



# Starting School

Starting primary school can be daunting and difficult for any child, but when they have additional needs, it can be particularly worrying for parents to know the best way to prepare themselves and their child.

If they have been attending a preschool or nursery, they may have had any special educational needs identified and there should be some handover of information about them from one setting to the next.

Sometimes the preschool setting will organise extra visits to the primary school or prepare a transition book to help your child prepare for the move.



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You could also make your own book about starting school. You may be able to take some relevant photos when you visit the new school or even use photos from the school website.

## Practise, practise, practise

- Practise the walk or drive to and from school a few times, pointing out any landmarks, showing your child where they will stand in the morning and where the new playground is.
- Practise dressing and undressing in their new uniform. You could make a visual support for their getting dressed routine if they struggle with keeping on task or finding the correct order for clothing.
- If they have difficulty with particular fastenings, you could alter the clothing to substitute buttons with Velcro or zips, or use elasticated waistband pull-up trousers.
- If your child has sensory sensitivities to clothing, you may need to find alternatives such as seamless socks or particular fabrics that are less likely to irritate. For more information regarding Adaptive Clothing, please scan the QR code on the final page to access our other information sheets.
- Practise wearing their new uniform around the house, particularly new shoes. Make sure they can fasten and unfasten their shoes effectively.
- Practise using timers to finish activities in preparation for a school setting where this may happen, e.g end of break time, end of lunch time.



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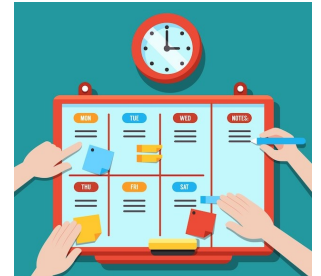


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## Visual supports

If your child is using visual supports already, prepare new ones to help them with their new routines. You could try a visual plan of the new morning routine.

Social Stories are sometimes helpful to address a particular issue or concern. They must always be personal and positive. For help with creating a Social Story, there are books and other resources available from the SNAP library. <https://carolgraysocialstories.com/>



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Visual timetables can also be a great way to prepare the child for an upcoming day and make them aware of timings in the day and knowing when certain things are going to happen. Just bear in mind that events can be changeable, and this could cause anxiety and confusion for a child unless you show the change visually.

## Communication

Ask the teacher if you can use a home/school communication book so you can tell the teacher if there is anything that has happened at home that may affect them at school or vice versa. You could also prepare a page listing your child's likes and dislikes, or particular strategies or tools you use that are effective if they are anxious for example.



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## Using the toilet

Your child should be shown where the toilets are and may be able to communicate when they need to go, but make sure the school knows any specific visuals, signs or language your child uses for this purpose.

You may be able to keep a spare change of clothing at school in case of accidents. If your son or daughter still needs to use pull ups you will need to check how the school will deal with this. If intimate care is needed on a regular basis, the school would normally draw up an Individual Healthcare Plan.



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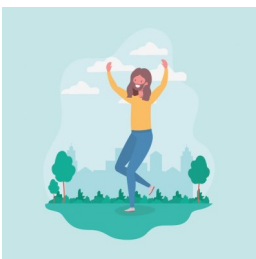
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## Emotions

Emotions may be heightened to start, for both parents and children. It is important to remember that as the routine becomes more familiar, these emotions should also become less heightened. Make sure you stick to these routines and try not to stray from them e.g drop off at the gate and leave with minimal fuss. Children pick up on emotions so try to make sure yours are regulated.

## What to expect

- Expect a change in behaviour while they settle into the new environment and routine.
- They may be very tired and struggle to cope with any additional pressure.
- Give them a chance to unwind in their preferred way when they get home.
- You may be keen to ask lots of questions about their day, but it may be better to save them for later, over dinner time or bath time when they are more relaxed. For more information on after school overload, please scan the QR code on the final page to access our other information sheets.
- There may be a few bumps along the way while you and your child get used to the new routine and while the school staff get to know your child. When the strategies are in place and they have spent time with your child, it should start to settle down. Keep regular communication with your school to ensure that all parties are happy with how things are going.
- It may help to talk to other parents who have young children with additional needs and discuss what they are going through, or whether they have been through similar experiences in the past.
- SNAP can signpost you to local or online support groups if requested.



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Please scan QR code or click on the link to access this and our other information sheets

[Downloadable Survival Guides, Information and Resources from SNAP](#)



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