

Starting school or nursery?

Helpful tips

When your child first starts school, it's a big change in your family life, especially if it is your oldest or youngest child. You may feel sad and be worried that your child will be unhappy, will not make friends, or will not enjoy schoolwork. You may be trying to support your child to make it all feel exciting while, on the inside, you are feeling just as nervous. Starting or changing schools can be one of the biggest transitions in a child's life, but it's worth remembering that most children love school and go on to make the most of their education. We have compiled some tips on starting school that you may find helpful. (<http://www.familylives.org.uk>)

Help your child

- Help your child to develop the skills they need to be independent, such as getting used to playing with other children, dressing themselves and looking after their possessions.
- Get storybooks from the library about starting school and read them to your child. In the week before they start school, get your child used to the times they will need to get up in the mornings and go to bed.
- Decide early who is taking your child to school on their first day so they can know as soon as possible what will happen on the morning.
- Share your memories of your first day or funny and light stories about your time at school so they start to get a light-hearted sense of what to expect.
- Plan a treat for the end of the school day; it's likely they will be tired so a simple trip to the local park or their favourite dinner would be more than enough.

Emotional support

- Talk positively to your child about starting school, as well as listening to and acknowledging any anxious feelings or fears they may have.
- Help your child to build their confidence. For example, make sure they know that it is ok to ask to go to the toilet at school.

- If you are feeling worried, make sure you have someone to talk to so that your children don't pick up on any negative feelings – and remind yourself that it is perfectly normal to have a bit of the jitters yourself.
- Encourage them to be thoughtful about other children's feelings and remember to take turns and share.
- If you sense your child will feel clingy and not want to leave you in fear they will miss out, let them know what you have planned for the day – the duller the better!

Speak to the school

- Find out from the school how reception children are introduced to the school and what happens on the first day. Talk this through with your child so that they know what to expect.
- Tell the school about your child, e.g. any special needs, medical problems, likes or dislikes.
- Make a point of finding out more about the school – look around your child's classroom so that you know what they are doing and can talk to them about it.
- Try to go to as many of the meetings before and after your child starts at the school, as you can. If you can't attend, give the school a call and ask for the information to be sent to you.