

Top Tips for Transition



Forefield Community Infant and Nursery School

What we can do to help children prepare for starting school?

1. Prepare them for what to expect

Helping children to prepare for change is the first step in tackling any transition. Talking openly about when, how and why things will happen helps children to make sense of the world around them. It is important to make sure that they know what is going to happen as far as is possible so that there are no surprises. This can help them to feel safe and secure. Look at the school website, read the e-book together and take walks past school and talk to your children as much as possible about what to expect

2. Get into a routine

Getting into a routine can be a great way to prepare for school. Bedtimes and waking times may have changed during lockdown; try to adjust these gradually so that children are ready for the school day. It will help to begin to get the practicalities ready for school – for example school uniforms and gather up the school equipment. Remember, school transition will be a big change for many parents too.

3. Listen to your child

Just being there and available to listen to children's thoughts and feelings is really important. Acknowledging their feelings without judgement or needing to find solutions immediately can help children to open up and share their concerns with you. It can be helpful to reassure children that their feelings are natural and that you are there for them. Every child is different and will experience things in their own way.

It's important to understand that validation doesn't always mean agreement. E.g. if a child is terrified about going to the doctor because she's due for an injection, you don't want to belittle her fears, but you also don't want to amplify them. You want to listen and be empathetic, help her understand what she's anxious about, and encourage her to feel that she can face her fears. The message you want to send is, "I know you're scared, and that's okay, and I'm here, and I'm going to help you get through this." **Listen to your child and validate their feelings without letting them escalate in a calm manner without judgement. Never belittle their feelings.**

4. Encourage them to talk

Sometimes, children can find it difficult to talk about how they are feeling. They may not have the language or understanding to identify or know how to describe them. As adults we can support them by ‘wondering’ about how they are feeling e.g. I wonder if you are feeling a bit worried which helps them to name their feelings and extends their emotional vocabulary. It can also be helpful to offer prompts and open questions as a starting point for conversations.

Suggested questions to help children to talk about their feelings about going to school:

- What are you looking forward to?
- What might be hard?
- What do you think will be ok?

Don't ask leading questions.

Encourage your child to talk about their feelings, but try not to ask leading questions— “Are you anxious about going to school? Are you worried that you won't make friend?” To avoid feeding the cycle of anxiety, just ask open-ended questions: “How are you feeling about going to school?”

5. Offer reassurance

Some children may need lots of reassurance about starting school. Home/school communication is so important. It helps families know what to expect and they are then able to talk about this with their children. Sharing knowledge from home with school gives staff an insight into how best to support a child in any areas they may struggle with.

If children are anxious about starting school or separating from their parents, it can be helpful to talk to remind them of the things they are going to enjoy at school. Having some fun and rewarding activities planned could help to boost children's positivity and sense of achievement. It can be helpful to talk to children about what is staying the same, as well as what is changing during times of transition – this can increase their sense of stability.

Try to encourage your child to challenge their thoughts safely. Talk about what would happen if a worry came true. But also use humour, 'Do you have beds in school?' 'No! So you can't stay the night!' 'So I will always come and get you!'

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6. Focus on positive separation with you and your child.

Talk about how well they coped. What exciting things they did whilst you were away. How it felt to reunite again. They did it then and they can do it now.

Don't mind the blips, sometimes there will be progress and something might make them go backwards for a day or two. That is ok! Agree a goodbye routine with your child. Reinforce how you will be returning to collect them and when that will be e.g. after story-time. Use a consistent approach of quick goodbyes and happy reunions.

7. Focus on activities to support your child's wellbeing

Have a look on our website under Curriculum- Health and wellbeing. This has information on what we can do as a school to support you and your child with health and wellbeing. It also has helpful links and a link to our Forefield Five Superhero character challenge (Captain Connect, Active Man, Lightning Learner, Mindful Mystique and Go Go Give) which supports children with activities to support their wellbeing.

Which Forefield Five Superhero are you going to choose?		How many activities can you complete?	
 <p>Captain Connect</p>	<p>Send a card/ postcard to a relative or neighbour who you aren't able to see at the moment. It will brighten their day.</p> 	<p>Have a chat with a friend on the phone or through facetime/ WhatsApp call. Remember it is important for us to keep in touch with our friends.</p> 	<p>Make something to go in your window- a rainbow or a picture that will cheer others up when they are out exercising. You could write a positive message 'Keep smiling'. You could change this weekly- people will look forward to walking past your house.</p> 
 <p>Active Man</p>	<p>Go for a walk or bike ride with your family.</p> 	<p>Active Man Challenge</p>  <p>5 star jumps 5 jumps 3 hops Jog on the spot for 10 seconds Repeat 5 times</p>	<p>Complete a Shake Up Activity (click on link) Which activity will you choose? Remember it is important to keep moving especially when we are in the house all day!</p> 

Health & Wellbeing

Health and Wellbeing

At Forefield Community and Infant Nursery School we ensure all children are nurtured and supported through a supportive environment so that pupils will become happy, respectful, independent and responsible members of society and develop the qualities and attributes children need to thrive as individuals, family members and members of society.

We understand that everyone experiences life challenges that can make us vulnerable and at times, anyone may need additional emotional support. We take the view that positive mental health is everyone's business and that we have a role to play in ensuring that children know what mental health is and how to support their own and others' mental health.

We therefore aim to develop children's self-esteem and provide positive experiences for overcoming adversities and building resilience. We want our school to ensure that children are capable of managing times of stress and that they are supported to reach their full potential or know where to go and get help from when they need it.

At our school we:

8. Look after yourself

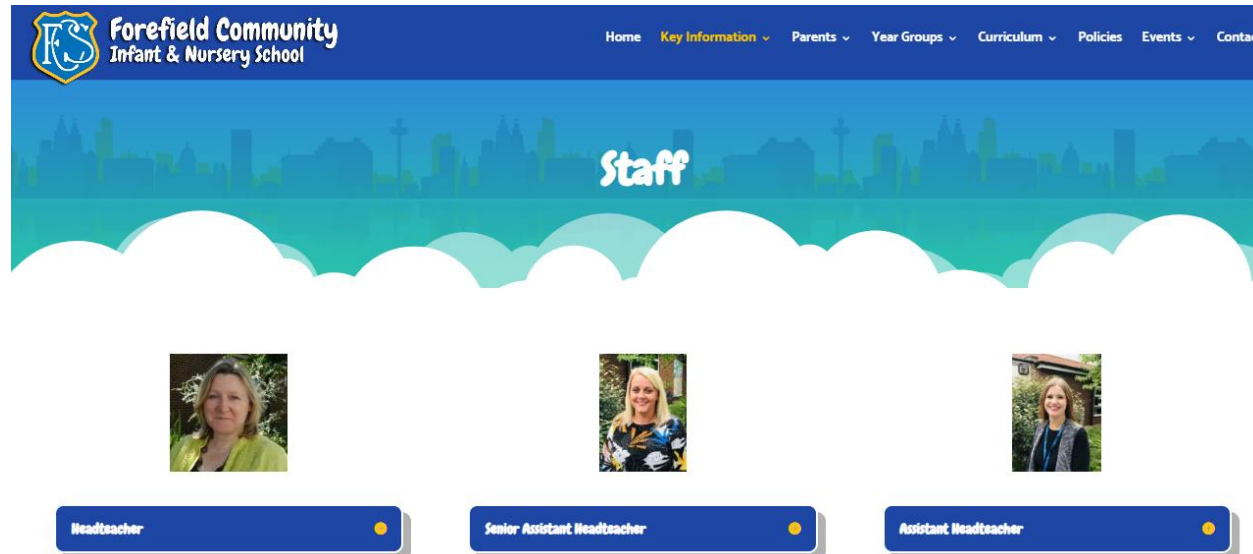
The coronavirus pandemic has put enormous strain on parents, carers, families and teachers. No one has been unaffected. Taking time to look after ourselves and each other is so important.

Your child starting school is a huge milestone and can feel quite emotional.

What you don't want to do is be saying, with your tone of voice or body language: "Maybe this *is* something that you should be afraid of."

9. Make good home school links

Use us- we are here to help both you and your child! There is a section on the website called staff. There you will find pictures of staff along with what their roles is and a little bit of information about what they do. We will always do our best to help you or find the right person who can.



SEPARATION ANXIETY

Top Tips

Practice separation

Never sneak away

Make a quick 'goodbye' routine with your child

Consistent approach

Be kind, firm but don't give in

Ask a familiar person to take them to school, it might break the cycle

Don't hang around, pass your child to a trusted adult, say your goodbyes and reassure you will see them later. Leave without fuss

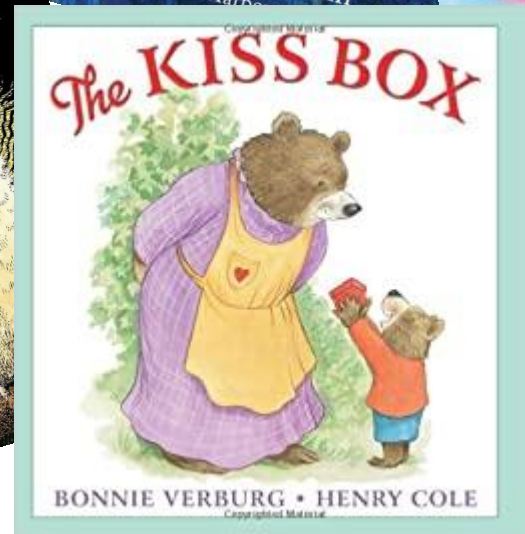
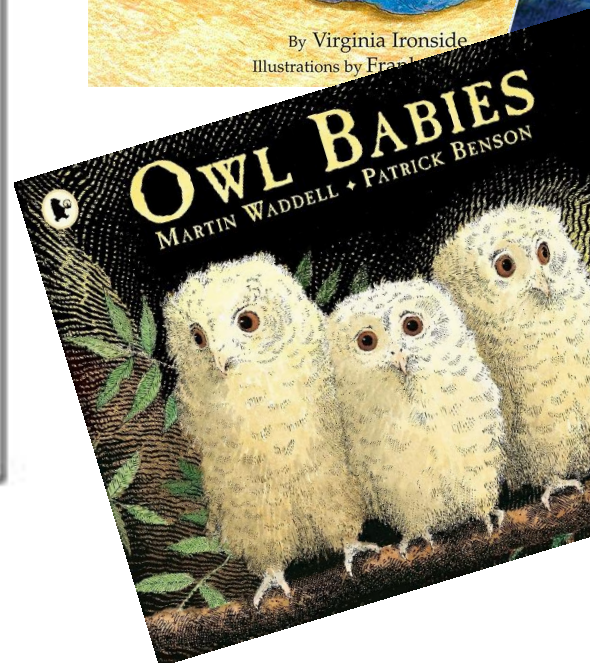
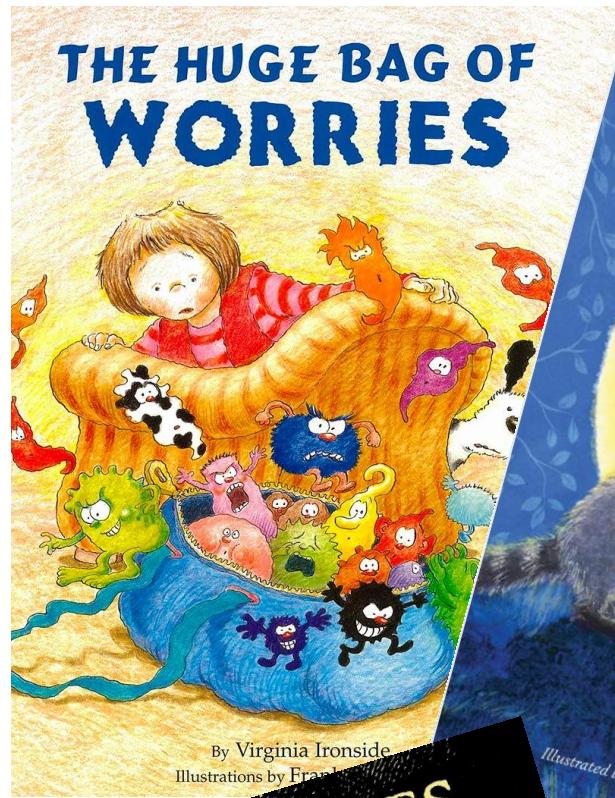
Explain how it is normal to feel anxious and the reasons we all experience anxiety sometimes.

Listen to your child and validate their feelings without letting them escalate in a calm manner without judgement. Never belittle their feelings.

Focus on positive separation from your child. How well they coped. What exciting things they did whilst you were away. Remind them they did it before and they can do it now.

Book recommendations

- Huge bag of worries
- The kissing hand
- The invisible string
- Owl babies
- The kiss box



Summary of Strategies

Develop a good home/school relationship

Reassure using positive language such as 'you are going to be fine, everyone feels a little nervous sometimes'. 'It's ok to try new things', 'You will have a good time'.

Stick to what they are supposed to be doing e.g. going to school, going to bed.

Explain how it is normal to feel anxious and the reasons we all experience anxiety sometimes.

Listen to your child and validate their feelings without letting them escalate in a calm manner without judgement. Never belittle their feelings.

Be kind but firm and never give in.

Try to encourage your child to challenge their thoughts safely. What evidence is there? Is this likely or unlikely to happen?

Focus on positive separation with you and your child. How well they coped. What exciting things they did whilst you were away. How it felt to reunite again. They did it then and they can do it now.

Don't mind the blips, sometimes there will be progress and something might make them go backwards for a day or two. That is ok!

Lots of patience and a sense of humour helps.

Agree a goodbye routine with your child. Reinforce how you will be returning to collect them and when that will be eg. after storytime

Never sneak away.

Use a consistent approach of quick goodbyes and happy reunions.

Top Tips for preparing your child for starting school

Talk about school

- ▶ Always be positive and enthusiastic about all the fun things that will happen at school, use their teacher's name so it feels familiar and talk about the new friends they'll make. Be realistic though, children aren't daft. Explain that it is ok to feel nervous or sad and they will get tired, but remind them that they can always tell their teacher. You'll find plenty of books online or at your local library that bring the school day to life, and if your child likes sticker books and playing schools with their favourite teddies – go for it! We are hoping to offer taster sessions before they start school in September. Look at photos on our website showing how the classroom will be laid out so you can talk about it with your child, pointing out desks, sinks, trays of equipment etc.



Top Tips for preparing your child for starting school

Get to know the school

- ▶ As you know we have been holding 'virtual' events for parents and children which we hope will welcome and encourage you into our school community. Your child is bound to be wondering what school will be like when they arrive and what sort of things happen during the day. During the summer holidays, practice the school run, this can get them excited about starting there and also used to travelling to and from the school. Taking walks or driving past the school often will prompt children to start talking about 'my school' before they've even started.
- ▶ Use the school website- have a look at the class pages and the photographs- talk about what the children are doing, do they look like they are having a good time etc?
- ▶ We also have a section on the website under key information – Welcome to Forefield Nursery and Reception- there you will find welcome books for both Reception and Nursery that include photographs and key information.
- ▶ <https://www.forefieldinfantschool.co.uk/welcome-to-forefield-nursery-and-reception/>



Top Tips for preparing your child for starting school

Getting ready for School

Equipping your children with some practical skills that will help them feel happy and confident about starting school is far more important than trying to get a head-start on academic performance. It won't be long before your child is learning letters, numbers and words at school but we suggest that you concentrate your efforts on getting a few basic skills in place. Encourage them to take an interest in the world around them, and to want to do things for themselves particularly:

▶ **Getting dressed (and undressed)**

Make a game out of putting on their school uniform and changing into their PE kit. Then changing back again. You'll soon find out which bits they need to practise.

If your child already goes to nursery or pre-school, they've probably already mastered putting on their coat. There are some interesting techniques including laying the coat on the floor, putting arms in and flipping it over the head or putting their hood on first and then slotting their arms in – whatever works for your child. And when it comes to shoes, bring on the Velcro!



Top Tips for preparing your child for starting school

▶ **Going to the toilet, washing and drying their hands**

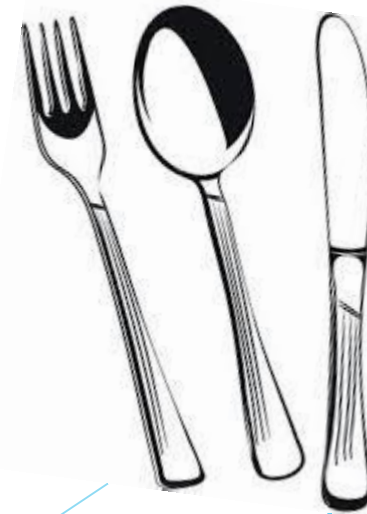
Make sure your child is happy going to the toilet on their own, their uniform is easy to pull down and up (or up and down), and they feel confident enough to put their hand up and ask to go. Don't worry if they have the odd accident as they're settling in - it's ok, nobody will be cross with them. It's something we are all are used to; and help is at hand when it's needed. Make sure that your child knows how to wipe themselves properly and pull up their pants. Teach them to flush the toilet, and even get used to different types of flushes, so they know what to do, and remind them to wash their hands. Talk to you child about how important it is to wash their hands really well, particularly topical at the moment. Try covering their hands with paint or glitter (the germs) and getting them to practise washing it all off.

Top Tips for preparing your child for starting school

Eating with others and using cutlery

All of our children are currently entitled to a free school lunch and we urge you to take this up. We will share menus with you in advance and suggest that you look at the menu together so they can choose what they'd like beforehand without feeling the pressure of the dinner queue. Don't be surprised if they change their choice on the day to match what their friends are having though! If they're having packed lunch, make sure they can open cartons and packets and unwrap a sandwich without help.

Please get them used to sitting at the table without getting up and down and using cutlery to eat their food and asking for help if they need it.



Top Tips for preparing your child for starting school

Using a tissue

- ▶ Using a tissue Introduce your child to the routine of 'catch it, bin it, kill it' – catching their sneeze or runny nose in a tissue, putting it in the bin straightaway, then washing hands to kill germs. Some children find nose-blowing difficult, so play games to practise nose control – blowing a feather

It is also really helpful if you can help them to:

- ▶ **Help them recognise their name**

It's helpful if your child can recognise their name written down (you can practise this when you're labelling all their stuff!). But really don't worry if they can't, in Reception we put a picture or photo by each child's name on their pegs and trays to make it easier for them and in Nursery staff are on hand to help.



Top Tips for preparing your child for starting school

▶ **Read to them**

Research tells us that [reading to your child](#) is the most important way you can support your child's early learning. So make time for lots of stories both throughout the day and at bedtime.

▶ **Get them used to letters and numbers**

This doesn't need to be anything more than recognising letters of the alphabet and numbers up to 10 or 20. There are loads of really colourful and fun alphabet and counting books available – charity shops are great places to pick these up. Choose a few and you'll soon find a favourite. When you are out and about look at numbers on the houses in the street and on car number plates.



Top Tips for preparing your child for starting school

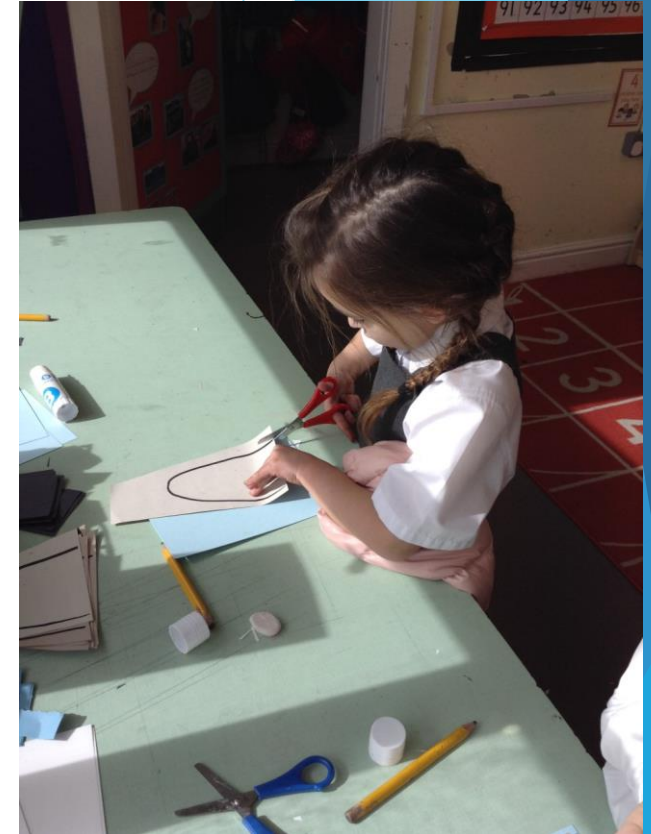
Just like physical and educational skills, children develop socially and emotionally at their own pace. There are things that you can do to help them master these skills early on will help them get used to school life:

- ▶ **Sharing and taking turns**

If your child has brothers or sisters, or they've been to nursery or pre-school, hopefully they'll be used to this already. But it's always good to check they've understood that sharing is a two-way process!

- ▶ **Listening and sitting still**

In Nursery/Reception class, at certain times your child will be expected to sit still and listen to basic instructions from their teacher. You can help with this at home by sitting together doing a jigsaw, colouring or looking at books.



Top Tips for preparing your child for starting school

Get them used to being away from home (if possible)

Try and make sure they understand that once they start, they will have to go back every week, Monday to Friday.

If your child hasn't been to nursery, or pre-school, or been looked after by a friend or family member on a regular basis, have a think about what you can do to make sure they're ok being away from you.

Don't worry if your child hasn't attended a childcare setting or preschool. Playing with other children, whether friends and family members, or other children at the park or soft play area, is all good practice for forming friendships with classmates at school. Often children who don't know one another will make friends very easily, but if your child struggles, teach them some useful phrases such as "can I join in?" or "do you want to share?".



Top Tips for preparing your child for starting school

Relax and it's over to us!

- ▶ On the first day of school make the morning as relaxed as possible. Have everything set out the night before, so you aren't rushing around trying to find a lost shoe or misplaced bag. Make time to get your 'first day of school pictures' and get to the school nice and early.
- ▶ It can be really exciting for you when you pick them up afterwards, as you will want to know everything that has gone on in their day - but don't be surprised if they don't want to talk about it or tell you that they haven't been doing anything— this is normal!



We hope this has been helpful and look forward to seeing you all in September

