

STARTING SCHOOL

Alison Findlay North Lanarkshire Psychological Service

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Starting school and Covid-19

Starting Primary 1 can be both an exciting and anxious time for you as a parent or carer, and maybe for your child too. And this year may bring additional worries for you. Although we are not sure what the start of school will bring this year, there are still things you can do that will help to prepare you and your child for beginning their Primary 1 journey.

Remember!

These are just suggestions and should be fun and easy things to do with your child. If they are too much, then please don't feel you have to do them. Children start school with a range of experiences and skills and part of the Primary 1 experience is to build on wherever the child is. If they are unable to do certain things please do not worry about it.

Have fun!

Children learn through play and so a lot of these suggestions will be play-based and designed to be fun. If they aren't fun then stop!

*“You are off to
great places.*

*Today is your day.
Your mountain is
waiting. So be on
your way” .*

Dr Seuss.



In this leaflet

- Games to promote learning skills.
- Practical skills to practise.
- Social skills to practice.
- Preparing for school life.
- Emotional support.
- What you can do as a parent.

Games to promote skills for learning

Your child learns through play and this will continue into Primary 1. There are simple games you can play at home which will help to develop some important skills for learning whilst having fun. Games can help to develop attention and listening, the ability to sort, and pre-literacy skills such as hearing rhyme.

Symbol dance

Draw a key where shapes are associated with a particular move. Then write sequences of shapes and ask your child to look at the symbols and preform the sequence. This will encourage pre-literacy skills as they are beginning to decode symbols and learn their meaning in the same way they will decode the letters when they learn to read.



Sorting

This could be sorting coins, socks, shapes, colours or anything that helps them to start to see the similarities and differences between items.

Songs and rhymes

Lots of songs can introduce early counting, such as “10 Green Bottles”.

They can also introduce the concept of rhyme, such as in “Humpty Dumpty”.

Songs can also help promote attention and listening skills, such as “Simon Says”.



Find your name

Hide objects around the house with your child’s name on them to help them get used to recognising it.

Read and share books with your child



Emotional support

Normalise feelings

Lots of children are excited about going to school but it's okay for children (and you) to feel nervous about it too. It is a change that children sometimes feel will be difficult. It is important to normalise this and reassure your child that these feelings are natural.

- Try not to talk about school as if it is a big deal. It is a normal life progression.
- Talk about when you went to school and what you liked.
- Encourage children to talk about how they feel -
"I feel _____ because _____".
- Use pictures to explore feelings if the words are difficult for them.
- Expect that there may be a change in behaviour while your child processes the change.
- Practise 'goodbye' routines and think of ways to let them know you are keeping them in mind, such as notes in lunchboxes, or hearts drawn on hands as virtual hugs.

Encourage independence and confidence

It is important that your child feels they can accomplish things and feel confident to try new things. Making mistakes and getting things wrong is one of the ways we learn. There is always help available at school but trying on your own first is a very useful skill for learning.

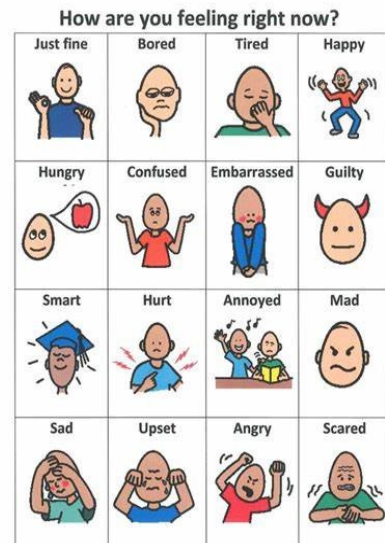
- Spend time with them having fun and playing.
- Give them small jobs and responsibilities at home.
- Praise often and use direct praise for effort and 'having a go'.

"I liked the way you tried really hard there".

"Well done for trying that".

"I really like how you stuck at it".

"Wow, you didn't give up and kept going".

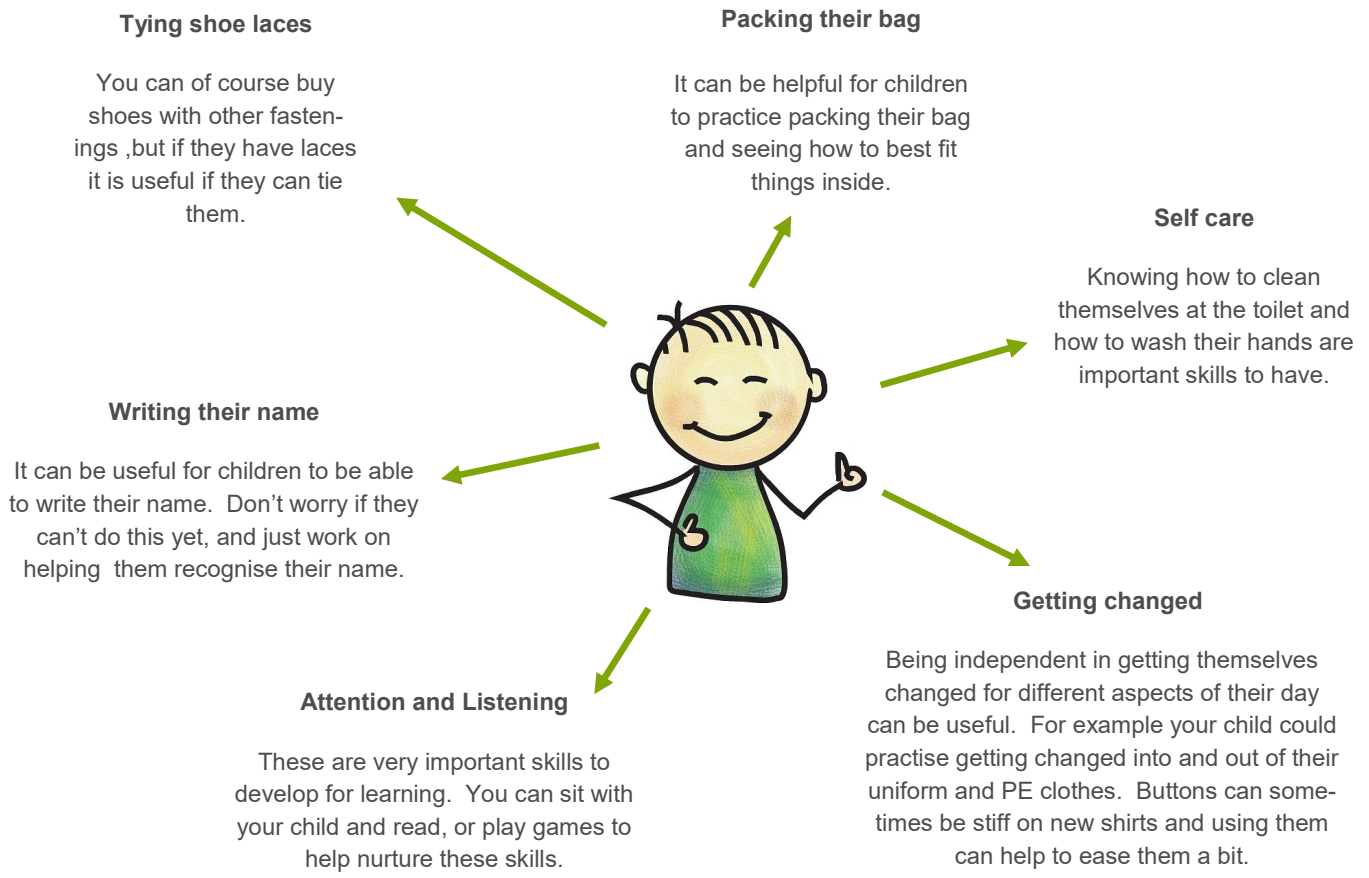




Practical Skills

Practical skills to practise

There are lots of new skills needed for school and children might not have done some of these before. There will of course be help on hand, but it can be useful for children to be able to have some of these skills so they can be independent and enjoy a sense of accomplishment.



Story books:

"I am Absolutely too Small for School" A Charlie and Lola book by Lauren Child

"Starting School" by Janet and Allen Ahlberg

"Topsy and Tim Start School" by Jean and Gareth Adamson

"Harry and the Dinosaurs go to School" by Ian Whybrow and Adrian Reynolds

"Come to School Too, Blue Kangaroo" by Emma Chichester Clark

Help them to visualise school

Helping to imagine what school might be like can help make it seem less strange. Try to find ways to make school feel familiar.

- Look at pictures of the school.
- Practise the walk to school if you can.
- Role play school days.
- Practise packing their bag.
- Read books (*see list opposite*).
- Use online resources: BBC Bitesize Starting School Game <https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/topics/zhtcvk7/articles/znc9vk7>

Practise social skills

Social skills are important in a new environment. They help young children ask for things they need and help to make connections with others, which can help to make them feel safe and secure. Some of these skills can be practised at home.

- Turn-taking games, to get used to letting others take their turn and knowing when it is yours turn.
- Learning to share, so that sharing space, resources and the teacher's time is easier.
- Help them learn some phrases to help them communicate their needs:

"Can you help me please?" *"I don't understand".*

- Help them to learn phrases to connect with others:

"Do you want to play?" *"Can I play with you?"*

"I'm sorry".

Social Skills

Accepting differences
Asking for help
Communicating clearly
Complimenting others
Disagreeing politely
Encouraging others
Following directions
Listening actively
Participating equally
Resolving conflicts
Sharing materials
Staying on task
Taking turns
Taking risks
Using quiet voices
Waiting patiently



Some more things to try

- If you are going to use childcare before or after school, try a visual timetable to explain who will be dropping them at school and who will be picking them up.
- Talk about any particular worries and concerns with your child and also with the school to ensure there is support and a plan in place.
- If your child has naps try to phase them out.
- Children may not want to talk about school, but if they do you could check in on how they are feeling.
- Expect your child to be tired after school for the first few weeks.
- Try and have some relaxing downtime after school.

“You’re braver than you believe, stronger than you seem and smarter than you think”.

A. A. Milne.

