

Our Top Tips for Starting Reception Class

Starting school is a special time for all the family, however your child might be feeling a little uncertain about this new experience. Spending some time with your child to prepare them for this new adventure greatly reduces any anxiety. Here are some ways to familiarise your child with their new Reception class.

Before They Start

1. **Get organised:** Make sure you have got everything they need in time for your child's first day. Include them in the decision-making processes (even if it is just choosing their water bottle) it will get them excited about starting school. Label their clothes and show them where the label is, so they can check it themselves.
2. **Getting dressed:** Practise with your child taking their shoes on and off by themselves and putting their uniform on by themselves.
3. **Hanging up their own coat:** Practise helping your child take their coat off, hanging it up in a special place and putting it on again. This will *really* help your child to feel more independent and able to move freely between our classroom and outdoor area.
4. **Talk about what they can expect:** Explain to your child about school rules and routines. Our Reception classroom should feel familiar to your child as we have similar activities to a nursery class. Talk about how we have a home corner, construction toys like Lego, building blocks, a dolls house, cars, farm and much more. Describe how they can play in the Early Years playground on the monkey bars, on the slide, in the mud kitchen or in the water tray.
5. **Home time:** Ensure your little one understands who will be collecting them at the end of the day. Assure them that it is ok to feel nervous and the adults at school are there to help them.
6. **Become familiar with the school:** Take a walk to school and show them the building while it is empty and not surrounded by people.

On Their First Day

7. **Dealing with separation anxiety:** It is important to reassure your child that you will be back to collect them, at the very place you left them. Of course, if it is not you that will be collecting them, you need to tell them this and the teacher.
8. **Do not sneak away:** It might be tempting to leave when they are not looking, but your little one will feel more afraid if you suddenly disappear. Say your goodbyes then leave.
9. **At home time:** Make sure you are on time and not late when you come to collect them. You do not want them to be anxious that you are not there. When you collect your child, give them your full attention, don't be on your mobile phone, as your child will be excited to see you!
10. **Time to talk:** Set some quality time aside to have a chat about how things went. Be prepared, they might tell you they "Did nothing at school". This is a very normal response, please do not worry! Be assured your child would have been busy exploring and looking around their new classroom.

Settling in

11. **Make sure they get plenty of rest:** Starting school is a big step and a huge change to a child's routine. Ensure that you are strict with bedtimes, as you do not want them to be tired and grumpy in the classroom the next day.
12. **Breakfast:** Ensure your child has a good breakfast and a drink before they come to school. They will be using up a lot more of their mental and physical energy!
13. **Keep talking:** Set some time aside each day to ask about how school is going. Keep your questions simple and try to build up a good picture of what life at school is like, and if they are happy with it. Ensure they know to talk to a grown-up at school if something is making them unhappy in class.
14. **Writing their name:** Please support your child to recognise and write their name. Please use lower case letters and a capital letter only at the start of their name. By doing this your child will be able to identify and label their own work, increasing their confidence.
15. **Book bags:** When your child receives their book bag, please make sure it is labelled with their name. They must bring their book bag into school every day with their school reading book. Please *empty their book bag every day*, occasionally there might be letters in there from school or your little one might be bringing work home to show you.

And Finally, Parents

16. **Do not overhype school:** Sometimes we spend a lot of time telling our children they are "Going to big school with the big children". This can be a bit daunting for children. Keep your conversations simple, explain that they will be going to a new school, but it will feel very much like preschool/nursey. Please do not make promises about things you cannot control.
17. **Do not worry:** Tears are completely normal. Your child is not upset with you, and you are not a 'bad' parent for walking away.
18. **Enjoy the morning:** We know there may be tears from you as well. Try and keep your tears until you are on the way home, easier said than done! We will do all we can to help, we are here to help your child get on their way to great things.

The calmer and more assured you are, the more confident your child will be.
We look forward to seeing you soon!