

Informing Parents

Parent Information Newsletter: Term 3 ♦ Week 2 ♦ Monday, 23 July 2007

Preparing your child for school!



Starting school is an important step in a young child's life and 'Is my child ready for school?' is a question asked by many parents.

Children develop at different rates and learn skills in different ways. It is the school's task to respond to the needs, learning styles and rates of progress of individual students. Schools also plan learning experiences based on the skills students bring to school.

School can be a strange and scary place for beginning students. Young children usually have to cope with bigger buildings, lots more children who are older and bigger and fewer adults for support. There are different rules to get used to and many new things that they are expected to do. The playtime breaks, especially, can be very frightening for beginners. School days can be very tiring too, for children who are used to a rest during the day. Children may have been looking forward to school a lot and feel very let down if they don't enjoy it as much as they hoped. Even for those who do enjoy it, starting school is stressful. Children need lots of support from you before starting school and especially in the first few weeks.

A successful and comprehensive transition to school program can help in alleviating many of these fears for both children and parents. The 'Ready, Set, Kinder' program at Narrabri West is aimed at ensuring that all children have a smooth and stress free beginning to their schooling. Please see the information on this program included in this package for further details.

Is your child ready for school?

Children may enter Kindergarten at the beginning of the school year in NSW government schools if they turn five on or before 31 July in that year.

Not all children are ready to begin school at age five, although this is the most common starting age. By law, all children must start school by their sixth birthday.

Some children benefit from the extra year of maturity before they start school and it can help them if they start a bit later. Think about this if your child is smaller or younger

than the other children, or is not yet really comfortable playing with groups of children or confident without adult support. Talk it over with the kindergarten or preschool teacher.

How you can help your child with starting school?

It will help your child if you prepare them as well as you can and at the same time show them that you are confident that they will manage the new challenges. We have included some suggestions that may make the transition a positive experience for everyone involved.

- ☆ Attend as many Kindergarten transition days as possible so your child can become familiar with the school environment.
- ☆ Help your child to dress in their school uniform. Have them practice tucking in their school shirt as well as putting on socks and shoes. Practise buttons, zips etc. Laces are often difficult for a child under six years of age. Velcro strapped shoes may be a better option to begin with.
- ☆ Ensure your child can use the toilet correctly and understands the importance of washing their hands after going to the toilet.
- ☆ Always pack a handkerchief and a change of underwear in your child's school bag.
- ☆ Put your child's name on all items of clothing, school bag, lunch box etc.
- ☆ Talk with your child about taking care of their belongings.
- ☆ Give your child practice with opening and closing their lunch box and school bag.
- ☆ Encourage your child to sit still until lunch is finished (10 minutes) and know the order of foods to be eaten, i.e. sandwiches, fruit, drink.
- ☆ Discuss the need to share and cooperate with others.
- ☆ Give your child opportunities to play with other children the same age and to feel comfortable with being away from you.
- ☆ Arrive at school to allow enough time for your child to interact with their peers and separate from you before bell time.
- ☆ Provide the school with as many contact numbers as possible so we can provide quality care should your child become sick or injured.
- ☆ Make sure your child knows how they are going home from school each day and the importance of not going

with strangers. If this routine varies you must inform the class teacher in writing, as they cannot allow your child to be collected by anyone else without your permission.

- ☆ Talk about school in a matter of fact manner – avoid making it a big issue or something magical or mysterious.
- ☆ Drive past the school when it is operating and also on weekends.
- ☆ Avoid statements to your child such as “I’ll miss you” or “Will you miss me?” These may cause anxiety. Statements such as “I’ll pick you up from the classroom” or “I’ll look forward to hearing about what you did today” are far more reassuring.
- ☆ Encourage your child to spend some time drawing or writing, using paste and scissors, help them to feel confident with these working tools.
- ☆ Attending and finishing tasks are important aspects of school and should be encouraged at home as well. Introduce a small job or responsibility in the home e.g. collecting the mail each day.

How to know if your child is ready for school?

If you are undecided about whether your child is actually ready for school, you can ask yourself some questions such as:

- ☆ Can my child go to the toilet alone? Can they dress themselves without help?
- ☆ Do they know their full name? Do they know their parent’s first names?
- ☆ Can they hold a pencil properly and cut with a pair of scissors?
- ☆ Do they know which way up to hold a book? Do they know where a story starts in a book and where it ends?
- ☆ If asked to put toys away do they know where they go? And do they do it? If asked to put rubbish in the bin do they know what to do?
- ☆ Can they answer a simple question, such as ‘what is a car?’, and can they speak and be understood?
- ☆ Do they know how to listen without interrupting?
- ☆ Can they take turns?
- ☆ Do they know how to share? Will they be able to share pencils and books?
- ☆ Do they know how to talk and play with other children without squabbling?
- ☆ Can they throw and catch a ball?
- ☆ Are they able to wash and dry their own face and hands?
- ☆ Do they know their home phone number or your mobile number?

Children may be ready for school when they:

- ☆ Have reasonable control over their behaviour and emotions.
- ☆ Can cope when minor things go wrong.
- ☆ Can talk confidently to adults, ask for help and express their feelings.
- ☆ Can entertain themselves.
- ☆ Can make things for themselves.
- ☆ Can tackle new or challenging tasks.
- ☆ Can solve simple problems on their own and stand up for themselves.
- ☆ Can look after their belongings.
- ☆ Can respect others' toys and games and share their own.
- ☆ Have friends and can make friends.

The following checklist of skills may also assist you in determining your child’s readiness. It is important to remember also that there is still a long time to go before Kindergarten and your child will grow and develop a lot in this time.

- I know my full name
- I know where I live
- I know my telephone number
- I know my birthday
- I know which school I go to
- I can read my name
- I can recognize my own belongings
- I can remember where I put things
- I can use the toilet correctly
- I can use a handkerchief / tissue correctly
- I can take my jumper / jacket on and off
- I can take my shoes off and put them on again
- I can carry my own school bag
- I can give school notes to one of my parents
- I can deliver a note from home, to my teacher
- I speak in sentences
- I can count from 1 to 5
- I can make other people outside my family understand what I want
- I answer and listen when I am spoken to
- I can listen without interrupting when someone else is talking
- I do not stay up late at night
- I can eat my recess and lunch
- I can help with little household tasks
- I can complete any activity or game
- I can pack away and tidy up when I have finished

- I can share
- I can wait my turn
- I like to listen to stories
- I like to look at books
- I like to talk about the pictures in books
- I can look after books, games and equipment
- I can watch TV and talk about the programs
- I can play with other children
- I can play by myself
- I can draw with crayon and pencil
- I can use a pair of scissors and I can paste
- I can remember little rhymes and songs
- I can join in with others to say rhymes/songs
- I know some colours
- I can obey simple instructions
- I can sit still and concentrate for approximately 10 minutes
- I understand the dangers of traffic, electricity, fire, water and high places.

This is just a sample of the skills needed for starting Kindergarten. Encourage your child to attempt these skills but don't worry if your child can't do all of them. Take the time to talk to our Kindergarten teachers about any concerns you may have.

How can I help my child once they start school?

- ☆ Talk to other parents and share your experiences, ideas and feelings.
- ☆ Don't be late picking your child up. A few minutes can seem a long time when you are not very sure of yourself.
- ☆ Some children want to tell you all about their day as soon as you pick them up so, make time for your child after school if they need it, or as soon as you get home if you work. Some children, however, like a while by themselves before they want company.
- ☆ Children are often 'starving' after school. A healthy snack straight after can make up for this. In the first few weeks they might be too tired to really want to eat by dinnertime.
- ☆ Listen, but don't ask too many questions. Children will talk when they are ready. Bedtime is usually a good listening time.
- ☆ It helps if you read stories to children even after they can read themselves. Bedtime is also a good time to read stories.
- ☆ Don't expect too much. New learning takes a long time and children learn at different rates. You can help by providing encouragement, taking an interest and showing you care.

- ☆ Be flexible in the early days of school. Children may be tired and grumpy for a while until they settle in.
- ☆ Keep to routines that allow time for rest and free play.
- ☆ Invite your child's friends over.
- ☆ Some children get upset if they haven't learnt to read on the first day! Remind your child of all the things they can read such as their name, road signs, and names on food packets.
- ☆ If your child is really upset or if you are worried, talk to the teacher about it.

Some children, when they first start school, find it so stressful that they don't want to go. They may get tummy aches or be very tearful in the mornings. If this happens to your child listen to their fears. Try not to let them see that you are worried. Let them know that you believe that they can manage to go to school and you will help them. Ask them what they think would help. If the worries don't get better soon, talk to the teacher about the best way to help your child.

Important Reminders:

- ☆ Starting school is a big step for children and it takes time to get used to.
- ☆ Children do best at school when their parents and teachers support each other.
- ☆ Let the teacher know if anything is happening in your family that might continue to upset your child at school.
- ☆ Tell the teacher when you are pleased with what is happening at school and when you are concerned.

Enrolling your child at school:

You need to visit your school to enrol your child. You will also need to bring along the following documents:

- your child's birth certificate or identity document.
- proof of your address (such as a council rate notice).
- immunisation certificate (no child will be excluded from school if they are not vaccinated).
- court orders (if you share the custody of your child you will need to bring copies of the court orders to the school).

If you are not an Australian citizen and wish to enrol your child in a NSW public school you will need to contact your local school principal.

If your child has special needs please call the school and make an appointment to talk with the Principal before they start school. We can then make the necessary arrangements to cater for your child. Special needs can include language difficulties, medical history (e.g. wears glasses, allergies), cultural needs, disabilities and special gifts.