

Sale Primary School 545

Suggestions for ways parents can help prepare and support their children when they first start school.

GETTING STARTED

The first days of school are very exhausting.

There are many reasons for this:-

- The classroom is probably the most demanding situation that the child has experienced, both in time and attention.
- A combination of listening, sitting still and keeping quiet can be very trying for a small child.
- Some children suffer fatigue due to over stimulation and excitement of the day's program. This applies less to the child who has had pre-school experience.
- School begins in the hottest time of the year.

Parents can expect some children to be cranky, bad-tempered and badly behaved, and yet a teacher will insist that the children have been perfect all day. Both statements can be true because almost all children have two behaviours. One is a social one seen particularly in a situation that is new. The other, perhaps more genuine, is shown mostly at home. Ignore, rather than punish, after-school crankiness. Welcome the child home; home is a very special place. Have a favourite cool drink waiting and then have a quiet talk about the day. Try to let them see how interested you are in their new adventure. Asking questions such as "What did you do at school today?" will often get a reply of "Nothing". You are much more likely to gain an insight into your child's day if your questions are more specific, such as "What story did you listen to today?" or "Did you draw a picture? What was it about?".

See that the child gets to school on time. Late - coming often leads to a worried child and emotional disturbance. It can also disrupt a productive learning environment in the room.

Very occasionally, children may wet the bed during the early part of their first school year. This is possibly an anxiety reaction and as such requires a moderate approach. Don't draw attention to it; for bed-wetting is often extended by parental anxiety.

When children come in contact with other children they can often pick up undesirable habits including swear words. These seem to have a magic attraction for some children and they often repeat the words to show off. The best approach is to simply tell them that these are not appropriate words to use.

HOW CAN YOU HELP?

The transition to school requires your child to cope in a new environment which has many and varied demands. Below is a list of suggestions that may help to enhance your child's intellectual, social and emotional development and which will assist him/her to adjust more quickly to school.

- Talk to the children about school.
- Give them little duties to aid their concentration span.
- Encourage them by admiring all of their work.
- Select good stories, picture books, and T.V. programs for them.
- Warn them against "strangers".
- Teach them to repeat - name, address, phone number, etc.
- Make sure they know where to wait for you after school.
- Practise several "school lunches". Children need the practice in handling their lunch.
- DO NOT ALLOW your child to bring along articles which may cause harm - toy guns, arrows, roller skates, etc.
- Do not allow your child to bring toys to school. We cannot guarantee safe keeping and careful handling at all times.
- School crossings must be used at all times - insist your child does so.
- Practise safe car skills – getting in / getting out of **parked** cars.

Intellectual Development

- ☺ Enrich their vocabulary and understanding of it by such words as big/little, up/down, high/low, wide/narrow, short/tall, before/behind, here/there, near/far, smaller/taller, shorter/fatter, to/from, same/different, circle, square, triangle, above/below, full/empty, wet/dry, warmer/colder, turn around, stretch, bend, inside out, right way around, and so on.
- ☺ You can help your child by making him/her more aware of the world around him/her. Use every opportunity to talk with your child, and extend his/her use of the language. Let your children see how spoken language looks when written, and how written language sounds when spoken. Remember, reading is a process of getting meaning from print, and a child's world is full of print - street signs, shops, package labels, television, books, magazines, etc.
- ☺ Fine and gross motor skill development - provide lots of opportunities for: Colouring in, cutting out, pouring things, building and stacking blocks, throwing and catching balls. These all help in the physical development of your child.
- ☺ Read regularly to your child, and encourage him/her to "read" to you, but keep these times fun and enjoyable.
- ☺ Name colours. Talk in colours. eg Put on the brown shoes. Bring me the yellow towel.
- ☺ Be a role model for your child. Let him/her see you reading.
- ☺ Talk about the days of the week. eg Today is Sunday. Tomorrow is a school day. Yesterday it was Saturday.

Emotional Development

- ❖ Playing games with family and friends is a fun way to help with emotional development. Through games children develop self-control, acceptance of winning and losing, confidence, responsibility, independence and start to see the value of persistence.
- ❖ Can he/she make choices, accept rules, adapt to frequent changes? This will be an important part of school life.
- ❖ Encourage the children to be independent - dress themselves, tie their shoelaces, turn their clothes inside out, etc. Pull sleeves through to the right side, Use words like inside, wrong side, right side, left and right shoe, etc.

Social Development

- * Social development is an important criteria when considering if your child is ready for school. Children need to feel happy and secure in the care of others, so please allow your child to mix with other children and adults so his/her social skills can develop. As your child plays, watch to see if he/she is fair or bossy.
- * Always encourage your child to share, take turns, listen and communicate. Start letting him/her perform limited tasks without adult help.

Learning to Read

What parents can do:

- 📖 Read aloud to your child every day. If this is done in the years before going to school, it will launch a love of reading.
- 📖 Talk about a book before you start reading it to a young child.
- 📖 Praise every effort in reading, especially if confidence is low.
- 📖 Be seen reading for pleasure yourself and making visits to the library.
- 📖 Don't nag your child about reading, nor worry if the reading isn't yet word-perfect or equal to that of some other child. Ask yourself: "Is my child interested in reading?" (TV should not be on all the time.)
- 📖 Share take home reading material. Children are not expected to be able to read independently to you. They can make up text from picture clues.

Learning about mathematics

What parents can do:

- # Display a positive attitude towards maths. Never say to your child, "You're just like me; I was never any good at maths!"
- # Maths is all around us. Try to develop your child's sense of number, size, length, height, weight, volume, area, time, etc.
- # Encourage children to take up hobbies that require "hands on" mathematical skills, such as building kits, hobby constructions etc.
- # Have a calculator around the house and have fun with numbers.
- # Seize every opportunity to use maths around the home; counting change, estimating, measuring and calculating whenever the opportunity arises.

Learning about Writing

What parents can do:

- ✓ Encourage your child to write often, to friends and relatives, and also to write in a personal and/or family journal (diary).
- ✓ Respond to the message or story of your child's writing, rather than mark out spelling errors. (Everyone takes many years to learn to spell, so don't think you must correct everything your child writes; but do help when the child asks you for a spelling.)
- ✓ When writing yourself, invite your child to add to letters you write to relatives. And why not become a note-writing family, leaving notes around for one another?
- ✓ Help your child to turn stories and other writings into 'books' by stapling them together into brightly illustrated covers.