

Hatch Warren Infant School



Early Years Parent's Booklet

Is my child ready for school?

GETTING YOUR CHILD READY TO START SCHOOL

...three important things to do...

1. Give your child confidence.

A child who feels confident about going to school will do better than a child who feels nervous. You want your child to go to school thinking that this is going to be a good thing and to feel happy about the adventure.

How to give your child confidence about going to school.

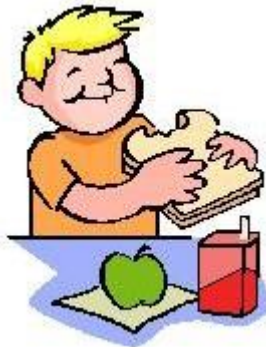
Children get confidence about going to school if they hear good things about school life.

As your child gets ready for school...

If you tell your child "You are really going to enjoy school" then your child will probably believe you. If, in a moment of exasperation, you mutter "You're going to do really badly at school if you carry on like this," then your child will start losing confidence.

It is much easier to be positive if the child in question is the eldest child, or an only child in the family. Watch out though if you have an older child who can't resist a bit of scaremongering about what goes on at school!

You should try and deal with this. Reassure the younger child. Tell your child that this is typical of older children - they always make up tales to frighten brothers and sisters. Talk with the older brother or sister and explain what they are doing is very unhelpful.



2. Make sure your child can build relationships.

Being at school is about being with other people. That means other children of the same age, older children and of course adults in the shape of teachers.

How to help your child build relationships.

Starting school for the first time means coming face to face with a large group of unknown children. It can be a frightening experience. For this reason it is helpful to let your child meet and get to know as many other children as possible before coming to school.

As children get to know each other they have to learn how to relate - and this can be a painful and difficult transition, but children are great natural learners. You will often want to help your child to behave properly with other children. You will want to stop fights, encourage sharing, stop bullying, help the children play with each other and stop breaking things. But, whenever possible, you should also try and let the children just get on with each other - that is how they learn best what other children are like.

3. Make sure your child has the basic skills that are needed to do well at school.

Here are some of the things that your child should be able to do when he or she starts school:

- Do up Velcro shoes
- Taking their jumper on and off
- Put on and doing up their coat
- Go to toilet and wash hands afterwards
- Eat dinner without help
- Ask for help when necessary - but not all the time!

SCHOOL IS A POSITIVE EXPERIENCE

If you are worried about your child going to school, your child will pick up your anxiety. So if **you** are worried the first thing you must do is to find out **why** you are worried.

You might be worried about your child going to school because:

- **You've grown used to having the child around all the time.**

Talk to other parents of children who have recently started school and ask them how they felt.

- **You're not sure if your child is ready for school.**

This is a common worry. Most children are perfectly ready for school by the time they have to go. Remember that your child's private worries and fears, hopes and dreams are not the same as your child's public face.

- **You're not sure if your child will do well at school.**

It is very hard to judge how well a 4 or 5 year old will do at school so try not to start judging your child now. If you do you might start putting too much pressure on your child just at the wrong time. There's a long way to go, a lot to learn and plenty of time to do it in!

- **Everyone else's child seems more grown up.**

Children develop at different rates mentally and physically. Children who seem one year to be way ahead can slip behind. The children who are good at sports one year might find the benefit of additional height or speed suddenly deserts them as everyone else has a growing spurt.

Don't judge your child against everyone else. There tends to be a lot of that later in life - there is no need to do it before your child has even started in school.



TELL YOUR CHILD IT IS GOING TO BE GOOD.

You will probably talk about school to a lot of people. Even when you think your child is not listening, you can be surprised.

So when talking at home, or when talking to friends, relatives or neighbours, always try to be positive about school if your child is nearby.

Remember to tell your child that this is going to a great adventure. It will be a chance to learn about a lot of new things. It will be a chance to make new friends.

Children can be very good at countering this sort of argument.

"I don't want to make new friends."

"I like it at home."

"I want to stay with you."

Don't be deflected. Keep up the message - ***school will be good.***

TEACHING YOUR CHILD INDEPENDENCE IN 7 STEPS

Growing up is about becoming independent. You may not want to let your child go, but it has to happen. It is much better to allow your child to explore independence slowly year by year than to be faced with it suddenly later in life.

You can help your child in the first 7 steps to independence. Here are some suggestions:

1. Encourage your child to play with other children.

When children play they have to co-operate. They have to agree what they are going to play. If they can do this without an adult helping, then they are taking the first steps towards independence.

2. If you find your child is becoming bossy when playing, talk to your child about this.

Talk about sharing and taking turns, negotiating and compromising. Spend a few moments helping the children sort the problem out, and then see if they can get the game going again. You may have to do this a lot, but it will be worthwhile.

3. Help your child to relate to adults.

We all relate to different people in different ways. Your child will talk to a teacher in one way, an uncle in another....and you in another. Learning the different ways of dealing with adults is an important part of growing up.

***** Introduce your child to adults that you meet. *****

Get your child to quickly say hello. Encourage the adults to ask your child simple questions and encourage your child to answer. Try very hard not to answer for a child. If a question is raised at mealtimes about what your child will or won't eat, try and get your child to answer.

***** When other adults are around, do try and get your child involved with them. *****

Some adults shy away from children, some have simply have had enough having spent all day with their own, but others have great energy and vitality to expend on children. Wherever there is an opportunity for another adult to talk with and play with your child, do let it happen, with you watching the situation.

***** Saying goodbye to a child can be a problem.*****

When you leave your child at a party, or with a friend or neighbour, say goodbye in a friendly way. Don't wait until the child is occupied and then dash out!

If, when you say goodbye your child prefers you to stay, don't worry. That is quite natural and reassuring. But make sure you still leave. It may cause a problem the first or second time, but your child must get used to your not being there all the time. After all it is much better that you practice leaving your child with friends or neighbours, rather than finding that you have great problems at the school gate on the first day.

***** When you return after leaving your child, say hello in a positive way.*****

Be pleased to see your child and try and give him or her your full attention. You may want to have a chat with the person who has been looking after the child, but do try and give your child as much warmth and friendship at that moment of return as possible. Please don't greet your child whilst talking on your phone.

***** Children can react to returning parents in many ways.*****

They can cry (at the sudden reaction that you have been away); they can ignore you (because the painting is too much fun) or they can just come up and give you a hug. Let the child decide how to react; your job is just to be friends.

4. Encourage your child to try new ideas.

If your child is reluctant at trying anything new, you need to offer gentle persuasion. Telling a child that it is wrong not to want to go out to another child's house won't solve the situation. Many children are naturally shy about going out and meeting others; they prefer the known.

Try to offer compromises that your child might find acceptable. Offer to go with the child, offer to stay if that is possible. If you can get this to work make sure the welcome home afterwards is particularly rewarding.

5. Encourage Independence.

By gaining a degree of independence early on, children gradually learn to do more and more for themselves. You should encourage this - but remember there will be times when your child want you to do everything. When children ask parents to do things for them which they can not do very well for

themselves, it is not laziness that makes them ask. They want reassurance that you are still there.

6. Tidying up.

Tidying up is always a problem. Most young children find it impossible to see how they can make a room tidy - they just don't know where to begin. The idea that you might start at one end of the room, picking up and packing away as you move across, is not one that children grasp early on.

That does not mean that you should allow your children to be untidy. Work with them - get them to see that tidying up is work that has to be done and get them to help you - even if their help is not very practical.

7. Overcoming bad manners.

Manners and politeness are things that have to be taught: children do not naturally say please and thank you. They do not naturally share and take turns until they realise that doing so can bring them the benefits of being in groups. The best way to teach manners is to demonstrate them yourself. If your child hears you say please and thank you to them and to other people in your life, then your child will copy that. It won't happen at once, but it will happen much more quickly where there is a model for the child to copy.

THE PRACTICALITIES OF LIFE

DRESSING

Please encourage your child to get dressed in the morning with the minimum of assistance-this can help enormously. Also, if you make sure that the clothes selected for school are ones that are easy to get on and off, this too makes life much easier for your child. Shaped buttons on girl's polo shirts may look lovely but they can be more fiddly than regular buttons. Also help your child to turn their clothes the right way through. If you buy their clothes slightly bigger than they need then the children will find it easier to get dressed themselves.

Shoes

Some shoes are much harder than others to fasten. It is much better for your child to have shoes that are easy to do up than shoes that are the latest fashion. Shoes should be practical with closed toes. Black trainers or school shoes are fine for school.

Coats

Coats too need to be done up and, the easier this is, the better it is for your child.

RECOGNITION

In Year R children should be able to recognise their possessions fairly easily. If you want to test this ability, put out some of your child's clothes, shoes, coats, gloves, school bag and anything else suitable, alongside items from one or two other people (yourself, brothers, sisters, friends...) and let your child choose. It may seem a simple exercise, but it will help develop your child's recognition.

But please don't just rely on recognition - remember that everything taken to school must be named and labelled, including shoes. It has a habit of walking off with someone else otherwise!

TOILET TRAINING

Children coming to school should be able to go to the toilet alone, and wash their hands afterwards. If this is a concern, please speak to your child's teacher or teaching assistant.

NOSE BLOWING

Children should be able to get their own tissue from one of the boxes around the classroom and blow their own nose. Children should know that the tissue then needs to be put in the bin.

EATING DINNER

Your child should be able to eat dinner using cutlery appropriately without help. If this is a concern, please speak to your child's teacher or teaching assistant.

MAKING DECISIONS

Practice giving your child choices as soon as possible - choices of what to do this afternoon, or what to wear, or of food or who to visit...

These choices should not be totally open - would you prefer to do this or that?

SHARING

In Year R, children should have a clear idea about sharing and be able to take turns with suitable adult supervision.

MEMORY

Most children have perfectly reasonable memories - what the children have to learn is how to use their memories. Here are some ways to help develop your child's memory.

- **WHAT HAPPENED TODAY**

Ask your child to tell you what happened today - especially on a day when something unusual has happened. Don't worry if one of the main events of the day is missed out from the list.

Children take a long time to learn how to use their memory. There's no need to play this game everyday - but just do it from time to time when there is something to remember.

You can combine **WHAT HAPPENED TODAY** with drawing pictures. If your child wants to draw a picture quite often, why not collect the pictures with a note in each case of what happened that day. Gather the pictures together in a collection

Go back to the pictures to talk to your child about them. Your child will probably remember the details and you can talk through what happened.

- **LISTEN AND RESPOND**

Give your child an instruction - such as "Go and get something green from your bedroom." You will soon see how easy or hard your child finds this to follow. Then each time make it a bit harder.

Incidentally, this can be of great help for you. Next time you want your child to get something from the bedroom there is a greater chance this will happen.

You can also try: "Find a picture of a big building in the paper."

- **LISTEN TO THE STORY**

When you have read or told your child a story, ask some simple questions about the story afterwards. You can ask the questions after the story, and ask them again the next day.

- **CONCENTRATION**

It is important to ask your child to concentrate.

Concentration will be needed at school: if you can encourage your child to concentrate you will be doing them a big favour.

The best way to do this is to get your child to listen carefully to your instructions and requests. This is very hard for the child if there are always other noises going on.

It is much harder for a child to listen when the television is on than if there are no other sounds and moving pictures around.

When your child is talking to you, try hard not to interrupt. This may be difficult - especially if your child is telling a rambling story that seems to have no importance and no obvious end! But it is hard for a child to learn to listen and concentrate if each time your child speaks someone else starts speaking too.

Of course it is not just children we interrupt - these days all adults interrupt each other more than ever before. If this happens a lot in your home it will make it harder for you to teach your child to listen and not interrupt you when you are speaking.

You may find that your child's mind seems to wander all the time. You can help overcome this by such activities as telling stories and playing games with your child without any background noises from the television. Make sure you are concentrating on the activity and the chances are your child will too. Children should be able to complete activities they have started - within reason! Always try to encourage your child to finish what has been started.

Your child should be able to concentrate on a simple topic or story for ten minutes or more or more by the time they start school.

WHAT WILL MY CHILD NEED FOR SCHOOL?

1. Uniform - Children will need a white polo shirt, black or grey trousers, skirt or dress and a red cardigan or jumper. This can be plain or a logo one available from Skoolkit or the FOHWIS second hand uniform shop.
2. At snack time, we give the children free fruit or vegetables daily as part of nationwide initiatives to encourage the children to eat more healthily. We have a healthy eating policy and biscuits, sweets, chocolate and fizzy drinks are not permitted. Children are also encouraged to have a drink of plain water from their water bottle. You can also register your child for the Cool Milk scheme (see separate letters)
3. A change of clothes in case of any kind of accident.
4. A red book bag - These are available from the school office with the school logo on. This should travel between home and school **every day please**.
5. Named water bottle - the children have free access to plain water throughout the school day. Please ensure your child brings this home daily to be washed and refilled. Please ensure that this is a sports style bottle rather than a twist cap as these are less likely to spill.
6. An Outdoor Fun Kit - we ask that you provide, in a bag separate from their PE kit, the following: **welly boots, a waterproof raincoat, a sunhat**. This will allow access to the outdoor learning environment all year round!

N.B. Please mark everything with the child's name.

Please ensure that your child does not bring toys or other treasures from home. If the teacher asks for anything related to the topic, they will let you know.

WHAT DO WE DO IN SCHOOL?

The children take part in a wide variety of activities during their time in the reception year. In the early stages, your child will engage in a range of practical and written tasks related to 7 areas of learning within the Foundation Stage. These are:

The three prime areas of:

- **Communication and Language**

- **Physical Development**
- **Personal, Social and Emotional Development**

The four specific areas of:

- **Literacy**
- **Mathematics**
- **Understanding the world**
- **Expressive Arts and Design**

This will enable your child to learn and develop skills, attitudes and understandings which prepare them for the National Curriculum that is taught in Year 1 and Year 2.

As much of the work is topic linked, the children are able to relate ideas in a meaningful way and learning is given a purposeful dimension. You will be informed in more detail of the topics being undertaken at the start of each term so that you can support your child at home too.

When your child first starts school, we will find out where they are at and from this information will plan their next steps. These steps will be formulated with you as parents so you can support and work with us in helping your child to make progress. The targets set will be regularly reviewed so that we are continually challenging and moving your child forward.

How can I help with reading and writing?

Reading and writing are an important part of your child's education.

Reading

A love of books is fostered from the initial pre-school visits and we hope this view of reading will also be supported by you as parents. Sharing stories and talking about books are valuable aspects of reading and we endeavour to build on the very wide range of reading experiences children have had before coming to school.

Whether your child is reading 'War and Peace' or whether they are at the stage of telling you the story from the pictures, every child is a 'reader'. It is up to us as teachers and parents to work together to ensure they continue to develop in their experiences and become avid readers.

At Hatch Warren Infant School, we teach reading using a combination of approaches. The children learn words from memory and use phonics as a support. They learn the sounds that letters make in order to sound out words.

It is important that your child is taught letter sounds initially rather than the names of the letters. It will be more useful for your child to know that the letter 'a' says 'ah'. They will not need to know the letter name 'ay' at first as it can add confusion.

Each of the letter sounds is taught and we make this an enjoyable experience through a variety of fun activities and by linking each letter to something that the children can relate to and remember. Each sound has an action, song and picture linked to it. We also teach letter formation at the same time as the letter sound.

From a structured approach in the early stages, the children move into our reading scheme, reading a wider range of books at their appropriate level of ability. Your child will also be given a selection of Fluffy's words that link directly to the book they are reading and to develop their sight vocabulary.

Writing

Before they begin to write, children need lots of time to draw and colour, to cut out and stick. Your child may use both hands to start with. Some children take a long time to settle on using their right or left hand. Children may need to understand what writing is for so let them see you writing shopping lists, letters to Grandma....

At first, children call their 'scribble' writing and it is important that you let them 'read' to you what they want it to say.

When writing with your child it is important to insist on the correct formation of letters as children can quickly form habits which are very difficult to break. It is also important to use lower case letters when writing with your child. Only use capital letters where they occur naturally, for example at the beginning of your child's name. You need to ensure that your child is holding the pencil comfortably between the thumb and first finger and you may need to show them how it is done.

By following these pointers when you work with your child at home you will avoid confusing them and you will reinforce the work they do at school.

How can I help with mathematics?

Mathematics is all around us. It is about shapes and sizes, time and space, matching and measuring, as well as numbers, counting and using money. Children learn to sort when they put spoons and forks away. They learn about size as they line up their toy cars or put on daddy's shoes and find they are too big. They count, add up and compare as they climb the stairs or find a piece of string long enough to tie up a parcel. They learn to recognise numbers from the front door and when they see them on birthday cards. They learn about time when you talk about yesterday and tomorrow and when you say you'll be home at six o'clock. They learn about money while helping you find the right pennies to buy the shopping.

You can support your child in their mathematical development by encouraging them to do some of these activities at home when preparing dinner or playing...there are endless opportunities. We will share activities with you in the half termly newsletters.

How can I help generally?

This section has been written following parent's enquiries as to how they can help their child when they start school.

Many of the activities suggested you probably do already and you may have many ideas of your own. This is only a guideline as to the type of activities that are important to your child's early development.

- Encourage your child to discuss things they have done or are doing.
- Find time to listen to the things your child wants to talk about.
- Encourage your child to play make-believe games in which they can act out different roles. Find time to join in sometimes.
- Read and share books with your child and encourage them to handle books correctly.
- Tell your child traditional fairytales and nursery rhymes and encourage your child to tell stories. Encourage your child to listen for the rhyming patterns.

- Find opportunities to practice counting, e.g. when you are climbing the stairs or laying the table. Sing number rhymes together.
- Involve your child in doing the shopping - checking the cupboards, making the list, paying for the goods.
- Find opportunities to discuss the colours of things, e.g. when getting dressed...
- Play games involving memory, matching or finding the odd one out.
- At bath time provide your child with containers of varying shapes and sizes to play with.
- Occasionally involve your child in doing some cooking. Encourage them to discuss what you are doing and what is happening to the food.
- Give your child opportunities to use equipment and materials such as scissors, glue, paint and pencils. Please ensure that pencils and scissors are held correctly.
- **Most importantly keep it FUN and ENJOYABLE for all involved!!!**

Play

What is 'play'?

" 'Play' is an activity having its main aim for the individual the pleasure which the activity itself yields." *Drever*

Play is an essential part of the Foundation Stage Curriculum and the young child's development. It is a pleasurable fulfilling activity and is integral to a child's education.

If you ask children what play is they will respond:

"It's when we do something we want to."

"It's when you don't tell us how to do something."

Their so called 'playing' is in fact 'learning'. They concentrate all their faculties on the one activity in which they are wholeheartedly engaged. It is this concentration that can be exploited as a teaching aid.

Play is organised.

- We provide a wide range of play activities to cater for the different stages of play development each child will achieve.
- The children are given free choice of play activities but also have play activities chosen for them to encourage and enforce a change of play.
- Similarly, the children are provided time on a daily basis to choose what they play with, where they would like to play (either inside or outside) and who they would like to play with.
- Occasionally children will be encouraged in play activities to work in a certain group. The aim of this is to ensure that they have the opportunity to socialise with different children.
- To encourage high quality play, starting points and challenges are often given. Skillful intervention and questioning help to check the activity and allow the teacher to encourage further development.
- We endeavour to provide equipment that is attractive, clean, complete and clearly labelled to encourage independence and respect for the equipment.

'Play underpins all development and learning for young children. Most children play spontaneously, although some may need adult support, and it is through play that they develop intellectually, creatively, socially and emotionally'

(Practice Guidance for the Early Years Foundation Stage)

- All children have their preferred activities and their likes and dislikes. Some children enjoy drawing, some children like climbing and some children enjoy building a tower to see how many ways they can knock it down. Each day is different and each child is different but every day will be full of new and exciting challenges and experiences. They may not always be able to take examples of this home in the evening to show you, but they will certainly have had a busy and varied day.

No, there's nothing in my bag today

Today I did my maths and science, I toasted bread, I halved
and quartered, counted and measured, used my eyes and ears
and head.

I added and subtracted, on the way I used a magnet, blocks
and a memory tray. I learned about a rainbow and how to weigh
so please don't say

'Anything in your bag today?'

Yes, I played the whole day through.

I played to learn the thing I do. I seek a problem I find a
clue, and make out for myself what to do.

My teachers set the scene and stay nearby to help me when I
really try.

They are there to pose the problems and help me think, I hope
they'll keep me floating and never let me sink.

All this is in my head and not in my bag.

It makes me sad to hear you say,

'Haven't you done anything today?'

I've learned about a snake and a worm, remembered how to
Take my turn, helped a friend and when they were stuck. Learned
That water runs off a duck.

Looked at letters from left to right, agreed to differ not to
Fight.

So please don't say 'Did you only play today?'

You see I'm sharing as I play, I learn to listen and speak clearly
When I talk, to take my turn, and when inside to walk, to put my
thought into a phrase, to guide a crayon through a maze.

To find my name and write it down, to do it with a smile and not
a frown, to put my painting brush away.

So please don't say 'What nothing in your bag today?'

When you attend your meeting and do your work today, I will
Remember not to say.

'What nothing in your bag, what did you do all day?'

We believe sincerely that your child's education is a partnership between
home and school. Like any partnership this requires co-operation and
understanding from both partners.

This philosophy is summarised in the following poem which we leave with you as a thought for the future.

The Sculptors.

I dreamed I stood in a studio
And watched two sculptors there
The clay they used was a young child's mind
And they fashioned it with care
One was a teacher,
The tools he used were books, music and art.
One a parent
With a guiding hand and a gentle loving heart
Day after day that teacher toiled
With a touch that was loving and sure
While the parent laboured by his side
And polished and smoothed it o'er.
And when at last their task was done
They were proud of what they had wrought
For the things they had moulded into the child
Could neither be sold or bought
And each agreed he would have failed,
If he had worked alone,
For behind the parents stood the school,
And behind the teacher,
The home.

From 'Right from the Beginning.'

Finally....

We hope you have enjoyed this book and we look forward to working with you in September.

