

Settling In to Preschool

Coming to preschool for the first time or returning to preschool after a long break, can be a stressful as well as exciting experience (for both children and parents!)

It may be the first time your child has moved out of a family situation, or the first time they have had to be with many other children. Be positive and patient! It may take a little time for them (and you!) to adjust and feel confident in this new situation.

Children are all very different in their ways of coping with new situations. Some will enter eagerly and begin play - leaving you feeling sad and redundant! Others will stay close to you for a while, and then venture out to play, and then maybe cry as you leave. Some will cling and cry from the moment they walk in the gate! Don't worry! There are ways to help smooth over these difficulties!

Here are some guidelines to help make this transition easier.

Before starting preschool:

- Talk about preschool.
- Read books about going to preschool eg "Spot Goes to School" by Eric Hill
- Visit the preschool together and meet the teachers and look at the toys.
- Remind your child that the children stay and play but the parents leave. Remind your child that the parents always come back.
- Make sure your child is confident to open and close their school bag, lunch box, water bottle and any food wraps you use - practise - have a picnic!
- Make sure your child can recognise their belongings - (there may be many fans of "Thomas the Tank Engine" and "Peppa Pig" at preschool – make sure your child's name and maybe a special sticker or tag clearly distinguishes their items)
- Make sure your child can comfortably dress themselves in the clothes they will wear to preschool. This will make them confident with toileting.
- Remind your child that teachers are there to help them - they only have to ask.

The First Day:

- Arrive on time - not too early and feel all alone
- not too late and feel overwhelmed by the crowd.
- Find a cubby hole for their bag and make sure they know where it is. This is your child's personal space for their belongings for the day
- Place their morning tea, lunch and water bottle in the eskys.

- Have something personal in their bag eg a family photo, a small security blanket etc to go and look at if missing home.
- Introduce your child to the teachers.
- Observe your child- if they are happy to go and play, watch for a while, then say goodbye. Tell them you will be back to collect them later, then leave.
- If your child is distressed when you say goodbye, make sure they know that you are going to return for them. Give them an easy to understand time frame eg: *After lunch and games. Before we pick up the big kids. Long before it's nighttime.*
- The teachers will be there to step in and help. We will talk to them, distract them with interesting games and activities and give cuddles.
- Always say goodbye and 'see you later' to your child. Never sneak out while they seem happy playing. It is very distressing to look up and find your parent suddenly is gone – they feel abandoned and betrayed. Your child may cry when you tell them you are leaving - but if you do say goodbye, then leave despite tears and protests, then return later as promised, your child will learn to trust you. They gain lots of confidence as they learn the preschool routines and realise that they can cope for a while without you being there. Your confidence gives them confidence.
- If your child is crying as you leave, don't worry all day. Please ring and we will tell you how they are going - often they recover quickly and begin having fun - then begin to cry again when you return to pick them up! (We will contact you to let you know how they are feeling when we can)
- It is important, especially in the first few weeks, to arrive on time or a little early at the end of the day. Children become distressed if they see other children going home if their parent has not arrived.
- Be consistent. Bring your child to preschool on the chosen days - give them time to learn and get used to the routines and people they meet. It can take some children a while to settle, but most of them do. We will certainly tell you if we have any concerns about how your child is settling in.
- Be aware that a child who begins confidently can have a relapse!
- Please discuss any concerns with the teachers.
- Enjoy your childfree time – you will be refreshed and ready to be a great parent when your child arrives home!

Learning to make their way in a group without you is a big achievement for your child. Encourage them to talk about their experiences at home by referring to the preschool daily programme and the remarkable creations your child will undoubtedly produce! (Hints; The question *"Tell me about this?"* often extracts a better response than *"What is this?"*. *"What did you play with?"*, *"Who did you see there?"*, *"What was the best thing?"* work better than *"What did you do today?"*. Your child may be very tired when they get home and just need to rest for a while before the conversations start – or they may just have to talk and talk until all is told!

The aim is to enjoy Preschool!