

GETTING READY FOR SCHOOL

Supporting Children with Special Educational Needs / Disability (SEND)

This sheet is part of a series of Information Sheets designed to provide parents / carers with advice and information on supporting children with Special Educational Needs and / or a Disability to get ready for Nursery or Reception Class at school. The focus of this sheet is to support you and your child through the journey to starting school.

As a parent / carer of a child with SEND, starting school can be an exciting and equally worrying time. You may have been on a long journey so far in learning about your child's needs and working to support them. Taking the next big step along that journey may understandably feel worrying. Whether your child is going to a mainstream school, a school with an attached resource centre or a special school you may have many questions or worries about it being the right place for your child. Equally, you may feel happy and confident with the choice of school and want to get started to support your child through the transition from home to school.

Either way, starting school is an important step in your child's lifelong development and you will not be alone in having many questions, thoughts and worries about starting school:

What is school readiness and what does it mean for my child who has SEND?

Why is getting ready for school important?

Who do I talk to if I have concerns?

Who will help / support my child at school?

Do I have to tell the school about my child's SEND?

My child finds changes difficult—how can I help them?

The information in this sheet will consider the questions above as well as:

- * Provide information on why getting ready for school / transition is important.
- * What getting ready for school means for children with SEND .
- * How best to prepare yourself, your child and their school for the journey from home to school to be as smooth and happy as possible.



GETTING READY FOR SCHOOL

The Importance of Transitions

Moving to school ~ the importance of getting ready for school.

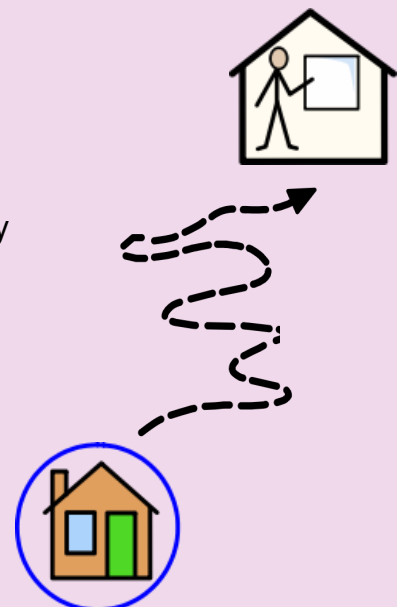
- * Preparing for, or getting ready for school requires helping your child with their social interaction skills, ability to separate from you and ability to develop their independence skills ~ at their developmental level.
- * Getting ready for school is important to ensure a smooth transition to school. This will help your child experience the change as a positive one and enable them to settle in so that they can continue their learning journey with minimal disruption.
- * For children with SEND, there may need to be additional planning as each child is unique and so the transition to school may need to be individualised for them. Getting ready for school and the journey to that will be unique to your child.
- * Getting ready for the transition to school will be about supporting you, your child and the school. It can be helpful to think about getting ready for and transition to school as a process rather than a single event. This process is part of your child's lifelong development ~ smooth transitions in the early years can greatly help future lifelong transitions.



Paving the way for a smooth transition to school.

The key factors to a smooth transition can include:

- * Communicating with and sharing information with the school in advance of your child starting with them.
- * Agreeing with the school any transition support that may be required for your child.
- * Supporting your child with learning any new skills that might help them to settle in.
- * Carrying out activities with your child to help them handle the changes to their routines / setting into a new environment.



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Getting Ready for School ~ You, Your Child & their School

Preparing your child for school will involve consideration of your child's needs, what the school will need to know and your thoughts and feelings.

<p>You Preparing yourself for the changes ahead</p>	<p>Your child Preparing and supporting your child</p>	<p>School Sharing information with school</p>
<p>Your role in getting ready for school is a crucial one, not only in preparing your child but also being key to sharing valuable knowledge of your child's needs with the school.</p> <p>Knowing that you can help your child may help you to feel more reassured about the transition to school.</p> <p>It can also be helpful to talk to relevant professionals who know your child to seek reassurance and advice on how you can support them.</p> <p>It will be important to be alert to how your child is managing the transition as well as to try and maintain a positive outlook so that your child does not pick up on any anxieties you may have.</p>	<p>Preparing and supporting your child will depend on your child's needs.</p> <p>This may involve consideration of your child's level of understanding, how they manage changes to routines, how long they take to settle with unfamiliar people / situations and / or past experiences of transitions etc.</p> <p>Supporting your child may also involve working on skills to take them to their next step in their development ~ remember that your child's readiness for school will be unique to them.</p>	<p>A smooth and successful transition is likely to involve communication with the school before your child starts ~ this might be a telephone / video call or possibly socially distanced meeting.</p> <p>It can be helpful to talk to the school to share information on your child's SEND, their unique individual needs, any strategies and interventions that they respond well to and outside agencies that are involved.</p> <p>Sharing reports from outside agencies that are relevant to your child's needs might assist the school in planning and preparing for your child.</p>

Knowing where to start preparing can be tricky.
The next page gives you an idea of what your journey to getting ready for school could look like.



GETTING READY FOR SCHOOL

Preparing your child for change

Preparing your child for change.

The journey to getting ready for school may take you through a process of talking to your school, doing activities to support your child as well as them through the first term and beyond.

5. During the first term and beyond.

Be alert to anything that your child is finding difficult ~ talk to the Class Teacher at the earliest point to prevent any issues from arising or getting worse.



4. The night before & the first day.

Being ready for the first day.



3. Preparing ~ talking to / showing your child pictures, about school ~ two to three weeks before).

- * Talking / showing your child about school using resources that will help them understand.
- * Doing activities to teach them about school.

1. Planning ~ deciding on skills to work on at home.

Think about your child's needs and what you would like to work on with your child so that they are ready for the move to school.

Planning ~ talking to school.

Sharing information with the school so they are ready for your child in a timely manner.



2. Preparing ~ working on skills (one to two months before).

Working on skills you would like your child to learn before they start school e.g. dressing / feeding / waiting / toileting etc. pick one or two each week.



GETTING READY FOR SCHOOL

1. Planning ~ deciding on skills to work on at home

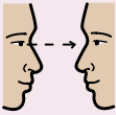


The first place to start will be to think about your child's needs. The three areas of development* below may help you to consider your child's needs and key priorities to work on as well as a framework of what to share with the school. *From Birth to 5 Matters: Non-statutory guidance for the Early Years Foundation Stage .





Personal, Social, Emotional development:

Understanding Emotions 	Sense of Self 	Making relationships 
Things that might cause anxiety / fears or unwanted behaviours / your child's dislikes / understanding of emotions / ability to self-regulate.	Separation from you / settling in new environments / ability to follow routines / coping with transitions / pretend play skills.	How your child interacts with others e.g. solitary play / turn taking / interest in other children.

Communication and Language:

Listening and Attention 	Understanding 	Speaking 
Eye contact / attention skills for self chosen activities / adult led tasks.	Level of understanding (objects / pictures / Makaton / single words / simple phrases).	How your child communicates (sounds / gestures / Makaton / single words / two words / simple phrases / complex phrases / PECS.

Physical development :

Moving and Handling 	Health and Self Care 
Gross motor skills e.g. running / stairs / co-ordination / awareness of space. Fine motor skills e.g. threading / pencil control. Sensory needs e.g. sounds / movement	Independence skills e.g. un/dressing; feeding; toileting & handwashing. Awareness of danger. Dietary needs. Medical needs which may require a medical health care plan.

GETTING READY FOR SCHOOL

1. Planning ~ Talking to School

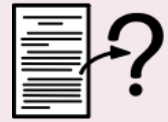


Talking to your child's school before they start can be a very useful way to support your child's transition. The best person to talk to at school will be the Special Educational Needs (& Disability) Co-ordinator. Every school will have a SENCO ~ find out who this is and try to make contact with them. Below are some useful questions you might wish to ask (depending on your child's needs).

Useful Questions to ask the school SENCO:

- ✓ My child had Speech and Language Therapy / Occupational Therapy / Physiotherapy ~ who will provide this when they start school?
- ✓ Will there be support available for my child? If so, who will this be, when and how will they support my child?
- ✓ Will there be someone to support my child with their feeding / toileting?
- ✓ What if my child eats a specific diet or has sensory needs which means their food intake is very individual to them?
- ✓ My child has an Education, Health and Care Plan ~ how will the support be arranged?

It can be helpful to prepare your questions in advance of your discussions with the school



Useful Questions to ask the Class Teacher:

- ✓ Will my child be able to have a transition object or photo book of familiar people / toys that they can take with them to school to help them settle?
- ✓ What happens if my child does not settle?
- ✓ Will someone contact me if there is a problem?
- ✓ Based on my child's needs, what would you advise as useful areas to work on before school?
- ✓ What visuals would be useful to start to introduce to my child?
- ✓ Do you have any pictures we can use at home to support transition?

It can also be useful to use the opportunity when talking to the SENCO / Class Teacher to share information about your child. Some suggestions of what to share are on the next page.

GETTING READY FOR SCHOOL

1. Planning ~ Talking to School



Talking to School ~ A useful checklist of things to share / discuss with the school:

- ✓ Your child's strengths, likes & what they can do.
 - ✓ Your child's needs & what they may find difficult.
 - ✓ Strategies that your child responds to well e.g. 'First / Then' or use of Visual Timetables.
 - ✓ Any resources that your child is familiar with and are successful e.g. sand timers / fidget toys.
 - ✓ Interventions that you have used at home e.g. Special Time / Bucket Time.
 - ✓ Any behaviour management strategies or resources that your child responds well to (if appropriate).
 - ✓ Strategies that help your child to calm if they become upset ~ what works, what does not.
 - ✓ Play preferences ~ do they have particularly motivating toys that they enjoy exploring / playing with that can be used as motivators?
- Are there particular sensations that your child may seek or avoid and how you might manage these situations?
- Your child's / family's COVID-19 experience if this would be helpful to share as this may help school staff to provide the support your child needs.
- Any support your child accessed whilst at their previous setting / targets they may have been working toward.



Schools will also find it helpful to know:

- ✓ Which agencies your child is known to e.g. Speech and Language Therapy, Occupational Therapy, Child Development Team / Clinic, when they last saw your child and their assessments and recommendations.
- ✓ Any diagnosis/es e.g. Autism Spectrum Disorder, Developmental Delay and dates of these.
- ✓ Whether your child is accessing Disability Living Allowance.
- ✓ When your child was at their previous setting whether they accessed any additional funding such as SEN Inclusion Funding. / Disability Access Fund.



GETTING READY FOR SCHOOL

2. Preparing ~ Working on Skills

Based on your child's needs, you may decide that you want to work on teaching your child skills they might find useful when they start school. You may have agreed with the school which skills you will be working on.



Based on your child's needs:

- ✓ Work out your priorities and things you think will most help your child to transition to school.
- ✓ Refer to any reports from your child's Speech & Language Therapist or Occupational Therapist for suggestions.
- ✓ Try to use the strategies from reports as these will be likely used at the school.
- ✓ If you have Targeted Plan targets from when your child attended their early years setting, you could look to these to see if these are useful to work on.
- ✓ Try to work on one or two skills at a time ~ it will help you and your child be more successful in learning new skills.

Remember the skills you are working on will be to help your child with their long term development. Try not to pressure yourself that your child must learn the skills before school. Children with SEND have their own unique profile of development and you are teaching your child skills as part of their individual next step in development.

There are a range of Information Sheets that you can refer to if there are specific areas of your child's development that you would like to work on. These are all available on the Hounslow Local Offer:



Independence skills such as undressing / dressing / feeding / toileting.

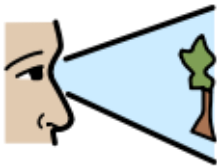


Personal, Social and Emotional skills such as managing feelings & behaviour / being able to separate from you / turn taking / waiting.

GETTING READY FOR SCHOOL

3. Preparing ~ Talking to / Showing your Child ~Resources

There are some things that you can do to support your child with getting ready for school. The following sections have some general tips and ideas you might like to think about as well as particular resources you can use or make to support the transition process.

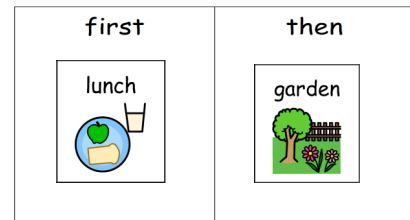


Many children with SEND have strong visual skills. Your child might understand better if shown an object or photo or picture of something. To use this strength, possible supports you might use include:

- ✓ Visuals ~ these could be in many forms. Visuals might include single objects / photos / pictures or written words. Visuals can also be presented in a sequence such as a 'First / Then' or Visual Timetables. If your child has not used visuals before, it might be useful to start to use these ~ they may help you and your child in daily family life as well as supporting the transition to school. Visuals are also used in schools so using them at home will mean that your child will become familiar with them.



Information Sheets on using visuals such as 'Objects of Reference', 'First & Then' and 'Visual Timetables' are all available on the Hounslow Local Offer.



- ✓ Transition Book ~ like a social story, depending on your child's level of understanding a transition book can show your child all the key features of their new school e.g. the building, the Class Teacher, where they will eat etc.
- ✓ Social Stories ~ depending on your child's level of understanding, these are books designed for your child help them see visually step by step, what will happen in a particular situation. You can have a social story book to teach your child about a range of situations such as the routine for getting ready for school / getting on the bus / walking to school etc.
- ✓ Resources and toys that your child is likely to see at school e.g. small whiteboard / pens / puzzles etc.



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3. Preparing ~ Activities to Teach your Child about School

Leaving the previous setting:

If your child has attended a setting previously they may need support to understand that they have now left and will be starting at their new school.

- ✓ You can say to or show your child a visual of '[Setting name] finished, bye bye [setting name]'.
- ✓ It may help your child to have a visual countdown to help them understand the time / days before they start at school.

Talk about School with / Show pictures to your child:

- ✓ Start by talking about or showing your child pictures of school ~ use the Social Stories and Transition Books

- ✓ Show your child a photo of their key member/s of staff (if available) and talk about their names and how they can help your child.



- ✓ Look at the school website and if the school has one watch the video tour of the school.

- ✓ Be positive and calm when talking about school / looking at school pictures.



- ✓ Talk / show things like class name & new words that your child will hear e.g. 'assembly', 'P.E' or 'lining up' and show them pictures of these ~ you could practice lining up at home.

- ✓ Show pictures / talk to your child about what will happen when they arrive at school (e.g. will they need to line up with their class, find their class / name label).



- ✓ Show pictures / talk to your child about what is going to be the same for your child (e.g. a friend that is also going to the school).

- ✓ Look at pictures / read stories about starting school ~ see the list at the end of this information sheet for suggestions or make your own social story book.

- ✓ Show or talk to your child about what will happen when they arrive at school ~ wait, line up, coat peg, carpet etc.

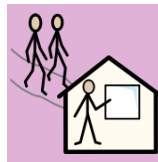
GETTING READY FOR SCHOOL

3. Preparing ~ Activities to Teach your Child about School

There will be activities you can do to support your child's understanding of the forthcoming transition to school. Depending on your child's needs and level of understanding, you could try some of the activities below.



Activities about moving to school:



- ✓ If you have not already, now would be a good time to introduce timetables such as 'First & Then' or a Visual Timetable.
- ✓ Practice leaving the house at the time you would for school i.e. get up, dressed and out of the house for a walk to the school (This will be especially important if your child has had intermittent attendance at their setting).
- ✓ Have a consistent bedtime routine so that your child is not tired for school. Over the Summer, try to wake them at the time they will need to wake for school.
- ✓ Practice learning new skills you would like to work on ~ refer to relevant information sheets (Independence skills / Toileting / Personal, Social and Emotional skills).
- ✓ Let your child look at and play with their new school uniform, PE Kit, school bag etc. Name the items as your child puts them on (e.g. school jumper, PE kit).
- ✓ Put up photos of the school (& teachers if possible) around the house to help your child become familiar with the school / look at websites of the school (many now have video clips).
- ✓ Take photos or cut out pictures of different items of uniform and play a posting / matching game with each item and take turns with your child, saying the name of each item as you match or post the pictures.

COVID-19 hygiene measures:

Following the introduction of additional hygiene measures during the COVID-19 pandemic, some schools may have maintained these measures as part of their daily routine.

To support your child, you may wish to:



- ✓ Practice washing hands for 20 seconds.
- ✓ Model coughing into your elbow, covering your mouth and putting the tissue in the bin etc.
- ✓ If your child is learning to hand wash, you might like to teach one part of the hand washing routine at a time. You could encourage your child to turn the tap, whilst you help them through the rest of the routine. Gradually, encourage them to do the next part e.g. wet hands, then soap on etc. until each part of the sequence is learned.

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4. The Night Before / The First Day ~ Top Tips

The first day ~ it may feel daunting the night before the first day at school. Try to be reassured that your hard work in preparing your child will help your them with their transition to school.



The night before:

- ✓ Keep to the routine that you have worked on ~ avoid any changes to the bedtime routine.
- ✓ Show your child the visual supports you have been using e.g. Transition book / Visuals.
- ✓ Talk to your child about what will happen in the morning as part of their routine.



On the first day:

- ✓ Try to have the transition object with you in case your child becomes distressed on the way to school.
- ✓ Talk to your child / show them relevant visuals throughout your journey to school.
- ✓ Make sure you know exactly where you need to take your child and at what time and also that you know where to collect your child and at what time at the end of the day.
- ✓ Say goodbye in a calm manner ~ say 'school first', 'then home' and leave calmly ~ do not make it a long goodbye.
- ✓ Smile and be positive (even if you feel upset).
- ✓ Try to relax and feel reassured that your transition preparation will have helped your child and the Class Teacher on the first day.
- ✓ At the end of the school day, keep to any evening routines that your child is familiar with.
- ✓ Tell your child that 'school finished' and say 'home time'. Keep your manner calm and positive so that your child experiences the transition at the end of the day as a positive one.
- ✓ Just as you did at the beginning of the day, avoid spending too long at the school ~ collect your child and take them home without too much delay.



GETTING READY FOR SCHOOL

5. The First Term & Beyond

The first term ~ Your child has started school and depending on how they are adjusting to the new environment and routines, your role continues to be crucial in maintaining routines and sharing information with the school about how the transition is going.



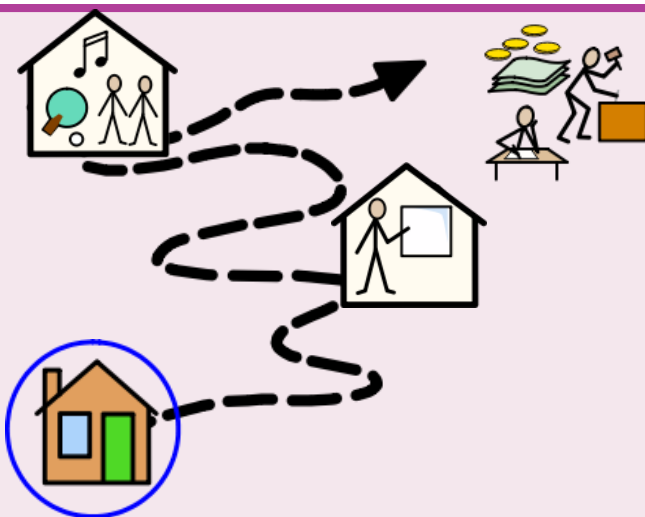
The first term and beyond:

- ✓ It may take your child a little while to settle in ~ keep the routine as simple as possible and limit any changes to your routine to keep some continuity for your child.
- ✓ Try to discuss any issues as soon as they arise rather than waiting.
- ✓ Be prepared that your child may have phases of being settled and may also have periods of time where they may be a little unsettled ~ remember that their transition to school is a process which can feel a little up and down. Keep to your routines with consistency as this can be reassuring to your child.
- ✓ You may notice changes to your child's behaviour as they adjust to school e.g. trouble sleeping / being upset more easily / irritable / withdrawn / changes to bowel and bladder habits / clingy behavior etc. Be reassured that these can be usual responses to a period of change. Continue to provide reassurance, consistency, routine and visual support to help your child on their transition journey.

Who to talk to if you have concerns.

It is always a good idea to talk to the school SENCO if you have any queries or concerns ~ their contact details will usually be available via the school.

If your query or concern is not resolved, you can contact SENDIASS for information and advice (contact details at the end of this sheet).



Your child's journey from home to school will be part of their longer journey of life long development. Transitions in your child's early life will help them with their future transitions and equip them with the skills needed to develop, learn and participate in their education and beyond into adulthood.

GETTING READY FOR SCHOOL

5. The First Term & Beyond

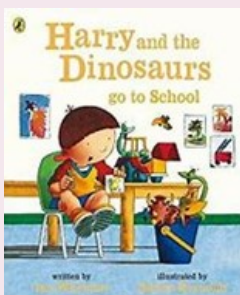
Useful information:

- * Further information sheets are available to support your child with their Independence Skills, Toileting development and Personal, Social & Emotional development. There are also information sheets on how to use 'First & Then' and Visual Timetables. ~ These are available on the Hounslow Local Offer.
- * You can also seek further information and advice from the Special Educational Needs and Disability Information and Advice Support Service ~ Telephone 020 8583 2607 / Email SENDIASS@hounslow.gov.uk
- * The Hounslow Local Offer is also a source of information on a range of services including Activities, Money & Benefits, Education & Health Care Plans and support available through Short Breaks, Childrens Centre activities for children with SEND and much more.

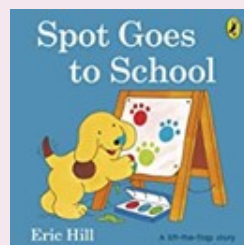


Books about starting school to look at / read with your child:

There are a great many books which you might like to use to support your child in becoming familiar with school. Try to pick books where the language is clear and simple. Depending on your child's needs, you might use the book to look at pictures and name items or play games to find pictures of items on the page. Some of these books are also available on You Tube ~ if your child might find it easier to watch the story online.



Harry and the Dinosaurs go to School
by Ian Whybrow



Spot Goes to School
by Eric Hill



Peppa Pig Busy Day at School
by Candlewick Press



The Colour Monster goes to School
by Anna Llenas