

BEITH PRIMARY SCHOOL

Preparing for school
2020



I understand that starting school this year looks very different for our new P1s. They have not had the chance to visit their classes, meet their teachers in person and do all of the things we would normally do. However, most children have already been in the P1 classes and are familiar with the school lay out (cloakroom, toilets, lunch-hall etc.). Obviously we don't yet know what P1 is going to look like exactly in August 2020 but we want to help you to prepare your child for starting school as best we can.

Starting school is a very important event in your child's life. We, the staff of Beith Primary, share your desire for your child to do well and have a happy, confident start to their school career. This booklet aims to offer some advice and ideas to help you prepare your child for the 'big event'. It is not intended as a checklist of things your child must do, or be capable of, before starting school. Children are all different and develop at different rates. Some children may not even be interested in trying some of the activities. We ask, particularly, that you do not insist your child does these activities for school.

As your child gets ready for school... ...three important things to do

1. Give your child confidence

A child who feels confident about going to school will do better than a child who feels nervous. You want your child to go to school thinking that this is going to be a good thing to do and to feel happy about the adventure.

Children gain confidence about going to school if they hear good things about school life.

If you tell your child, 'You are really going to enjoy school' then your child will probably believe you. If, in a moment of exasperation, you mutter, 'Just you wait till you go to school!', your child will begin to lose confidence.

2. Help your child to develop some basic skills

- Try to encourage your child to dress himself/herself. Recognising own clothes, knowing which way round jumpers are worn, fastening zips and buttons are all very helpful after gym in a busy classroom.

3. Talk about how things are different this year

All of the boys & girls haven't been in Nursery for a long time. It might take a wee while to make new friends or get used to be around other children again. That's OK. Teachers will help and you will get lots of time to play and get to know each other.

- It is very important to label all your child's belongings and show your child where to find his/her own name.
- Help your child to recognise his / her own name. But it is not necessary for your child to be able to write his/her own name. We will teach the correct way to form letters when your child comes to school.
- Ensure your child can go to the toilet and remembers to wash his/her hands afterwards.

- Teach your child the importance of tidying up and of being well mannered, to other children as well as to adults.
- Allow your child to use pencils, crayons and playdough.
- Talk to your child about daily routines, encouraging him / her to remember details in response to simple questions, e.g. How did we get there? Where did you put your jacket? What happened next?
- Encourage your child to count, identify colours and call money by its value, but don't worry if your child appears to have difficulty with any, or all, of these concepts.
- Help develop your child's ability to concentrate by encouraging him/her to complete short activities, once started. (This is quite difficult for many young children, so try to be patient)
- Encourage your child to listen carefully. It often helps to begin every conversation with the word 'Listen', or by saying your child's name, then pausing until your child looks at you.
- Establish a regular habit of reading to your child.

Reading to your child

Please don't be misled into thinking that you are expected to teach your child to read and write.

What you can do is teach your child the value of books.

Find a book that has a story with pictures and read it to your child. Audible are providing free books during the school closure;

<https://stories.audible.com/start-listen>

Point to the **pictures** as you read. Talk about the story as you read. Ask questions, including what might happen next. Talk about the pictures, encouraging your child to look for details. If your child is unwilling or unable to respond then offer suggestions e.g. Do you think the boy is going to his Grandma's, or the swing park, or.....? If you relate stories to your child's own experience they are more likely to be able to respond to your simple questions.

If you share books with your child regularly your child will associate reading with pleasure and will be ready to enjoy learning to read when he / she comes to school.

Reading in school

We feel that it is important to emphasise that children develop reading skills at different rates. Class teachers will not give a child a reading book

until that child is ready to cope with it. Giving a child a book before he / she is really ready for it may lead to a sense of failure - 'This is too difficult, I can't read.' Some children take longer than others to get started but, once they gain confidence, progress at a steady rate.

Parents should not worry if their child does not appear to get a reading book at the same time as some others in the class.

Some books in our reading scheme are for discussion only and your child is not expected to be able to read every word, but this is clearly indicated on the front cover of the book.

Play

Play is a vital part of a child's development and so is a vital part of a child's daily routine in school, this will be even more important as a result of the closure period. Play activities in school are carefully structured to develop physical and social skills as well as skills in language, maths and other curricular areas.

Play presents these important skills in a relaxed and familiar way. Even the most reluctant child enjoys playing, and picks up many skills without being aware that he / she is actually 'working'!

The next few pages suggest activities you could try at home. You may even remember some of these activities from your own childhood. If your child is

not interested in a particular activity it is as well to leave it and perhaps try again at a later date. Play should be fun! Don't worry if your child has no apparent interest or aptitude for any of the activities. It is not a reflection of your child's overall ability or readiness for school. After all, even adults have a variety of interests and are not all keen on the same things.

Games to play at home

Can you find?

Ask your child to find something that has characteristics you describe.

Eg. Can you find something blue? Can you find something with buttons? Can you find something I use every day?

Your child can take a turn of asking you questions too.

Cut and stick

Use old magazines or papers. Let your child cut out interesting pictures and stick them onto a large sheet of paper or into a scrap book. Most children find cutting out rather difficult but will improve with practice. It is best to stay with your child during scissor play to avoid any trips to casualty!

Do as I say

Any variation of the game Simon Says where children follow your instructions such as 'Wave your hand' 'Stand on one leg' etc. You can then try to catch the children out by suddenly doing something

(e.g. standing up). The children should not do this - they should only do as you say, not as you do!

Find the mistake

Draw a picture with something silly in it (e.g. a dog wearing a hat) and ask your child to find the mistake.

It doesn't matter if you are not good at drawing as you can tell your child what the drawing is supposed to be!

Alternatively you can tell a story but with something wrong in it (e.g. the dog jumped into the car and drove away) and your child has to listen for the mistake.

Hopscotch

Draw a pattern of boxes with chalk on the ground. Number the boxes from 1 to 10. Your child has to throw a small stone onto the boxes in order, starting with number 1. He/she then hops onto the boxes and picks up the stone then hops back. He/she then tries to throw the stone into box 2 and so on.

Instructions

Give your child a pencil and a large piece of paper. Give a simple instruction - 'Draw a large circle' then 'Put a square inside the circle' 'Put a dot outside the circle' 'Draw a house inside the square'. Make sure you are not giving instructions your child does not understand i.e. Is your child familiar with words such as circle/square, inside/outside?

Matching colours

Show your child a coloured item, identify the colour, then ask your child to find something else the same colour.

As your child's colour awareness grows you may be able to give instructions such as 'Find something blue' without first showing the colour.

Pick up a straw

Gather a bundle of 20 or more straws, hold them upright with the bottom touching the table and let go. Your child has to pick up a straw without moving any of the others.

Playdough

This is a familiar favourite for modelling. You can make your own dough with two cups of flour, a cup of water, two tablespoons of oil and a teaspoon of salt. Heat gently.

Snap

You can buy picture cards aimed at small children but commercial playing cards can be used by simply reducing the number of cards in the pack and pointing out pairs to your child. Picture lotto games are also good for developing the same skills.

Threading

Collect cotton reels, large buttons or even pieces of card with holes punched in them and let your child thread them on to a shoelace.

Once again it is important to emphasise that these activities are **suggestions** only. You may wish to try some of these at home to help your child develop some of the basic skills. There are many other useful games and activities you may already do with your child, as this list is in no way exhaustive. Spending time, even just talking to your child, is the best thing you can do.

Remember not to worry if your child has difficulty with any or all of the activities. It is **not** intended as a development checklist and does not reflect your child's readiness for school.

Common worries for parents

If you are worried about your child going to school, your child will pick up your anxiety.

You might be worried about your child going to school because :-

1. *You are not sure if your child is ready for school.*
Most children of school age are ready for school when the time comes. They are often quite confident about meeting new challenges, sometimes more confident than adults. Also, the staff are very experienced in helping children settle into the new routine.

2. *Everyone else's child seems more grown up.*
Children develop at different rates physically and mentally. They can appear to be way ahead one year, then slip behind for a while the next. Don't

judge your child against anyone else. The class teacher is quick to pick up on children's varying abilities and plan work programmes accordingly.

3. You are not keen to let your child go.

Letting your child go to school is often a bigger wrench for the parent than the child, especially if you have been used to having your child around all the time (more so now than ever before). However, your child must go to school and will just be upset if encouraged to cling to you. Continue to make your child think of school as a great adventure, share your worries with other parents (but make sure your child is not present - because we all know that children only really listen when you don't want them to!)

The school staff are also here if you need to speak to someone and the classroom assistants are always on hand to dry first day tears (Parents as well as children! You are not alone).

I hope the information is helpful. If you have any concerns, please contact me and I will be only too glad to help.

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