

# *Parent and Student Handbook*

*Early Years Foundation Stage*

*2017 - 2018*



NORD ANGLIA  
INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL  
SHANGHAI, PUDONG



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## *Welcome to Our School*

Firstly we would like to extend a very warm welcome to you and your family from the Early Years staff here at Nord Anglia International School Shanghai Pudong.

The first week of school is an exciting and busy time for the children, parents and teachers. There will be lots of new experiences and lots of questions that you will want to ask.

For children who are new to NAIS Pudong the first day is a big day. Some children may find separating from parents and carers difficult. Preparing your child in advance by talking to them about their new school can make things easier. On the day a big hug, a wave goodbye, a big smile and reassurance that they will be collected and when, will help your child adjust to their new environment more quickly. With time your child will become more familiar and settled with the school routines.

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Team





## *Message from the Principal*

Dear Parents and Students,

The guide that follows has been prepared to serve as a reference guide for our families and especially for those who are new to NAIS Pudong.

First and foremost, if we have not already met, please do come forward as I like to meet all families and do my best to know as many of the young people in our school as I possibly can.

It is most important that you know that we have an 'open door' approach across the school and that you can ask any questions that you may have.

The sense of community is essential to all good schools and with that comes:

- A common sense of values that are shared by students, parents, teachers and all staff alike;
- A clear commitment to achieve academic success and personal improvement through engagement in the life of the school;
- An understanding that we are all role models for others and that human values of courtesy, consideration for others, and open-mindedness are applied throughout;
- A belief that we can always do better and that we are respectful of the environment where we come together with shared purpose;
- At NAIS Pudong we create opportunities for you to thrive now and in the future.

On a practical basis this also means abiding by some sensible shared procedures and understanding who is who and what goes on where. This book aims to provide that information.

I look forward to working together and trust that your experiences of schooling at NAIS Pudong will be positive, healthy and enriching throughout.

Yours sincerely,

Lesley-Ann Wallace  
Principal

## Settling In Process

Settling into school is an important time for young children and their families. For some children this will be the first time they may have been left with another person and often the first time they have been left in a larger environment. At NAIS Pudong we aim to make this process as smooth as possible. All children and families are unique and as such their individual needs are taken into account throughout the settling in process. Through discussion with each child's key carer individual arrangements are agreed for each child.

### ORIENTATION DAY

During this day you and your child will attend a welcome meeting led by the School Principal and Head of Primary. After this meeting you will be able to meet your child's teacher and the specialist teachers that will be teaching your child for PE, music, and Mandarin. There will be an opportunity for you to ask questions or to simply introduce yourselves.

### FIRST DAY FOR PRE-NURSERY AND NURSERY

On your child's start date parents/carers should:

- Arrive between 8:15am – 8:40am where your child will be welcomed in by the class teacher and teaching assistants.

- 8:15am – 8:45am – parents welcome to stay until the child is settled.
- 12noon – children encouraged to be collected. If your child is taking time to settle the teacher will liaise closely with you to make the transition smoother. Please speak to the class teacher if your child needs to stay until 3pm.

We will follow the same structure for the first week of school. Please talk to the class teacher in regards to the settling in routines, we hope that by working with parents/carers we can provide the best possible start for your child's entry into nursery, laying firm foundations for the future.

Children to arrive between 8:15 am– 8:40am where your child will be welcomed in by the class teacher and teaching assistants.

- All parents must leave the EYFS unit by 8:45am.
- Children have the option of continuing to be collected at 12noon or 3pm. Please speak to the class teacher about your child's collection arrangements.
- They can bring a small pillow and a teddy to help them rest. The children are often very tired by the afternoon and for the well-being of the children it is important that they have time to rest during their busy day.

- Specialist classes will begin in week 3 for Nursery children. You will receive an email from your child's teacher before these begin.

### FIRST DAY FOR RECEPTION

On your child's start date parents/carers should:

- Arrive at between 8:15am – 8:40am where your child will be welcomed in by the class teacher and teaching assistants.
- 8:15am – 8:45am – parents welcome to stay until the child is settled.
- 3pm hometime, if your child needs a settling in period, please discuss this with your child's teacher as an early dismissal of 12pm can be arranged for the first week.

From week 2 onwards, we will follow the below procedure:

- Children to arrive between 8:15am – 8:40am where your child will be welcomed in by the class teacher and teaching assistants.
- All parents must leave the EYFS unit by 8:45am.
- Specialist classes will begin for Reception children. You will receive an email from your child's teacher before their these begin.



## ATTENDANCE AND PUNCTUALITY

It is important to arrive and collect on time. It also helps children to learn the necessity for good timekeeping. If you will be unavoidably late picking up – please telephone so that we can explain this to your child. If someone other than yourself or a regular person that we have met before is picking up, then you must email your class teacher. If we are in any doubt, we will not send the child home until we have phoned you or your emergency contact.

We ask that you ensure your child makes full and regular use of the place offered to them. If for any reason your child will not be able to attend, for example due to illness, or holiday please email your child's teacher to inform them.

### Academic Review Evenings

- There will be an Academic Review Evening each term. These meetings will last 10 minutes and are another opportunity to ask questions and find out more about how your child is doing in all aspects of school life.

### Reporting

- All children will receive a settling in report within the first half term of school.
- Parents and cares will receive a further 3 formal reports throughout the year.



## Early Years Curriculum

Your child's first experience at school is crucial to how they will approach learning for the rest of their life.

The Early Years setting at Nord Anglia International School Pudong is committed to ensuring that your child develops into a creative, happy, confident and independent lifelong learner.

All children arrive with different attributes and needs; therefore tailored learning is at the heart of our provision. The way that your child engages with other people and their environment - active learning (Motivation), creative and critical thinking (Thinking) and playing and exploring (Engagement) – underpin learning and development across all areas and support the child to remain an effective and motivated learner. We provide the children with the tools to develop their learning characteristics, which will lay the foundation for the skills they will need in years to come.

We encourage children to have positive attitudes, form positive relationships and believe in themselves. If children can learn to “have a go”, learn from mistakes and try again, they will succeed in their future learning by becoming resilient risk takers. When children are provided with open ended opportunities where there are no right and wrong answers they learn to think creatively, lead their own learning and become independent learners.

The curriculum is based on the new Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Curriculum incorporated with additional worldwide strategies to make sure your child is getting the best possible education. We ensure that there is a balance of adult- led and child-initiated learning throughout the day, which take place indoors and outdoors. Your child will experience practical play-based activities to ensure they reach their full potential. It is our priority that all children have the time to learn, play, make friends and grow.

The EYFS is based around 7 areas of learning, each area is of equal importance and are used to plan activities which follow the interests of the child and are purposeful and creative.

The three prime areas are:

- **Personal, Social and Emotional Development** - to develop a positive sense of themselves, and others; to form positive relationships and develop respect for others; to develop social skills and learn how to manage their feelings; understand appropriate behaviour in groups; and to have confidence in their own abilities.
- **Physical Development** - to develop co-ordination, control and movement. To understand the importance of physical activity and to make healthy choices in relation to food.

- **Communication and Language** - to develop confidence and skills in expressing themselves and to speak and listen in a range of situations.

The four specific areas are:

- **English** – to link sounds and letters and to begin to read and write.
- **Mathematics** – to develop skills in counting, understanding and using numbers, calculating simple addition and subtraction problems and to describe shapes, spaces and measures.
- **Understanding the World** – to make sense of the physical world and the community.
- **Expressive Arts and Design** – to express and explore a wide range of media and materials. To share their thoughts, ideas and feelings through a variety of activities in art, movement, dance, role-play and design and technology.

### Daily Routines

Children and Parents are asked to wait in the main EYFS reception until a member of staff welcomes them in. The children's first task is to self-register in their classroom. Children are then able to choose where they would like to learn.

## Daily Routines

### Pre-Nursery Timetable 2017-2018

		Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
8:20-9:00		Child-led Activities (Indoor Provision)				
9:00-9:15	Start of Day	Welcome Circle				
9:15-9:35	Session 1	Snack				
9:35-9:55	Session 2	Story Time				
9:55-10:45	Session 3	Teacher input & child initiated time				
10:45-11:00	Session 4	Physical Development Session				
11:00-11:20		Lunch				
11:20-11:50	Session 5a	Mandarin on the Mat				
11:50-12:00	Session 5b	Goodbye Circle Time Nursery Rhymes				

### Nursery Timetable 2017-2018

		Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
8:20-9:00		Self-registration				
9:00-9:15	Start of the Day	Welcome Circle Time				
9:15-9:35	Session 1	Phonics Activities				9:15 - 9:35 Snack
9:35-9:55	Session 2	Snack				9:35-10:00 P.E.
9:55-10:45	Session 3	Carpet Time				
10:45-11:00	Session 4a	Adult Led And Supported Activities, Leading Into Child Initiated Play				
11:00-11:20	Session 4b	Physical Development Session				Story Time
11:20-11:50		Lunch				
11:50-12:00		Lunchtime dismissal				
12:30-13:30		Quiet Time				
13:30-14:00	Session 5	Wake-up Workout				
14:00-14:15		Snack				
14:15-14:50	Session 6	Mandarin on the Mat				
14:50-15:00	End of Day	Story & Dismissal				

## Reception Timetable 2017-2018

		Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
8:15-8:40		Early Morning Activities				
8:40-8:50	Start of the Day	Registration & Welcome Circle				
8:50-9:15		Weekend News	Guided Reading			Assembly (T3)
9:15-9:30	Session 1	Gross and Fine Motor Development				
9:30-10:45	Session 2	Adult Input				
		Child Initiated Play				
10:45-11:00	Outdoor Play					
11:00-11:30	Session 3	Letters and Sounds	P.E. (10:45-11:15)	Letters and Sounds		
11:30-11:40	Story Time					
11:40-12:40	Lunch & Outdoor Play					
12:40-13:25	Session 4	Adult Input				
		Child Initiated Play				
14:00-14:15	Session 5	Music Session (13:25-13:55)	Guided Reading		P.E. (13:25-13:55)	
14:15-14:30	Snack					
14:30-15:00	Session 6	Mandarin				

## How we learn in EYFS

We believe that children learn best through play. They are encouraged to join in all activities, to be independent and to make choices.

We offer a rich and varied curriculum in a safe but inviting environment.

We understand that children develop at their own pace, but with encouragement and opportunity will maximise their potential. Children learn best when they are happy, safe and secure. The staff are there to guide and teach and will get to know you and your child well during your time here.

We have a number of curriculum documents and statements all available for you to see. Please ask if you would like to look through these documents. You can also ask any of our staff about the curriculum.

Our environment is planned to give children the opportunity to extend and develop their thinking and learning across all areas of the curriculum. Although the resources in each area tend to reflect a particular curricular area, they are planned together enabling children to consolidate and apply their learning in a way that makes sense to them.

Each area is monitored by the adults in the environment and then teachers plan specific learning experiences that are appropriate to the needs of the children. They work with groups and individuals to meet each child's specific needs.

Our environment consists of several areas. Each area offers a different variety of learning experiences for our children.

- Book area and listening area
- Fine motor skill activities
- Building and Small world play
- Number area
- Exploring and Investigating Area
- Sand / Water
- Creative Area for painting, modelling and constructing
- Music Area
- Role Play Area and dressing up
- Technology and interactive whiteboards are available throughout the environment

### OUTDOOR LEARNING

The outdoors is the very best place for preschoolers to practice and master emerging physical skills. It is in the outdoors that children can fully and freely experience motor skills like running, leaping, and jumping. It is also the most appropriate area for the practice of ball-handling skills, like throwing, catching, and striking. The outdoors has something more to offer than just physical benefits.

Cognitive and social/emotional developments are impacted too.

Outside, children are more likely to invent games. As they do, they are able to express themselves and learn about the world in their own way. They feel safe and in control, which promotes autonomy, decision-making, and organisational

skills. Inventing rules for games (as preschoolers like to do) promotes an understanding of why rules are necessary.

All of the above resources are also available outside, as well as wheeled toys/vehicles, space for running and physical experiences, climbing frames and small equipment e.g. balls, hoops and rings.

Outdoor learning is very important to us here at NAIS Pudong as it allows for cross-curricular learning to take place on a bigger scale.

The EYFS environment is regularly risk assessed by all the staff in the EYFS unit.

### SPECIALIST SUBJECTS

- Mandarin – daily sessions a week covering 20-40 minutes each.
- Swimming – one 30 minute session a week. (Reception Only)
- Music – one 30 minute session. (Nursery & Reception Only)
- PE - one 30 minute slot a week. (Nursery & Reception Only)



## RECORD KEEPING

We use an online assessment which tracks your child's progress as they work towards achieving the Early Learning Goals at the end of their Reception year. During the Early Years Foundation Stage at NAIS Pudong, to ensure effective teaching and learning, teachers use observational assessment to gauge a child's level of development and understanding. The Learning Journey is a record of what a child has achieved, knows and can do.

Teachers record ongoing observations in the seven areas of learning accompanied sometimes by photographic evidence. This form of assessment not only keeps you up to date with your child's progress but also informs the teachers planning and ensures that each child's learning experiences are based on individual needs.



## Specialist Sessions

### PHYSICAL EDUCATION

The Physical Education provision your child will receive at NAIS Pudong is truly exceptional. The curriculum has been carefully designed to enable all children to build a foundation of skills and confidence that will enhance their physical development and transition seamlessly to Key Stage 1. Lessons are delivered by Physical Education specialist teachers who are passionate and experienced in working with Early Years children of all ability levels. Your child's PE teacher will remain consistent to each class so as to facilitate strong and trusting student-teacher relationships and enable progression to be tracked and monitored. This teacher will be the first point of contact should you have any questions or concerns regarding PE.

Nursery and Reception PE lessons start in Week 2 and 3 respectively of Term 1. All classes will receive two PE lessons per week. Sports Days will take place outside (pollution and weather permitting) in the Summer Term. Parents are invited to come and watch their children at this event. The dates of these will be communicated with parents via our Week Ahead Letters and Class Dojo as soon as they are confirmed.

#### Swimming

We benefit from a swimming pool at NAIS Pudong. There is always a

lifeguard present on poolside. We take the health and safety of our children extremely seriously.

The swimming pool temperature is maintained above 28 degrees and water is checked for pH and chlorine levels throughout the day. If the temperature, chlorine or pH fall outside of our parameters swimming lessons will be cancelled that day as we will not risk any children having a negative experience.

Children will be grouped by ability and may be moved up or down ability groups throughout the year based on their rate of learning and progress. Only one Early Years class will be on poolside at a time. Each class will be taught by the class PE teacher. Children change in the changing rooms supervised by their class teachers and TAs.

#### Swimming attire

- Swimming costume / shorts
- Small towel or towel dressing gown
- Swimming cap
- Goggles (Optional)
- Flip Flops

### MANDARIN IN EARLY YEARS

Language learning is integral to the life of NAIS Pudong and promoted as a key life skill for all. Learning a language broadens a child's understanding of other cultures, communities and countries in partnership with developing their

communication and language skills to become true global citizens.

All children at NAIS Pudong receive daily lessons in Mandarin. All language lessons are taught by specialist teachers and a variety of techniques and methods are used to actively engage children in their learning, which incorporates stories, games, songs and role play in a fun, enjoyable way.

### MUSIC SPECIALIST SESSIONS

Why would we want children to learn music? Firstly, because it's fun! But playing and learning music has other important benefits: it enhances fine and gross motor skill acquisition, increases pattern recognition and spatial awareness, enhances social and emotional development. Music is a form of communication, it gives children another way to communicate moods, emotions and ideas and children who learn music tend to improve in subjects such as maths, science and English.

During music specialist sessions children will learn to sing songs and explore musical instruments. It is a social experience where children will learn to choose between different ways of playing music on their own, with small groups or in large cooperative groups. Throughout the year the children will also be involved in musical performances to share their musical skills with you.

# Uniform

Please ensure that every item of your child's school uniform and all other personal belongings are clearly labelled. Please also include a change of underwear and a spare set of clothes in your child's school bag. This can be left in their locker.

Help your child to be independent by getting shoes that are easy to put on and take off.

## Summer Uniform - (Approximately August, September, October, May, June)



Boys	Girls
Short sleeve polo shirt	Short sleeve polo shirt
Navy shorts	Navy shorts or Gingham dress
Black ankle socks	White ankle socks
Black, white or blue trainers	Black, white or blue trainers
Sweatshirt (All Year)	Sweatshirt (All Year)

If you wish to add layers under the uniform, please ensure they are teal coloured or white with no patterns or designs.

## Winter Uniform - (Approximately November, December, January, February, March, April)



Boys	Girls
Long sleeve polo shirt	Long sleeve polo shirt
Tracksuit	Tracksuit
Black ankle socks	Black ankle socks or tights
Black, white or blue trainers	Black, white or blue trainers
Sweatshirt (All Year)	Sweatshirt (All Year)

If you wish to add layers under the uniform, please ensure they are teal coloured or white with no patterns or designs.

## Communication

### Face to face

Communication with Parents and Carers is very important to us at NAIS Pudong. Your main point of contact within the school will be your child's teacher. Please come in and talk to your child's teacher if you have any worries or concerns, sometimes a chat is all that is needed to set your mind at rest. Please be aware that teaching begins at 8:45 am, if you feel you need more time for discussion please arrange a meeting with your class teacher.

### Class Dojo

At the end of every day you will receive a 'class story' which tells you of the learning that took place in your child's class on that day. It is not intended to replace face to face communication but rather to support it.

### Communication books

Every day in your child's school bag you will find your child's blue communication book. This is a record for library books, care habits, any visits to the nurse and key messages.

### Parent Workshops

Throughout the year you will be invited in for a selection of parent workshops. These will guide you through our ethos and vision in the Early Years unit at NAIS Pudong. Workshops include physical development, EYFS curriculum, reading and maths.

### Parent Community Association

The Parents Community Association at NAIS Pudong aims to add value to our school by promoting community spirit, hosting fun family events and raising charitable funds. All parents are welcome to join the general PCA meeting each month. These meetings are a great way to get involved in event planning and preparation as well as to meet other NAIS parents. Our main yearly events include the Summer Fair, Dads and Kids Campout and the International Food Fair. If you would like to be included on the PCA mailing list or would like further information please email [community@naispudong.com](mailto:community@naispudong.com)

## *Lunches and Snack Time*

All children in Early Years have the option of a school snack and lunch. Although there may be a set snack time they can eat as and when they are hungry. Some children get up very early for school and travel quite a distance so they may eat on entry to the classroom. Other children may choose to eat later in the morning.

Children will be monitored and assisted to ensure that they eat. If your child brings a packed snack & lunch, please send in sensible amounts of food for your child to eat. We ask that chocolate biscuits and sweets do not get packed as part of their snack.

- Box: snack examples of a healthy lunch – 1 piece of fruit, yoghurt, snack bar.
- Lunch– 1 sandwich/ wrap, vegetable sticks, juice, yoghurt, pasta.
- Water bottle – for health and safety reasons please do not send in metal water bottles with hot water

Please show your child their lunch boxes so they know what they look like. Ensure containers are easy for the children to open and close independently. Please clearly label your child's boxes as 'snack' and lunch' and please do not send in glass ware. NAIS Pudong is a nut free school.

For lunchtime all children will have the option of a nutritional hot lunch provided by the school caterers if you wish to do so. More information can be obtained during the orientation morning.

### **Queries and Concerns**

We hope that during your child's stay with us you will be happy, and be able to discuss any concerns you may have with your child's teacher. If however you do feel it is necessary to talk to someone else please come and talk to the Head of Early Years who will endeavour to resolve the problem or issue.



## Health and Safety

### MEDICAL - CHILDREN ILLNESSES

Guidance on exclusion from school.

Diarrhoea & Vomiting Illness	Recommended period to be kept away from school	Comments
Diarrhoea and/or vomiting	24 hours from last episode of diarrhoea or vomiting.	Exclusion from swimming should be for 2 weeks following last episode of diarrhoea. Exclusion applies to both adults and children.

Rashes	Recommended period to be kept away from school	Comments
Chickenpox	5 days from onset of rash and when all spots are crusted.	
German measles (rubella)*	6 days from onset of rash.	
Impetigo	48 hours after commencing antibiotic treatment or until lesions are crusted.	Open sores must be covered.
Ringworm	Not usually required.	Treatment is important – see Doctor. Ensure pets are also examined.
Shingles	Excluded only if rash is weeping and cannot be covered.	Can cause chickenpox in those who are not immune. It is spread by very close contact and touch.
Warts and Verrucae	None.	Verrucae should be covered in swimming pools, gymnasiums and changing rooms.

Other conditions	Recommended period to be kept away from school	Comments
Head lice	None.	Treatment is recommended only in cases where live lice have been seen. Close contacts should be checked and treated if live lice are found. If eggs present, parents should manually remove eggs daily.
Conjunctivitis	Until discharge has ceased	
'Flu' (Influenza)	Until recovered.	
Fever	24 hrs free from fever or fever reducing	

Following a bout of sickness or diarrhoea, we ask that you keep your child at home for a full 24 hours after the last episode. And your child needs to be fever free at least 1 day before returning to school.

Notwithstanding the above, it is expected that parents/carers use their discretion and if their children remain unfit for school beyond the above guidelines their children stay at home. Young children need time to rest and should not be in school whilst taking medication.

Should your child become ill in school, we will try and contact you as soon as possible so that they can be collected. Please help us to keep contact numbers up-to-date.

### **Accidents and Accident reporting**

All accidents requiring treatment are recorded on system by the school nurse. This will then be recorded in the school communication book. The class teacher will inform you of any accidents during collection time. If in our opinion a child requires medical treatment, we will contact you immediately.

**Please make sure we have up-to-date contact numbers and your medical consent form is completed and signed.**

### **SAFETY AND SECURITY**

A security system operates in our EYFS unit; please help us maintain a safe and secure environment.

- All parents must wear their badge when entering and walking around school.
- All visitors are asked to report to reception to sign in and wear a visitor's badge.
- Please ask a member of staff to let you out of the EYFS unit. This is to ensure that children are not let out of the unit by mistake.

If anyone different is picking your child up from school please inform their teacher or relevant member of staff.

### **TOYS FROM HOME**

Occasionally children like to bring a toy from home to show other children or an adult in the classroom, or just for security. Could you please discourage this as much as possible unless children have been asked to bring in a toy for a specific reason such as 'Show and Tell'. Treasures can easily be lost or misplaced which can be very upsetting for the children.

## FAQs

### **What if my child cries on the first day?**

Don't worry! It is quite normal for young children to become upset when entering a new school or classroom for the first time. All the teachers and other adults are used to this and they will do all they can to make your child feel and eventually settled in their new environment. For some children it may be appropriate that the parents and teacher need to establish an early pick up routine until the child is more secure. If your child is having a hard time separating we do kindly ask that once you have said goodbye to your child that you avoid letting your child see you again until pick up time. Once a child has said goodbye and settled down, seeing the parent again can upset them further.

### **Will my child get homework?**

In Nursery there is no formal homework given. However through our half termly topic news and parent workshops we do give suggestions of fun learning activities that you can do with your child at home.

### **What if my child needs to go to the toilet?**

We require that all Nursery children are out of nappies on their first day of school. Adults will assist all children going to the toilet as and when they need to go. Children will be prompted to go to the toilet at 20 minute intervals, if needed, to help them become more confident with their self-hygiene care. The children will learn to become more independent with their toileting needs throughout the year. They will be prompted to always ask for assistance if they require it.

### **Will the Early learning goals put pressure on my child?**

No. Most of the time the children will feel they're just playing and having fun through exciting learning experiences. Sometimes they'll choose what they want to do. Sometimes they will take part in adult led activities that develop a particular skill.

### **Will my child bring home a reading book?**

In Reception, two reading books are sent home weekly for you to share with your child. All children will bring home a library book on a weekly basis.

### **Will my child be tested at the end of the reception?**

There is no formal testing. Adults engage in ongoing assessment throughout the EYFS. The information collected is presented in the form of a book called a 'Learning journey'.

### **When does my child have time to play outside?**

After morning carpet time all classrooms adopt a free flow learning environment whereby the children can move freely between their inside classroom environment and the central outside area at their own choosing. However within this morning period if they chose to spend a lot of their time outside they will be reminded to come inside to eat their snack and to go to the toilet. When the weather is hot the children have limited time spent outside and this is monitored by the class teacher.

## What can I do to help my child?

There's a lot you can do to get ready for the first day. But try to keep your efforts low-key. If you make too big a deal out of this milestone, your child may end up being more worried than excited.

Here are some ideas to keep the focus on fun.

- Use pretend play to explore the idea of school. Take turns being the parent, child and teacher. Act out common daily routines, such as saying good-bye to mommy and/or daddy, taking off your coat, singing songs, reading stories, having Circle Time, playing outside, and taking naps. Reassure your child that preschool is a good place where he will have fun and learn. Answer questions patiently. This helps children feel more in control which reduces their anxiety.
- Read books about school. There are many books about going to school available.
- Talk about the story and how the characters are feeling. Ask how your child is feeling.
- Make a game out of practicing self-help skills like: unzipping their coat, hanging their coat on a hook, putting on their backpack, fastening their shoes. For example, you might want to have a "race" with your child to see how quickly they can put on their shoes. When you play school together, you can give your child the chance to practise taking off

their coat, zipping their backpack closed, and sitting "crisscross applesauce." If your child will be bringing lunch, pack it up one day before school starts and have a picnic together. This will give them the chance to practise unzipping their lunch box and unwrapping their sandwich—important skills for the first day!

### WORRIES AND WATCHING

Your child may also have some questions or concerns about starting school, either before or after they start in August. Help them get ready with these two key strategies:

- **Listen to your child's worries.** Although it's tempting to quickly reassure your child and move on, it's important to let your child know that their worries have been heard. No matter what they are, big or small, children's worries about school can significantly influence their experience there. Will you remember to pick them up in the afternoon? Will their teacher be nice?

Let your child know it's normal to feel happy, sad, excited, scared, or worried. Explain that starting something new can feel scary and that lots of people feel that way. It can be helpful to share a time when you started something new and how you felt. When you allow your child to share their worries, you can help them think through how to deal with them.

- **Notice non-verbal messages.** As much as some early years children may talk, most are not yet able to fully explain how they are feeling or what they are worried about. Your child may "act out" their worry by clinging, becoming withdrawn, or by being more aggressive. Another common reaction as children take a big move forward is to actually move backward in other areas. For example, if your child is fully potty trained, they may start to have toileting accidents. They may ask that you feed or dress them even though they can do these things by themselves.

It is natural to be frustrated by this regressed behaviour, and you may be concerned that if you do these things for them, they will not go back to doing them themselves. In fact, letting them play this out often leads to children returning to their "big kid" selves sooner. Remember that your child is facing and managing a big change in their life. They may need more support, nurturing, and patience from you while they make this transition.

## THE SCHOOL COUNTDOWN: WHAT TO DO AND WHEN

### The Night Before school

- Answer any last-minute questions from your child.
- Make sure that your child goes to bed on time.
- Pick a bedtime that gives your child a good night's rest before their first day. Keep the bedtime routine soothing and relaxing. Do not focus too much (or at all!) on the first day of school unless they want to.

### The First Day

Wake up early enough so that you and your child do not have to rush to get to school. Make breakfast for your child and, if possible, sit down to eat together- or at least talk with them as they eat and you get ready. Review the day's routine (what school will be like, how your child will get to school/ come home).

- Pack your child's backpack together. If your child is bringing lunch, select foods that you know are their favourites. Having some familiarity on their first day is helpful as they adjust to so many changes.

### Saying a Good Good-Bye

These strategies can ease the anxiety of separating on your child's first day at school.

- **Plan to stay a little while.** Staying for 15-30 minutes on that first morning can help ease the transition. Together, the two of you can explore the classroom, meet some other children, play with a few toys. When you see that your child is comfortable, it is time to leave. If they are having a harder time getting engaged, you may want to ask your child's teacher to stay with your child as you say good-bye so that when you leave, they can turn to another caring adult for support.
- **Keep your tone positive and upbeat.** Children pick up on the reactions of the trusted adults in their lives. So try not to look worried or sad, and do not linger too long. Say a quick, upbeat good-bye and reassure your child that all will be well. Upon collection time focus on positive language, for example, I heard you had a great day at school today.
- **Think about creating a special good-bye routine.** For example, you can give your child a kiss their palm to "hold" all day long. Or, the two of you can sing a special song together before you leave. Good-bye routines are comforting to children and help them understand and prepare for what will happen next.

- **Resist the rescue.** Try not to run back in the classroom if you hear your child crying, as upsetting as this can be. This is a big change and your child may, quite understandably, feel sad and a little scared. But if you run back in, it sends the message that they are only okay if you are there and it is likely to prolong your child's distress and make it harder for them to adapt. Rest assured, teachers have many years of experience with helping families make the shift to school. Instead, you can wait outside the classroom for a few minutes to ensure that all is well, or call the school later in the morning to check-in.



## Key Contacts

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