

# Being a Child Friendly School

## *What do we mean by a 'child friendly school'?*

When children start school, they arrive with a whole range of experiences and skills. Some have been to a full time nursery since they were a baby; some have stayed at home with a family member; while others have had a range of experiences including going to a child minders, playgroups and frequent trips to the park.

Everyone arrives with their own skills and experiences that contribute towards making them uniquely them.

Our aim in the Early Years is to celebrate all of their experiences, differences, skills and strengths. This is a joint venture that involves:

- ◆ **ready children** - with social and independence skills,
- ◆ a **ready school** - equipped to provide optimal learning environments for the children
- ◆ a **ready family** - ready to help their children make a smooth transition.

## *What are the characteristics of a child who is ready for school?*

When your child first arrives in September, our main aim is for them to settle happily and be able to separate from their families as they start their learning journey.

Here are a few things that you might like to think about as you prepare your child for school:



## **Being Ready to Learn**

### Language

Can they express their needs and wants? Are they able to tell an adult if they are hurt or want a drink?

- \* We support children in using a variety of communication strategies, including non-verbal or pictorial cues, where appropriate.

### Self-care

Are they able to go to the toilet, wipe their bottom and wash their hands on their own?

- \* We are constantly reminding children to go to the toilet especially at the beginning of the year.  
Can they open their packed lunch box or eat a meal independently?
- \* They don't need to do much cutting but it really helps if they know how to hold their knife and fork. Can they take off their shoes and socks? Better still, can they put them back on afterwards?
- \* It is best not to have lace up shoes at school until they can tie the laces themselves. Can they put on their coats and have a go at the buttons and zips?
- \* It really helps the children to feel grown up if they can do a few things for themselves. It also means they can go into the garden quickly if they don't need to wait for some help.

### Social skills / interactions

Sharing toys can often be a challenge. It is very helpful if your child has had plenty of practice sharing toys and playing games with other children and adults. When we were children we used to play lots of 'take it in turn' games with dice and cards. Don't forget to play these old favourites with your own children; turn taking and sharing are life skills!

## Attention and concentration

Is your child able to sit and listen to a short story until it is finished?

- \* It is very helpful if your child has already had some experience with sitting and listening to a story. We all know it can be hard to listen from time to time, so we don't expect the children to sit for more than a few minutes when they start school. Perhaps they enjoy looking at a book on their own. That is wonderful, as an interest in books supports so much of their learning.

## Listening and following instructions

Does your child enjoy doing little jobs for you?

- \* Listening and then following simple instructions is an important part of learning in the Early Years. Many children enjoy being given a responsible job around the home as well as in school.

## Physical skills

Can your child keep going all day from 9am – 3:25 pm?

It is worth helping your child to build up their stamina before September so that they are used to keeping going for a whole school day. Not every child is ready for full days straight away, so please talk to the school about any concerns you have about this during the settling in period.

Can they sit cross legged and upright unsupported? Developing core strength through crawling around on the floor, playing games and lying on their tummy to look at a book or do some puzzles, really helps children to build up these important muscles.

Some children enjoy craft activities. This gives you the ideal chance to help them learn how to use a pair of scissors as well as how to hold a pencil while they are having fun.



## **Learning Characteristics**

Learning for life or a life of learning, whichever way you look at it, these are the characteristics that we encourage in our learners as they begin this journey:

- Resilience,
- Curiosity,
- Taking the initiative,
- Having a go,
- Contributing and collaborating,
- Taking a risk in a safe environment,
- Being able to join in,
- Being happy to make a mistake and learn from it.



## **What does a school look like that is child friendly?**

### Your unique child

We like to provide opportunities in the summer term that allow us to meet you and your child before they start school. It enables us to get to know each other as well as giving you the opportunity to share any of your concerns.



## Positive relationships

Each child has a key worker that has a special focus on your child. Together we can respond to your child's needs, support your child's own efforts and encourage their independence and learning. Please tell us if there is anything you feel we need to know in order to help and support your child. Even if we can't do anything about it, for example, knowing that your child wouldn't eat their breakfast or had a restless night, helps us to be aware of how your child may be feeling.

## Enabling Environments

Children learn and develop well in enabling environments, with experiences to suit their individual needs and a strong partnership between home and school. Stimulating and relevant resources can support the rich learning opportunities that we provide through play.

Enabling environments support children:

- ◆ To take risks and explore,
- ◆ To value all people,
- ◆ To value all learning.



## *It's all about progress*

Children arrive at school at different stages of their learning. Our first job is to find out where they are on their learning journey. Then we can support them to make the best progress they can and celebrate all their achievements however small.

## *How do we support their development generally and individually?*

Not all children develop at the same rate and at the same times. There are numerous reasons for this including being premature, their term of birth or a variety of early life happenings.

We take account of all the children's individual strengths and needs. We have a range of strategies and a wealth of experience of working with children who find school challenging.

It is helpful when we can work with families to understand and support those children who need an extra helping hand to settle as well as those who may need longer term support.



## **What you can do to prepare your child for starting school?**

### *Here are some activities that can be helpful in the lead up to starting school:*

- Family expectations: increase your expectations of your child around self-care tasks such as dressing, toileting, eating and getting ready to leave the home. Start to reduce your physical help and instead provide verbal prompts for them to complete a task.
- Talk positively about going to school: family attitudes, goals and behaviours influence the way your child develops their language skills. Valuing and maintaining using their mother tongue at home is important as it is the first language they learn at home.
- Social skills: encourage your child to develop relationships with a range of similar aged children and arrange play dates for social interaction practise. Even better, join in with their play if they need an adult to model play skills.
- Books: expose your child to a range of books and give them opportunities sharing and listening to a whole story book. You can extend the length of the book depending on their interests and concentration span.
- Early preparation: try engaging in a range of 'sit down' activities together. This will really help when they start school if they are familiar with participating in small group activities such as Snap, Snakes and Ladders, etc.



- Encourage a daily routine: try building a daily routine into different parts of your day such as breakfast and getting dressed; bath or story time; and getting ready for bed. It will really help your child if they are already familiar with following routines, especially if they don't need you to be continually reminding them.
- Noticing print in the environment: notice numbers and text when you are out and about such as bus numbers, door numbers, sign posts and shop names.
- Visit the library: have a look at some books together that are all about starting school.
- Give children some time to think about what they want to say and put their thoughts into words, without jumping in too soon to say something yourself.

Finally, if you do have any concerns about your child starting school, then do contact Anne Rawcliffe, the Early Years Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator on [anne.rawcliffe@rhodes.haringey.sch.uk](mailto:anne.rawcliffe@rhodes.haringey.sch.uk)

