

Transition into School: Is your child ready?



Cambridgeshire Community Services NHS Trust: delivering excellence
in children and young people's health services

Ready for school?

Starting school is an exciting time and a big change for parents and children. This leaflet provides advice on how a little preparation and support can help calm nerves and ensure they get the most from school.

Children will start school with a range of skills which will continue to grow during their first year. Above all, happy, healthy and confident children who are ready to try new things will settle and learn more easily.

Practical skills

To help your child before they start school it is important that they have gained the following skills:

- Go to the toilet on their own, clean themselves afterwards and wash their hands.
- Feed themselves - use cutlery and be able to open things like yoghurt pots, bananas etc.
- Put their coat and shoes on and get changed for PE.
- Know their name and colours and understand the importance of tidying away their belongings.

Helpful Tip - Practice, practice, practice

Set up an obstacle course with different stops where they can practice washing their hands, putting on their coat and shoes, peel a banana etc. Make it more fun by inviting their friends over! Activities that are fun and engaging help to build excitement about starting school.



Communication

Expressing needs, thoughts and feelings is just as important as reading and writing skills when starting school.

- Can your child talk in simple sentences?
- Can they ask a question and start a conversation?
- Can they make themselves understood by others?
- Can they listen and follow instructions?

Helpful Tip - Role play, dressing up and creative play all help with building your child's speech, language and listening skills.

If you are concerned about your child's speech you can self refer to Speech and Language Therapy (a free NHS service) offered by East Coast Community Healthcare across Norfolk. Please call 01493 809977.

Books and reading together

Use every opportunity to read to your child not just bedtime stories but newspapers, magazines, cereal boxes etc. Research shows that children who are read to daily are more prepared to learn with improved attention spans and memory skills. It's also a great time for cuddles and quality parent/child time.

To find your nearest library, please go to the Norfolk County Council website address below. This is a free service for you to access.

<https://www.norfolk.gov.uk/libraries-local-history-and-archives/libraries/your-local-library/locations-and-opening-times>

Routines

Routines help children feel secure, learn acceptable behaviours and follow rules more quickly. It is important that your child has regular routines both at bedtime and during the day to prepare for school life.

Through routines children gain structure, they know what is going to happen next and are therefore calmer and more cooperative. This will help children to arrive on time for school, ready to start the day and have good attendance levels.

Activity

Making sure your child is eating a balanced diet and getting lots of fresh air and exercise helps to create a healthy and happy lifestyle.

The NHS recommends that children of pre-school age who can walk without help should be physically active for at least 3 hours, spread throughout the day.*

Individual physical and mental abilities should be considered when interpreting the guidelines.

The 3 hours could be made up of light activity or more lively activity**:

Examples of light activity include:

- standing up
- moving around
- walking
- less energetic play

Examples of more lively activity (which makes the child 'huff and puff') include:

- active play (such as hide and seek and stuck in the mud)
- running around
- jumping on a trampoline
- riding a bike
- dancing
- swimming
- climbing
- skipping rope
- gymnastics

Helpful Tip - Find your local park and visit with your child to make use of the open space and play equipment.

*Start Active, Stay Active: A report on physical activity for health from the four home countries' Chief Medical Officers (2011)

** Physical activity guidelines for children (under five years), NHS Choices

Diet

Starting a healthy relationship with food from a young age will improve eating habits later in life. Balanced healthy diets and drinking plenty of water will ensure that your child gets all the nutrients and energy they need. A healthy breakfast before school and a free school lunchtime meal (available from Reception through to Year 2) will help your child's concentration and behaviour in class.

More information about creating a healthy diet can be found on the British Nutrition Foundation and the Government websites:

<https://www.nutrition.org.uk/healthyliving/resources/healthyeatingtoddlers.html>

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/528200/Eatwell_guide_booklet.pdf

Helpful Tip - Foods that release energy slowly help to avoid blood sugar spikes and crashes which will help your child to keep the right level of energy throughout the day.

Mixing and playing with other children

If your child is in nursery, looked after by a childminder or regularly attends pre-school groups, they will be used to playing with other children. They will also be used to spending time away from you. Don't worry if your child hasn't attended a childcare setting - there are other ways you can provide chances for your child to play with other children, whether this is at the park, soft play area or with friends' children.

Games that involve sharing or taking turns will improve their social skills - all good practice for forming friendships with school classmates.

It's not too late to think about nursery before starting school and funding is available to help you with the cost.

To find out about funding and which early years childcare providers are available in your area please go to the Norfolk County Council website:

<http://www.schools.norfolk.gov.uk/Early-years-foundation-stage/Early-learning-and-childcare/NCC121617>

Other Important Information

Hearing, Vision, Height and Weight

In the first year at school your child's hearing and vision will be screened together with their height and weight. This will be carried out by members of our team and you will be informed when this is due to take place. When this will happen during the school year will differ across the county. Results will be shared with you after the screening has taken place and further information provided to help you support your child.

Dental Health

Research carried out in 2012 and 2014 found that almost a third of 5 year olds and 12% of 3 year olds had tooth decay. Starting a regular teeth-cleaning routine early in your child's life is therefore essential for good dental health.

This routine should include:

- Brushing teeth and gums twice a day with a pea sized blob of fluoride toothpaste.
- Keeping sugary food and drinks to the minimum and only at meal times.
- Drinking lots of plain water and milk which are the best drinks for children at this age.
- Visiting your dentist regularly - NHS dental care for children is free.

For more information on children's dental hygiene and to find your local dentist please visit the NHS website listed below.

<http://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/dentalhealth/Pages/Careofkidsteeth.aspx>

Head Lice

When your child starts nursery or school they may be with other children who have head lice. Head lice lay eggs in clean or dirty hair. The eggs are white/silver. Head lice must be treated, as they can spread and everyone in the family can get them. You can use a nit comb and some conditioner to remove lice and eggs from wet hair.

Your Health Visitor or your School Nurse can give you further advice if required.

Also visit www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Head-lice/Pages/Treatment.aspx

Useful Websites and Information Sources

For more information on how to prepare your child for school, including fun activities, the PACEY website is a great place to start:

<https://www.startingschooltogether.org.uk/home/>

The Book Trust website provides tips on reading and has a great section on book recommendations:

<http://www.booktrust.org.uk/books/children/how-to-share-books/>

For more information about encouraging your child to be active and the benefits of exercise the British Heart Foundation have some useful information:

<http://www.bhfactive.org.uk/userfiles/Documents/startactivesstayactive.pdf>

Change 4 Life also provides useful information in relation to diet and exercise:

www.nhs.uk/change4life

Information on pre-school child development can be found at:

www.pbs.org/parents/childdevelopmenttracker/four

Information on how to toilet train your child can be found at:

www.eric.org.uk



For further information about this service contact:

Just one number



The **Norfolk Healthy Child Team** includes **Health Visitors, Nursery Nurses, School Nurses** and **Support Workers** who work together to support children, young people and their families from 0-19 years old.

Before your child starts school please contact The **Norfolk Healthy Child**

If you require this information in a different format such as in large print or on audio tape, or in a different language please contact the service on the details above.

If you have any compliments about this service or suggestions for improvements, contact our Patient Advice and Liaison Service on 0300 131 1000 (charges may apply depending on your network) or email: ccs-tr.pals@nhs.net.

For free, confidential health advice and information 24 hours a day, 365 days a year please contact NHS 111.