

Parentkind

Bringing together home & school

Being prepared as a parent

It's not unusual for parents to feel anxious when their child starts primary school, so if you're feeling a bit wobbly about it all, that's ok. As well as making sure your child is ready for school, set aside some time to get the whole family prepared. It is a big change and it will affect you all in some way.

The practical stuff

Your family routine

Families come in all shapes and sizes, so it's important that everyone involved in caring for your child knows what's going on.

Working parents with children already at nursery, or being cared for by extended family or a child-minder will be pretty well-rehearsed in all this, but it can be tricky to start with. You'll need to be adaptable, but any routine is better than the chaos of no routine at all.

- Agree who'll be doing the drop off and pick up each day. The school will need names and contact details for anyone other than yourself who'll be collecting your child, and your written permission for them to do so.
- Walk or drive your route to school so you know how long it takes, then add extra time for school traffic. If parking is limited you might want to get there a bit earlier to bag a space.
- Set regular times for everything you need to do between waking up and going to bed – and stick to them.
- Make sure your child eats a healthy breakfast every day, either at home or breakfast club.
- If it's possible to eat your evening meal together great, if not, still get the children to eat their dinner sitting at the table.
- Allow time for reading, talking about their day and bedtime stories.

Shop for the essentials

The school will let you know what your child needs, but if you know other parents with kids already at the school, ask them what's needed straight away and what can wait (it's unlikely they'll need a spare pair of wellies kept at school in September).

Get your child involved by letting them choose anything that doesn't need to be strictly uniform, like their coat or lunchbox.

Reception children come home grubby, whether it's dirt from playing outside, or school lunch down their front. So unless you want to spend your evenings washing, it's a good idea to buy

plenty of uniform. T-shirts are relatively cheap and easy to get hold of, but jumpers and cardigans with the school logo can be quite expensive, so ask if the school or PTA have a second hand uniform sale coming up (or make friends with the parent of an older, only child – great for hand-me-downs!!).

Label everything

If it's not permanently attached to your child, put their name on it! Labels help your child identify their own clothes. If they don't recognise their name written down just yet, it might help to get labels with little pictures on.

Thankfully the days of spending hours sewing in labels are long gone (unless you want to). There's now plenty of choice – stick on, iron on, stamp on – or the old marker pen on the label trick will do. Because let's face it, rummaging through piles of unnamed jumpers and book-bags at the end of a long day isn't what you or your child want to be doing!

The emotional stuff

Stay positive

Your child will be taking their cues from you, so try to stay positive. If you're enthusiastic about school, it's more likely they will be too, if you're anxious it sends a signal that there's something to worry about.

Schools are used to children being worried in the first few weeks, so however your child reacts, the teachers will have seen it all before and have support systems in place. Some schools pair Reception children with a year 6 'buddy' - they might even receive a letter from their buddy before they start school.

[Read how first time mum Liz coped with first day tears \(that lasted all term\).](#)

Be realistic

Make sure your expectations about what your child will learn and how they'll develop are realistic. Relax and let them progress at their own pace, don't put them under pressure by expecting too much, too soon. The qualities that matter most in Reception age children are things like curiosity, independence, imagination, and enjoying playing with other children. As time goes on, if you do have concerns then speak to their teacher.

[Primary insider encourages us all to 'ignore the nonsense'](#)

Be a good listener

"Nothing" and "I can't remember" are standard answers to questions about your child's day. If you're used to detailed nursery handovers, this lack of information can come as a bit of a shock. Don't be discouraged; wait a while and the stories will come out, usually at an odd time – like in the bath, half way through a bedtime story, or on the toilet. Try asking specific questions like "who did you play with today?" or "what made you laugh today?"

NEXT: [Starting school \(the early days\)](#)

Reviewed: January 2018