

Getting Ready for School



**WEST HORSHAM
SCHOOLS NETWORK**
Learning • Thinking • Growing Together

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As a parent/carer, your child starting school is an important milestone. You may be excited or worried about how ready your son or daughter is for their first days at school. These are extremely normal and common feelings most parents/carers have, so our group of schools and academies in West Horsham have put together this useful booklet to help share other parents'/carers' experiences and help put your mind at ease.

This is just the start of an exciting learning journey for both children and parents/carers alike and we want you to have some 'top tips' given to us by current parents/carers and professionals about how to give your child the best start in September.

What does 'school readiness' really mean?

Being 'school ready' isn't just about having the right shoe on the right foot, eating breakfast, and arriving on time. A huge part of school readiness is about a child's physical, social, emotional, and cognitive skills.

Without knowing it, your child will already have many of these skills. For them to be able to integrate into school-life, they will put into practice their skills around taking risks, asking questions, taking turns and vocalising choices.

www.bbc.co.uk/tiny-happy-people/how-to-prepare-your-child-for-school/zxpc8p3



Routines

At schools, children will be introduced to routines and this helps them to settle in and enjoy school. The aim of this is to help them be happy and therefore ready to learn.

Will my child need a new routine when they start school?

Suggestion: Routines help give children a sense of security in life and at school. Many children can be afraid of “the unknown” and this can cause stressful situations for both children and families. At school, children will be introduced to routines very quickly and this is why children settle in to enjoy school. This enables them to be happy and ready to learn.

What time should my child go to bed?

Suggestion: According to the Millpond Children’s Sleep Clinic, children aged 4 should get at “least 11 hours sleep each night.” Research shows that children need a calm and technology free sleep so switch off electronic devices well in advance of sleep.

What time should we get up to get ready for school?

Suggestion: Each family has their different routines but we all agree that when we have to be somewhere at a particular time it can often be a rush! See the next page for some handy advice on helping with the morning routine...



We asked families in the Early Years Foundation Stage what their routines are in the morning and these are some of their replies:

- 1** Put out the cereal or whatever healthy breakfast your children will be eating the night before. (Sarah, parent of Tilly)
- 2** Lay out children's clothes the night before. This includes everything that they will need: underwear, socks, pants, shirt, belt, shoes... If they can get dressed by themselves (over 3 years old, I'd say), tell them to get dressed before they come downstairs. (Aasif, parent of Rafee)
- 3** Have their toothbrush baskets ready for them. Ours includes toothbrushes, toothpaste, mouthwash, a comb, hair gel & floss. I have this all in one basket under our bathroom sink. When getting the kids ready for school, it's all about keeping things moving.
- 4** Have bookbags and water bottles ready the night before. We keep their bookbags by the door on their designated hook. The water bottles are packed and in the refrigerator, ready to go. They just grab them in the morning. One less thing for me to do! (Jo, parent of Lloyd)
- 5** Eliminate all media in the mornings. We can ONLY watch TV IF we are ready. When shoes are on, teeth are brushed and bookbags and coats have been moved to the front door. If and only if those things are ready, they can watch TV until we have to leave. This helps them race to get ready! (Richard, parent of Molly and Rose)
- 6** And a big tip....get up ten minutes before they do to get yourself ready. :) This is the hardest one for me! (Laura, parent of Leo)

Self-help skills

Children like to be independent and do things on their own. This is a healthy part of normal child development and as children grow, they learn to do more and more tasks by themselves.

How can I encourage my child to be more independent?

Suggestion: Encourage them to carry their own book bag and water bottle to and from school. My daughter felt all grown up doing this. (Alyssa, parent of Esme)

Suggestion: Have races at home to see who can put their coat on quickest. This helped my son, who is really competitive, learn how to do this quickly. (Nathan, parent of Luca)

Suggestion: Encourage your child to go to the toilet by themselves. My son found doing up his trousers difficult so I taught him a trick of how to do this easily. As the teachers can't help with this at school, I was really pleased to know he could do this on his own before September. (Haleema, parent of Kabir)

Suggestion: I will be helping my son practise with a knife and fork at dinner times as my eldest daughter has found this difficult this year. School staff can't cut up food for children like nursery staff as there are so many children in the hall having dinner at the same time. (Chris, parent of Jack)

Did you know?

A hot meal provided by schools only provides approximately 1/3 of a child's required nutrition, so we would encourage you to continue to offer a hot meal for your child after school or in the evening as well.

Suggestion: Toilet training

Children do need to be out of nappies by the time they start school. If your child is not yet dry please continue to persevere with toilet training. The following websites have some useful advice on toilet training.

www.nhs.uk/conditions/pregnancy-and-baby/potty-training-tips/

www.eric.org.uk/top-10-potty-training-tips

At school, the children are expected to use the toilets relatively independently, the easier this is for them the smoother the transition into school will be reducing feelings of anxiety and concern. Of course accidents happen, so please send your child with spare pants, trousers and socks so we can help them to change their clothes if needed. Please contact your school's SENDCo or Early Years Leader if your child is unlikely to be toilet trained when they start school due to an identified medical need.

Suggestion: Being able to get dressed and undressed for PE

In Reception it will be the expectation that children are able to dress and undress with little help from an adult. Please encourage your child to dress and undress in the lead up to starting school. Allow plenty of time for this and build this into your daily routine. Try providing them with dressing up clothes in their play, this is an ideal time to encourage independence. Of course grown-ups will be there to help with tricky buttons, but you will be surprised at how quickly children get the hang of these when the expectations are set high- have confidence in your child's ability to do things for themselves.

Suggestion: Being able to use a knife and fork

As you know all infant aged children are entitled to a free hot lunch. Usually these meals require the use of a knife and fork sitting at a table.

Being independent benefits all the children, as staff will have more time to focus on other areas of development in the curriculum.

Speaking, listening and responding

A happy child is a child who can communicate with others without becoming angry and frustrated.

According to the Speech-Language-Hearing Association, generally:

- If your child is 18 months old, you should be able to understand approximately 25% of what he/she says.
- Once your child is 2 years old, you should be able to understand approximately 50 to 75% of what he/she says.
- Even though your 3-year-old child may make sound errors, 75 to 100% of what he/she says should be understandable to family and carers.
- Your 4-year-old child's speech should be understood by people with whom he/she doesn't associate regularly.
- Even though your 5 year old may not be able to say all sounds correctly, his/her speech should be understood by most listeners in all situations.



At school, your child will be in a class of around 30 children, which makes communicating, listening and responding essential skills. Many children are happy to chat to familiar faces but to enable them to make new friendships and links with new adults, it is really important to encourage speaking and listening at home. Over the page are some tips from the Speech and Language service.

If you have any concerns, please liaise with your school's SENDCO.

Did you know?

Since the Covid pandemic many children are not secure with lip reading or understanding facial expressions - you could help with this by encouraging your child to look at the person speaking and talk about what their expression is telling us.



Seven ways to help



1 Speak clearly, naturally and, most of all, correctly. Speaking clearly and naturally includes establishing eye contact, speaking at an easy-to-understand rate and saying sounds precisely.

2 Monitor your child for ear infections. If you suspect your child has an ear infection, call your doctor immediately. A temporary mild hearing loss from an ear infection can slow a child's ability to understand language and his/her ability to say words clearly and correctly.

3 Model the correct way to say a word. If your child says a word incorrectly, in most cases, it is wise not to ask your child to repeat the word. Repeat a troublesome word, and over-enunciate the sound your child is mispronouncing by saying it louder and longer. Continue talking, and make the troublesome word a natural part of your conversation.

4 Give your child many opportunities to hear troublesome sounds pronounced correctly. This will make it easier for him/her to hear the difference between the correct and incorrect productions of sounds, and it will also make it easier to say the sound when he/she is developmentally ready. Try the activities below. As you and your child interact, emphasize the troublesome sound by saying it as often as possible.

If your child is having trouble saying /f/ sounds:

- Talk about things you can do with your feet.
- Make a favourites list (favourite foods, animals, toys).

If your child is having trouble saying /c/k/ and /g/ sounds:

- Play with cars in a toy garage.
- Talk about the keys on your key chain.
- Talk about what you might plant in a garden.

If your child is having trouble saying /sh/ and /ch/ sounds:

- Talk about different kinds of shoes. Count the shoes in your house.
- Find five things you can shut.
- Push your child on a swing and talk about other things you can push.

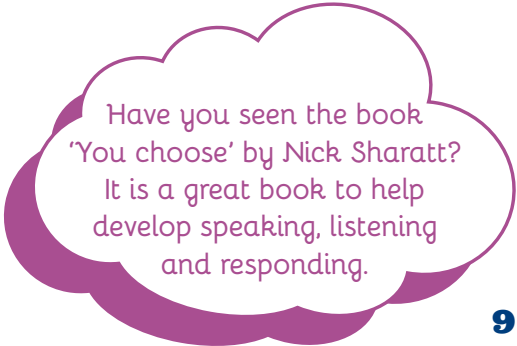
5 Expect your child to speak clearly.

It is important for you to encourage and expect your child to speak clearly and accurately in the best way. Be patient, and also tell him/her how proud you are when he/she tries his/her best. If your child has all his/her wants and needs met without having to request or respond, he/she may not be getting the opportunities to practice speech sounds.

6 Prepare your child for new situations. Children who struggle to communicate often feel self-conscious or apprehensive, especially when facing the unknown.

Talk to your child about a new situation he/she may be facing. Rehearse the words he/she might hear or say in this situation.

7 In school it is important that your child listens and responds to questions and instructions. Play question and answer games. For example, How do you feel about...? What do you think about...? What would you rather be, a worm or a bird? Who do you think...? When do you think...? Wait for and expect your child to respond.



Have you seen the book 'You choose' by Nick Sharatt? It is a great book to help develop speaking, listening and responding.

Behaviour for learning

All parents have experienced a child becoming frustrated but teaching your child how to manage their behaviour before they start school can be the difference between a happy and unhappy child. The key to encouraging positive behaviour is keeping your cool so that you can communicate with your child calmly about what is and is not acceptable behaviour and how he/she can make better choices and learn from his/her mistakes.

At school, we are often faced with the statement; "My child is well-behaved at school but is a nightmare at home! What is your special trick?" All schools would say that consistency and clarity is key to maintaining positive behaviours at school.

You should be aware that your child will have worked / tried hard all day long at school and so they will be tired and in need of some 'downtime' at home. Don't be surprised if their behaviour changes during this time.



Here are some useful tips provided by children's behaviour specialist on how to encourage and nurture positive behaviour;

- Model and encourage games which take turns such as board games or card games.
- Encourage sharing with siblings and new friends.
- Talk to your child and explain how everyone is different and how we have to respect that.
- Play games to show how we are not always the winner or always right. Praise their effort and fairplay.
- Use praise in a positive way and praise specific things worth praising e.g. I like the way you have picked up your clothes. Thank you for offering to help clear the table.
- Encourage your child to enjoy receiving verbal praise and not to expect a reward such as sweets/toys.
- Above all encourage your child to respect others.

The NSPCC have produced a helpful guide with top tips for building and strengthening relationships with your child. 'We know how challenging it can be to balance all the demands parents and carers have to cope with. That's why we've put together some tips to help. All children need boundaries and discipline, and this guide helps you develop what works for you and your child.'

[NSPCC Need-to-know Guides: Positive Parenting](#)

Strategies for managing challenging behaviour

NHS advice is to...

- **Be consistent**


Children need consistency. If you react to your child's behaviour in one way one day and a different way the next, it's confusing for them. It's also important that everyone close to your child deals with the problem in the same way.

- **Don't over-react**

This can be difficult. When your child does something annoying time after time, your anger and frustration can build up. It's impossible not to show your irritation sometimes, but try to stay calm. Move on to other things you can both enjoy or feel good about as soon as possible.

- **Be positive about the good things**

When a child's behaviour is difficult, the things they do well can be overlooked. Tell your child when you're pleased about something they've done. You can let your child know when they make you happy by giving them attention, a hug or a smile.



Don't forget to separate the child from the behaviour by saying "I love you very much but I don't like this anger / shouting".

Who am I?

When your child starts school they will socialise with new people and no doubt make new long-lasting friendships. It is really useful to have conversations with your child about their own family and how that may be different to other families. Your school will encourage you to share information about your family so that school activities can celebrate differences e.g. traditions, celebrations and beliefs.



Literacy and maths



As a parent/carer, it can be daunting worrying about what your child needs to know before school. This is a list of the top 5 useful literacy and maths based activities to do with your child before they start school:

- 1** Read stories to your child daily and speak to them about the characters and the pictures. Encourage them to guess what the story might be about from the title and the pictures.
- 2** Sing old-fashioned nursery rhymes, with the actions!
- 3** Visit the local library and borrow a collection of books to share with you.
- 4** Write their name and display somewhere in the house so they can recognise their school peg or drawer in September. It is really helpful to have their name with a capital letter for the first letter and lower case letters for the rest of their name.
- 5** Play writing games and if they are interested get them to write their own name.

If they enjoy those activities, try these maths ones:

- 1** Sing counting songs such as "1,2,3,4,5, once I caught a fish alive...."
- 2** Count items into the trolley at the supermarket.
- 3** Talk about colours and shapes.
- 4** Sing the days of the week and teach them their birthday so they start to learn the months of the year.
- 5** Use mathematical language such as more than, less than, below, above, first, second, third, heavy, light, bigger than, smaller than, one o'clock, two o'clock etc.
- 6** Look for letters and number in the environment while out walking or driving.

Working with the school

It's widely recognised that the more involved parents are in their child's education, the better they perform at school. Communication between home and school works best when it is two-way and teachers are always keen to hear from parents/carers if they have any worries or concerns or to share learning successes.

What should I do if I am worried about my child at school?

Suggestion: Speak to the class teacher or teaching assistant at the start or end of the day. Each school will have its own system for speaking to parents and will encourage you to share as much information about your child as possible.

I know that it is a legal requirement to send my child to school unless they are ill, but how will I know if they are too ill?

Suggestion: Children need to be kept at home if they have been sick but if you are not sure, call the school office first thing in the morning and discuss your child's illness with them. The DfE rules that holidays in term time will not be authorised. See your school's attendance policy for more information.



A place for technology in a 4 year old's life

Technology for children today is exciting and much more advanced than when we were at school. Schools are very lucky to be able to offer some of the latest technology and children are often able to teach adults how to use some devices! However, there is some guidance about how much exposure children should have with technology.

Four year old children are at a very impressionable period of their life. They are only beginning to develop their social skills and learning to communicate with people around them. It is not surprising that spending their time interacting with a colourful screen that obeys their every command does nothing towards developing their interaction skills with people and functioning in the real world. If you use this gadget with them, however, children can benefit both from interaction with you and the resources it has to offer.

Games, even educational ones, can be loads of fun and especially appealing to children because of their colourful design, interactivity and fast pace. On one hand they are good for honing hand-eye coordination and reasoning, but because they are so responsive they can also shorten children's attention span.

Children shouldn't have any screen time (on an iPad or tablet) 2 hours before bedtime as it will disrupt their sleep.



Kids can get used to colourful images exchanging quickly, a new picture available at every touch at the screen, but this also means that other things (not happening on tablets) will seem too dull and slow and a child will quickly lose interest. Let them play games, but be aware that screen time does not only apply to TV- it is of crucial importance when it comes to tablets too. Everything in moderation!

(Dr. K. Troeg – Children’s Psychologist)

If your child is using mobile devices it is essential to have parental controls in place to keep your child safe. More information can be found under E-safety on pages 20 & 21

Tell me about your day

It may come as a surprise, but lots of children can find it difficult to talk about their school day, which can be frustrating for an excited parent or carer who wants to hear all about it!

Try these helpful questions that can encourage conversations about what has happened at school:

- 1 Tell me one thing that you learned today.
- 2 Tell me something that made you laugh today.
- 3 Where is the coolest place in school?
- 4 Tell me a new word that you heard today.
- 5 If I called your teacher tonight what would they tell me about you?



- 6** How did you help somebody today?
- 7** How did somebody help you today?
- 8** What was the best thing that happened at school today?
- 9** When were you the happiest today?
- 10** When were you excited today?
- 11** If an alien spaceship came to your school class and beamed you up, what would you tell them?
- 12** Who would you like to play with at playtime that you've never played with before?
- 13** Tell me something good that happened today.
- 14** What do you think you should do/learn more of at school?
- 15** Where do you play the most at playtime?
- 16** What was your favourite part of lunch?
- 17** If you got to be the teacher tomorrow what would you do?
- 18** Tell me about three different times you used your pencil today at school.
- (Simple Simon and Company)

E-safety

Children and young people spend a lot of time online – it can be a great way for them to socialise, explore and have fun. But children do also face risks like cyberbullying or seeing content that's inappropriate.

Whether you're unsure about what happens online or are up to speed with new technology, it's important that you talk to your child about staying safe. It may feel daunting, but you don't need to be an expert on the internet. Understanding what children do online and the risks they face will help you keep your child safe online.

What children do online and through social networking

Children and young people go online to connect with friends, and make new ones, to browse the internet for information, chat with others and play games. They may:

- Search for information or content on search engines like Google and Bing
- Share images and watch videos through websites or mobile apps like Instagram, Pinterest, Vine and YouTube
- Use social networking websites like Facebook and Twitter
- Write or reply to messages on forums and message boards
- Play games alone or with others through websites, apps or game consoles
- Chat with other people through online games, game consoles, webcams, social networks and tools like Whatsapp.



When online, children and young people can learn new things, get help with homework, express themselves creatively and connect with friends and family.

There are also risks, but by understanding and talking about the dangers you can help keep your child safe online.

Some websites and games use age restrictions and checks to make sure that children don't see unsuitable content.

Children must be at least 13 to register on most social networking websites. But there's not a lot standing in the way of children joining at a younger age.

Age limits are there to keep children safe so you shouldn't feel pressurised into letting younger children join these websites.

(Taken from the NSPCC)

Your school will have an e-safety policy which will be shared with you. Children will also learn how to be safe online as part of the curriculum. If you have any concerns, please speak to your child's school.

Useful websites

www.thinkuknow.co.uk

www.childnet.com

www.wisekids.org.uk

www.theschoolrun.com/reception

www.familylives.org.uk/advice/primary/learning-school/starting-primary-school?referer=/advice/primary/learning-school

www.pacey.org.uk/working-in-childcare/spotlight-on/being-school-ready/#readyforschool

www.nhs.uk/Conditions/pregnancy-and-baby/Pages/starting-school.aspx

www.icancharity.org.uk

Useful contacts

Arunside Primary School
Blackbridge Lane,
Horsham,
West Sussex,
RH12 1RR

Tel: 01403 263919
Email: office@arunside.school
Web: www.arunside.school

Shelley Primary School
Wickhurst Lane,
Broadbridge Heath,
Horsham,
West Sussex,
RH12 3LU

Tel: 01403 265343
Email: office@shelleyprimary.school
Web: www.shelley.w-sussex.sch.uk

Castlewood Primary School
Castlewood Road,
Southwater,
West Sussex,
RH13 9US

Tel: 01403 734822
Email: office@castlewoodprimary.co.uk
Web: www.castlewood.w-sussex.sch.uk

The Southwater Infant Academy
Worthing Road,
Southwater,
West Sussex,
RH13 9JH

Tel: 01403 733254
Email: office@southwaterinfants.co.uk
Web: www.southwaterinfantacademy.co.uk



St Mary's CE Primary School
Normandy,
Horsham,
West Sussex,
RH12 1JL

Tel: 01403 265999

Email: office@stmarysschoolhorsham.co.uk

Web: www.stmarysschoolhorsham.co.uk

St. John's Catholic Primary School
Blackbridge Lane,
Horsham,
West Sussex,
RH12 1RR

Tel: 01403 265447

Email: office@stjohnshorsham.school

Web: www.stjohnshorsham.school

Trafalgar Community Infant School
Victory Road,
Horsham,
West Sussex,
RH12 2JF

Tel: 01403 254925,

Email: office@trafalgarinfant.com

Web: trafalgar.eschools.co.uk/web

Warnham CE Primary School
Freeman Road,
Warnham,
Horsham,
West Sussex,
RH12 3RQ

Tel: 01403 265230

Email: office@warnhamprimary.co.uk

Web: www.warnhamschool.org.uk







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