

Tips for Parents of Young Children



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Supporting a child when they start nursery or reception

Starting school or nursery is an important milestone for your child. You will both be feeling excited about this new adventure but probably a bit anxious and nervous as well. It's completely normal to be concerned about this big step in both your lives; here are a few top tips to make the leap a little easier and less stressful for you both.



How to prepare for this important step:

- **Talk about their school** – Tell them what their school will look like, what they might be learning and all of the new friends they will meet.
- **Visits from a setting** – If they attend a day care setting find out about any transition visits taking place between the setting and school and talk to your child about these visits
- **Do a few practice runs** – Whether you are walking, driving or using public transport take the time to do a practice run so that you will know how long the journey will take and you and your child will be familiar with the route.
- **Visit the classroom and meet the teacher** – Try to take your child to see their new classroom and meet the teacher during an open day. Show them all of the exciting things that they can do and if you are allowed, take photos of the room to refer to at a later date.
- **Explain what will happen every day** – Go through their day in school, what will happen in the morning, at break time, lunch and home time. They will then know what to expect and when they will be going home.
- **Try on their uniform or clothes for nursery** – Get them to try on their uniform or their outfit for nursery with their shoes and bag so that they feel comfortable in it and enjoy wearing it.

- **Have everything ready at the door** – Make sure you have their coat and shoes at the door waiting and that their bag is packed, perhaps the night before. This will help you to feel calm and in control on the big day.
- **Being independent** – Encourage your child to be able to use the toilet and put their coat/shoes on by themselves. Avoid shoes with laces and instead opt for Velcro or slip on shoes.
- **Reading** – Borrow books from the library such as 'First Day at School' to help familiarise your child with the changes in their routine.
- **Familiarity with basic number and letters** – Help your child practise writing their name so they become familiar with it. This will help encourage your child to be curious about learning and help build their confidence.

What to do once they have started:

Once they have started in their new school or nursery, try to make sure you greet them positively from school. Remember to put away your phone and give your child your full attention as you talk to them about how they are getting on, how they are feeling and about any worries or concerns.

- **Make time to talk** – Set aside some one-to-one time everyday to ask how their day went and how they are feeling. Bedtime can be a good time for this.
- **Ask for a list of books** – Ask the teacher for a list of the books they will be reading and read them together at bedtime. They will get excited to show you the book that they are reading in school and to tell you what they do in school.
- **Make connections** – You may like to exchange contact details with other parents so that you can discuss upcoming school events, share concerns and arrange play dates outside school.
- **Get Involved** – Find out if there is a parent group. This could be a friends of the school or PTA that arranges social and other activities. There may be family learning groups that can help you find out more about how and what your child will be learning at school and how you can support them.
- **Arrange for friends to visit** – Schedule in some play dates with children in their class on the weekend, this can help them to feel more confident on a Monday morning as they can discuss what they did with their friend.
- **Toy or blanket** – If they are used to having a favourite toy or blanket try and get them used to leaving it in the same place everyday so that they will know it's safe at home.
- **Who will be collecting them and when** – If you are asking family members, a childcare setting or child-minder to collect your child make sure your child (and the school) is aware of who will be collecting them each day. You could make a chart for the fridge and check it before you leave each day so that they feel comfortable and don't get upset.
- **Allow them some quiet time** – They may be quite tired after school for the first few weeks so allow them to have a small nap or some quiet time before asking them too many questions. This will help them to recharge a bit.

Things to avoid:

- **Showing them you are nervous** – Even if you feel emotional and nervous about leaving them make sure you don't show it, try to be relaxed and maybe have a sing-song on the way to school so that they don't feel nervous. If they cry, give them a big hug, smile and wave them off, telling them you will see them soon. It will get easier with every day and once inside they will have a great time!
- **Negative experiences** – Try to avoid letting your child hear negative stories about school and bad experiences as they may become worried.
- **Nap times** – If your child still has naps it would be best to try and phase these out before school so that they don't get too tired and upset.
- **Making too many plans** – Try to avoid organising too many after school activities and making lots of plans on the weekend for the first week or so while your child settles in to their routine. They will likely be very tired.

Where to get additional help and support

School/childcare setting key worker or LSA (contact school/setting)

Education begins at home – gov.wales/topics/educationandskills/schoolshome/parents/education-begins-at-home/?lang=en

Advice on taking time for yourself and managing stress – giveittime.gov.wales/parenting-and-encouragement-tips/look-after-yourself-and-managing-stress/?lang=en

Parentkind for advice on school groups for parents – www.parentkind.org.uk/

Families First Advice line – gov.wales/topics/people-and-communities/people/children-and-young-people/parenting-support-guidance/help/families-first/contact-local-families-first-team/?lang=en

Dewis site for information on wellbeing – www.dewis.wales/

Family Information Service – gov.wales/topics/people-and-communities/people/children-and-young-people/parenting-support-guidance/help/familyinformationservices/?lang=en

For helpful tips on managing challenging behaviour such as tantrums and for a range positive parenting techniques, visit: www.gov.wales/giveittime