pig? What if the sheep sounds like an elephant? What if the snake sounds like a dog?

Playing with sounds encourages good listening and develops concentration... it also promotes a sense of fun.

Whose voice can you hear?

We will record the children's voices with voice recorder. We will play their voices back – can they recognise each other? Do they think they sound funny?

Extension – we will play sounds of animal voices – can they recognise the animal from the sound without any visual clues? Some children are visual learners – they rely on visual stimuli to understand new things – they might find this game quite tricky to start with and will need lots of repetition.

Working with parents – parents can record their own voices for their children to listen to at home.

Describe voice sounds

Making different sounds with your mouth, for example –

- Clicks and tick tock
- Sleepy zzzzzzzzzzz
- Aaaaaaa
- Moans and groans
- Blowing and sucking
- Tongue stretching
- Laughs and giggles

Making long, high, low, short, loud and quiet sounds – talking about the differences.

Extension – when they are confident with how to play, letting the children lead the game.

What sound am I making?

Sitting with the children in front of mirrors and...

- Showing them how to watch themselves as they say letters / sounds
- What do their lips / tongues / teeth look like?
- Exaggerating the sounds...

Voice emotions

Singing songs using different emotions –

- Happy - lalalalala
- Sad – moan
- Grumpy – bah humbug
- Angry etc...

Comparin the emotions and talking about how the songs make us feel.

Dear Parents we will observe –

PSED – can the children make mouth movements in the mirror? Do they join in?

C & L – how are listening skills coming along?

C & L – do the children understand how to make silly voices to stories?

C & L – can the children recognise their own and each other's voices, including a recorded voice?

PSED – can the children recognise and name emotions? Challenge them to give emotions a colour or a silly name – what do they come up with?

Maths – long and short sounds – how long can the children hold a sound?

Assessment -

Can the children distinguish between the differences in vocal sounds?

Do the children sustain their listening through a story?

Planning – moving the children on...

Introduce children to blending phonemes – can they recognise the whole word?

Segment simple words into phonemes...

Observation and assessment...

Voice sounds – I can...

- Make sounds with voice eg tick-tock for clock
- Share my favourite sound with the group
- Talk like a robot spelling out words
- Add sound to a story when hearing a cue word
- Listen to and identify a recorded voice / describe a voice sound
- Use my voice to add sounds to a story
- Use a megaphone to make sounds with my voice
- Listen to and sing a variety of songs

Letters and Sounds aspect 7 - Segmenting and blending

If children show an interest, we will speak to the child's reception teacher about how we can extend it while ensuring the skills and knowledge we teach them fits in with what they are going to learn at school.

As a general rule, these activities are usually planned by the child's teacher at school. All our hard work teaching them through aspects 1 – 6 will allow the child to be confident when they start in reception class.

Blending and segmenting – I can...

- Understand sound talk eg c-a-t
 - Sound out and clap CVC's from s, a, t, p, l, n
 - Identify objects with 3 phonemes from sound talk
 - Blend 2 or 3 phonemes from sound talk to word
 - Play I-spy by blending sounds.eg I spy a z-i-p
 - Copy sound talk
 - Speak in sound talk
 - Say how many phonemes I can hear p-i-g 1 2 3
-

Maths focus - rhythm and rhyme

Rhythm is an important part of maths – children need a sense of rhythm to learn their times tables and to spot rhythms in maths problems.

Game 1 - Drum outside - taking the children outside - giving each child a beater and explaining that we want them to tap on different objects and listen carefully to the sounds they are making.

Showing the children how to tap (as opposed to hit) –

- Trees
- Paving stones
- Walls
- Wooden blocks
- Plastic boxes
- Small world animals
- Different types of drums etc...

Game 2 - Play with syllables - making a collection of objects with names of varying syllables –

- Doll
- Umbrella
- Camera
- Xylophone
- Photo of each child – or their name card
- Rubber etc.

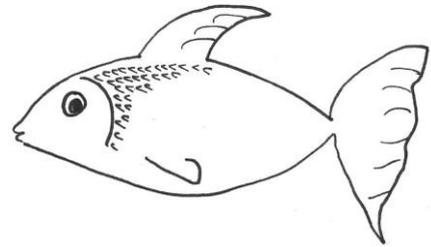
Talking about each of the objects and discussing what they are called and how they are used.

Saying the names of the objects stressing the syllables

Using clapping or a tambourine to tap out the syllables.

Teasing Mr Shark

5 little fish swimming in the sea
Teasing Mr Shark you can't catch me'
Along comes Mr Shark as quietly as can be
And snap goes Mr Shark... oh dear me!



Activity ideas – 5 little fish

- Reading books about fish – 'The Rainbow Fish' by Marcus Pfister
- Singing '2 little fish, swimming in a tank, one called Freddie and one called Frank. Swim away Freddie, swim away Frank, swim back Freddie, swim back Frank'.
- Making a big fish using lots of collage materials for the scales.

We will observe –

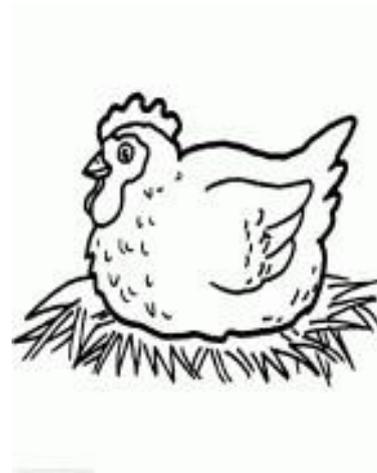
- This song is similar to the monkey and crocodile song – can the children make connections between the 2 – what is similar and what is different?

Early Years Outcomes – understanding the world (the world) – learn about animals and other creatures that share our earth.

Support home learning – making a booklet of learning experiences including photos and pictures the children have made to share with families.

1, 2 buckle my shoe

1, 2, buckle my shoe
3, 4 knock at the door
5, 6 pick-up sticks
7, 8 lay them straight
9, 10 a big fat hen!



Activity ideas – 1, 2, buckle my shoe

This is a great song for sequencing and practicing rhyming words.

Some more activity ideas include...

- Making a series of pictures to sequence the song
- Making up rhymes for different numbers
- Go and collect some sticks – what can you make with them? They are great for making shapes, counting, grading by size or thickness etc.
- Do the children have buckles on their shoes? Practice opening and closing them.

We will observe –

- Can the children manage simple sequencing? Do they understand words like 'in front of' and 'behind'?
- Can the children talk about 'first', 'next' and 'last'?

Early Years Outcomes – maths (sequencing) and maths (numbers); literacy (rhyming).

Support home learning – talking to parents about the rhymes their child is making and how they can play simple rhyming games at home.