

Starting School



Starting Primary School

Supporting transition into school during COVID-19 times

Information for parents and carers

Get ready to start school

The COVID-19 pandemic has unsettled family life around the world and there has been a lot of uncertainty, worry and anxiety. Many children have not been attending their nursery, and schools have only recently opened. For children who are due to start school in September, the usual procedures to help smooth transitions e.g. visiting the classroom and meeting the teacher have not been possible.

Being **creative** and **using technology**, we can still offer children a sense of **safety** and **continuity** to support them to say **goodbye** to their nursery and help them to prepare for starting school.

Here are some ways you can help prepare for your child starting school.

Look after yourself...

Having children at home, unable to go out and play or meet friends as usual, often when parents and carers are trying to work themselves, has added extra stress to families.

In these unusual circumstances, **it is normal to feel worried**, low, anxious, frustrated or isolated. It is especially important to take care of yourself, so you can support your children. Visit the NHS Every Mind Matters website for advice on ways to support your mental well being:

<https://www.nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters/coronavirus-covid-19-staying-at-home-tips/>

Help your child to connect and belong

Join in with any activities your child's nursery is offering, like video calls for circle time, watching nursery staff read them a favourite story, or singing familiar songs

Encourage your child to **talk about** and **remember** nursery. Ask them to draw a picture or something they remember enjoying, or ask questions like:

What was your favourite thing to do?

Which children or adults do you remember most?

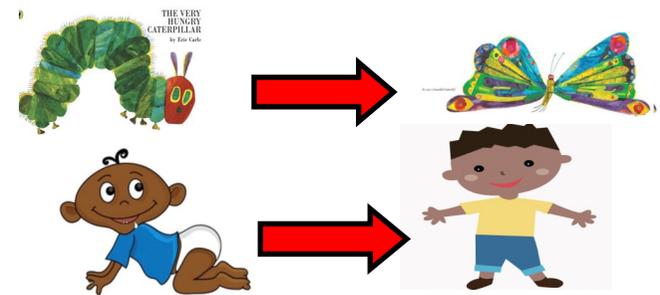
Talk about and make a picture of different things that your child likes and dislikes, and their positive personality traits. Talk to your child's nursery about how best to share this with the school.

Help your children **interact remotely** with friends or nursery staff, like sending videos or photos of what they have been doing. You could even send in copies of drawings or photos of what your child has made/done.

Keep a **structure** and **routine** that suits your family, with bedtime and morning routines similar to what your child is used to. This will help promote a sense of **normality** and **belonging** as it will be **reassuring** for your child.

Help your child think about and understand change

Read stories or watch videos about change, like **'The Very Hungry Caterpillar'** by Eric Carle or **'Little Tree'** by Loren Long. Have a look through **baby photos** of your child and talk about how they have changed or stayed the same as they have grown.



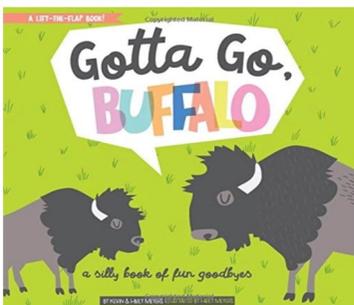
Communicating goodbye

Help your child understand connections and goodbyes. Watch on YouTube or read the story called **'The Invisible String'** by Patrice Karst . This book is about how even if we cannot spend time with the special people in our lives, we are still connected to them by an invisible string which goes between us. Look at **'Gotta Go, Buffalo'** by Kevin Meyers to make goodbyes fun with animal rhymes and lift-the-flaps.

Help your child think about all the special people and pets they are connected to in their home life, even when they are not always with them.

Join in with the **ending activities** your nursery has like a virtual teddy bears picnic, nursery book or goodbye song.

Use **photos of the nursery and school** to show 'now and next' and to help understand and communicate **'goodbye'**.

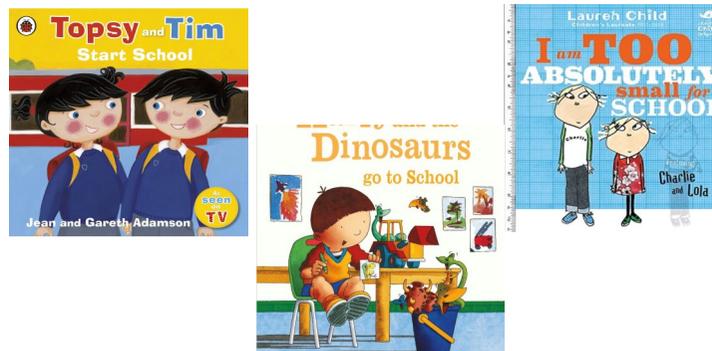


Now	Next



Preparing for school

Share, or watch on YouTube, books with your child about starting school, for example:



Communicate about school with your child at their level of understanding. Your child's new school may provide information, a **welcome pack/ brochure**, photos and pictures of the school and teachers. Have fun looking at and communicating about these with your child and focus on what your child is looking forward to. Share any concerns with the nursery and school.

It is perfectly normal to have a mixture of emotions about your child starting school. It could help to **make a plan** for after you drop off your child the first few days. Think of an activity, call a friend, and prepare yourself for how you might feel and react on the day.

Make sure your child gets to say goodbye to you before you leave. Having a **practiced routine for saying goodbye** can make separations easier.

Settling into a new class is a challenge for all children. It is normal for you and your child to feel some anxiety. **Discuss any concerns with the teacher** beforehand and continue to liaise with them to plan how best to support your child.

Starting school is very tiring and challenging for your child so they may need more **quiet and calm time** when they get home. Discuss with them before school what they would like to do after pick up so that they have **something to look forward to**.

Building relationships

Try to make **connections with parents and carers** of children who are also starting at the same school so your child can get to know and be familiar with each other before they start.

Find out what your child's school are doing to support children starting reception, what the name of your child's new class is, and the **names of the adults in their class** and **photos** if possible.

Get ideas from your child's nursery on how to help and support your child. **The PACEY website** has lots of advice and practical ideas to help children with **'school readiness'**: www.pacey.org.uk/parents/toolkit/

If your child has **additional needs** it is important to consider and plan around your child's understanding, needs, likes and dislikes so they can benefit from a smooth and supported transition. Your child's nursery SENCO will work with you and professionals (e.g.



Educational Psychologist, Speech and Language Therapist etc) and connect with your child's new school to arrange a **transition meeting** by video for you all to attend. **And lastly, all the best!**