

School Readiness:

What does it mean for your
child?



What is "school readiness"?

The term "school readiness" is a broad term that has different interpretations and that has changed over time. The current definition that is used by schools and preschools is the definition from The Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework, where school readiness is defined as "the broad range of skills, knowledge and attitudes children need as the foundations for good future progress." (Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage, page 4). In order to clarify this statement further Hampshire County Council Children's Services department has produced a position statement (January 2013) that aims to develop a joint understanding between parents, preschools and schools over what the term "school readiness" means. The position statement, which also incorporates UNICEF's description of school readiness, forms the basis of this leaflet. It involves three pillars – the readiness of the child for school, the readiness of the school for the children and the readiness of the family for school. For children to be ready for school all three pillars, which are interrelated and co-dependent, need to have fulfilled their role. This will help to ensure that children are best equipped to start their school careers in a positive way and to fulfil their potential, academically, personally and socially.

What will the school and preschool do to get my child ready for school?

The Hampshire expectation is that schools and Early Years practitioners will work together during the transfer of children from preschools to schools. It is good practice for schools and Early Years practitioners to:

- * Communicate effectively and share information about each child's unique transition
- * Demonstrate high expectations for all children that are based on a good knowledge of where the children are and what their next steps are
- * Enthuse, engage and motivate all children and allow them the opportunity to make decisions, giving them the confidence to learn
- * Operate in the best interests of the child and adapt practices where necessary
- * Establish positive relationships and effectively consult with parents
- * Share ideas about how to support children's development and learning with parents, including home routines
- * Assign each child a key person (at Hyde school this is the class teacher) and inform each family of what this role will mean for them
- * Understand the different stages of child development, how these relate to each other and how to plan developmentally appropriate activities
- * Track individual children's progress and share outcomes with all relevant people
- * Celebrate success widely, especially with families
- * Respect and respond to the children's backgrounds and circumstances
- * Provide appropriate continuity of care
- * When planning activities and teaching children as they first arrive into school, recognise, record and respond to the different ways that children learn and reflect this in their provision and practice
- * Consider the changing school readiness needs of children as they enter different phases of their education

What can I do as a parent/guardian to get my child ready for school?

Parents are the people who know their child best and who have the biggest influence on their children's lives. There are subsequently lots of different things that you can do to help make sure that your child is ready for school and has a smooth transition from preschool to school:

- * Remember that you are your child's most important role model – if you are being positive about starting school they will copy your attitudes
- * Have fun with your child! Children's early learning experiences come through playing so the more practice they have at playing, talking and sharing the better equipped they will be for learning at school.
- * Use the everyday experiences that you and your child have to develop their vocabulary and their interest in different things. Talk about the weather, where they are going, what they are doing, how things are changing as the seasons change. Follow your child's interests – if they are interested in dinosaurs borrow some books from the library or pretend to be dinosaurs when you go for a walk.
- * Show your child that you like finding out new things by exploring something that is new to both of you.
- * Encourage your child when they try something new, or to try again if they don't succeed the first time.
- * Be interested when your child wants to share their achievements with you – they will be able to tell if you are not interested and it may put them off sharing with you later on.
- * Celebrate your child's achievement in language development – sing songs, nursery and finger rhymes and make time for talk. Your child's key worker will be able to tell you about the songs and rhymes they do at preschool, although they have probably already sung them to you at home!

- * Support your child in their self-help skills so that they can learn to do things for themselves.
- * Recognise and talk through your child's feelings and emotions – if they are sad tell them that they are feeling sad and talk about what happened to make them sad. Remind them that emotions change. Talk about what it feels like to be happy, angry, disappointed and so on.
- * Provide opportunities for your child to be independent
- * Allow your child to have time to relax, rest and play.
- * Provide opportunities for your child to meet and relate to others including adults beyond close family and friends so that they feel positive about socialising, sharing toys and taking turns.
- * Make sure that your child has a good sleep routine. Children like routines and they provide stability for them, especially during major life events. They will find this reassuring when they come to school, but it will also help them to be in a positive frame of mind when they get to school. Children who are tired can find school difficult as they are not rested enough to be able to share, take turns and be patient.
- * Read with and to your child as much as possible, every day if you can.
- * Take your child to the transition events at their new school.
- * Seek professional advice and guidance where necessary, particularly in terms of health related matters
- * Ensure your child is as active and healthy as they can be.
- * Provide meaningful opportunities for your child to experience that not everything happens at once and on their demand
- * Promote children's independence skills by giving them choices.

What attitudes does my child need to be "ready for school"?

The most important part of a child's "school readiness" is their attitude towards new experiences. The prerequisites for effective learning, from the perspective of the child, are that they:

- * Are excited, enthusiastic and confident about learning
- * Are resilient and ready to join in with school life
- * Feel able to ask questions, take risks and find solutions
- * Feel safe, secure and cared for
- * Know that they are important to the adults in their lives
- * Feel that their contributions are respected and valued
- * Have a broad range of knowledge and skills acquired through their everyday experience
- * Are active and healthy
- * Feel like they are celebrated and recognised for their achievements
- * Can communicate their thoughts, ideas and needs in their own way
- * Are developing an awareness of their own emotions and behaviour and the impact their actions have on others
- * Are independent in the use of self-care skills (toileting, feeding, changing)
- * Are beginning to develop co-operative and turn taking skills
- * Are comfortable talking to others

What skills does my child need so that they are ready for school?

As well as having the correct attitudes necessary for school there are some key skills which will make your child's transition to school easier. In particular the following skills will help to ensure that your child has a positive start to school:

- * Children should be able to use the toilet and clean themselves independently. It is very distressing for your child if they get to school and then need adult help when they go to the toilet, especially if they cannot find an adult to help them straight away and have to wait to be helped to clean themselves.
- * Children will need to be able to manage the majority of their dressing and undressing for PE independently. It is helpful if they can do and undo their own buttons and fastenings, although we will help them to develop these skills if they come to school unable to dress themselves.
- * It is important for children to be able to change their own shoes, recognise when they are on the right feet and do their own fastenings up.
- * It is important that children can put on their own coat and have a go at fastening it.
- * When they start school children will be expected to share and take turns, both with the toys and equipment they are using and with the adult attention. It is helpful if children have experienced sharing, turn taking and waiting for an adult to become available (the wait is usually less than a minute but for a child this can seem like an eternity!)

* There will be times when children will be expected to sit and listen for short periods of time, for example at the beginning and end of the day. It will help your child if they have experienced short periods of listening, for example sharing a story with you or watching a short programme on TV. It is also helpful if they have had experience of answering simple questions about what they have read, seen or done.

* Children like to be able to locate their pictures and work that they want to bring home, usually done by writing their name. We give each child a name card with their name on that they can access when they want to do this. Some children can do this before they start school because they have experimented with mark making and are ready to form letter shapes and make their mark. However, if your child cannot write their name we will help them to do this during the school day.

* Children like to find out "how many" of something there are and counting different amounts is something that we start quite quickly when your child comes to school. It is helpful if they have been exposed to small quantities as part of their everyday lives, for example counting the bricks in their towers. However, when your child starts school we will be doing a lot of counting with them, so please don't worry if they are not counting yet.

* When your child starts school they will be bringing home a reading book every day. This is a book at their level that they can read with you. Children do not have to be able to recognise letter shapes and sounds before they start school, although many children recognise familiar words and the letters in their names. However, it is helpful if they are used to sitting down for 5-10 minutes a day at home with you sharing books and talking about the events, characters, settings etc.

What are the transition arrangements for Hyde Primary School?

The school and preschools will work together to ensure that the transition from preschool to school is as smooth as possible. The class teacher from Hyde School will come and see your child in their preschool setting and talk to your child's key worker about your child's strengths and areas for development. This usually happens in the second half of the summer term. There will also be four transition mornings during the summer term where you will be invited into school with your child. On the first of these you will stay with your child to help your child to get used to the classroom environment. On the second of these your child will stay in the classroom and you will meet with the class teacher and the head teacher to talk about starting school. There will also be an opportunity to try on and buy school uniform. For the last two transition mornings your child will be left at school for the morning so that they can begin to get used to the routines and form friendships with their peers. You will also be offered the opportunity for a home visit or a drop in session at school where you can talk to your child's teacher on a one-to-one basis.

At the end of the summer term a copy of your child's school report and assessments will be sent to Hyde School. The class teacher will use this information, in conjunction with the information from the transition events, to decide on starting points for September. Your child's Tapestry account will also be transferred from any preschools which are using it to Hyde so that your child's record of their learning journey will be uninterrupted. Any children without a Tapestry account will have a new one opened for them in September to record their learning.

Children who attend Hyde Preschool share activities with us throughout the year, usually based around exploring our unique outdoor environment.

Each child who starts at Hyde Primary School will have a personalised booklet showing them who their buddy is, the areas of the school, the school staff and showing them involved in the transition events at school so that they can talk to other people about the school. This booklet is given to them on the last transition visit to look at over the summer holiday.

What should I do if I am concerned about my child and their "school readiness"?

If you are concerned about whether your child is ready for school the first person you should talk to is your child's key worker at preschool. They will be able to answer any of your questions that relate to their child and hopefully put your mind at rest. If you have specific queries about starting Hyde Primary School please feel free to pop into the school at the end of the school day or phone on 01425 653350. The Class One teacher will then phone you back.