

Fact sheet 20

Helping your child prepare for their first school

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Many children go to Pre-schools, often on the same site as a Lower School. This helps children get used to routines and being away from their parents or carers. There are a number of things you can do to make your child's move to school easier.

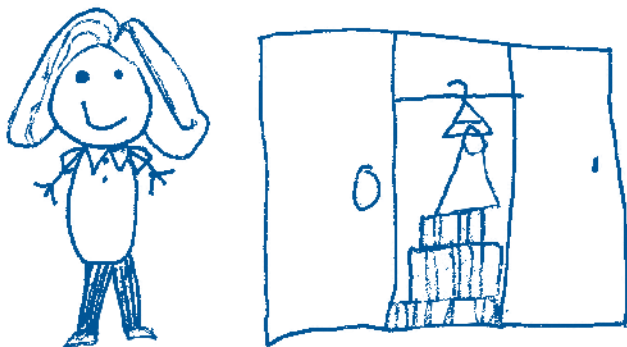
Practicalities:

- Children at school need to be able to dress themselves and do up their own shoes. Make it a game at home until they feel confident to do it all by themselves.
- Children need to be able to go to the toilet alone, and wash their hands.
- Children need to be able to eat independently so help them get used to cutting up their own food and using cutlery.
- Children need to be able to identify their own belongings. You could make a game of picking

out their things from amongst all the family belongings. It isn't always helpful to kit them out with all new belongings just before they start term as they won't recognise anything. Labelling their clothes and shoes will help the teachers help your child too.

Emotionally ready for school

- Your child is likely to need lots of encouragement and reassurance. Talk about the new adventure in positive ways. Tell your child what you liked about your school and the things you did. Find out about your child's new school day so you can talk about it together.
- Encourage your child to play with other children, of other ages too. This will help increase their confidence and independence. Practise being away from your child so both your child and you get used to being separated.
- Your child will be asked questions by teachers and class mates without you being there to answer for her/him. Practise asking questions like her/his name, her/his address, her/his likes and dislikes etc. Encourage your child to ask for help if she/he can't do something, rather than you interpreting her/his needs or actions.
- Point out the school whenever you pass it so they see it regularly.
- Read some positive books about starting school. The BBC website recommends "Topsy & Tim Start School" by Jean & Gareth Adamson or "Starting School" by Alan & Janet Ahlberg. Your Library is likely to be able to get these books for you.



Drawing by Lucy Williams.

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- For your own reassurance you could ask the teacher what strategies she/he will use to settle the children.
- A few weeks before the start of term, try to get your child into their new term time routine. Try to get them used to the bedtimes and getting up times they will have once school has started. Get your child to help you get together the things they will need. Write a list and get them to tick off things as you get them ready.
- Even though you may be upset try to send your child off with a smile on their first day. Try to be at the school gates early before and after school, as a few minutes can seem like a long time to a four year old waiting for his mum or dad.

Useful Contacts

School Admissions Service – Children’s Services, Bedfordshire County Council, County Hall, Cauldwell Street, Bedford. MK42 9AP

School Admissions General Enquiries –
Tel: 01234 718 120

Home – School Transport – Transport Section, Customer Contact Centre, County Hall, Bedford.
Tel 01234 228 431

School Transfer Adviser – Jo Maule, C/o Parent Partnership Service, Westfield Middle School, Chester Road, Bedford. MK40 4HW Tel: 01234 316 444 (Tuesday-Thursday)

Bedfordshire Parent Partnership Service –
Chester Road, Bedford, MK40 4HW
Telephone helpline: 01234 316 353

Further Information

Bedfordshire Parent Partnership Service –
Leaflet No 8 – “Looking at Schools”

Bedfordshire Parent Partnership Service –
Fact sheet 21– “Applying for places at Lower, Middle and Upper Schools in Bedfordshire”

Bedfordshire Parent Partnership Service –
Fact sheet 22– “Starting and applying for schools in Bedfordshire if your child is supported on School Action or School Action Plus”

Bedfordshire Parent Partnership Service –
Fact sheet 23– “Starting and applying for schools in Bedfordshire if your child has a Statement of Special Educational Need”

Bedfordshire Parent Partnership Service –
Fact Sheet 24 – “Useful School Admissions Websites”

These leaflets and fact sheets are available from the Parent Partnership Service, or may be downloaded from their website:
www.bedfordshireparentpartnership.co.uk



Drawing by Sarah Kerr.