



Starting a New School

A Guide for Parents of Primary School Children

Starting a new school is an exciting milestone — but it can also bring nerves for both children and parents. With the right preparation, you can help your child feel confident, secure, and ready to thrive.

Why Starting a New School Can Feel Big

Children may experience:

- Excitement about new friends and experiences
- Worries about the unknown
- Concerns about making friends
- Anxiety about new routines or teachers

All of these feelings are completely normal.

How to Prepare Before the First Day

1 Talk Positively About the Change

- Speak enthusiastically about the new school.
- Avoid sharing your own worries in front of your child.
- Emphasise opportunities: new friends, activities, and learning.

2 Visit the School (If Possible)

- Attend transition days or open evenings.
- Walk past the school building.
- Show photos from the school website.
- Point out where they will enter and be collected.

3 Establish a School Routine Early

Start 1–2 weeks before school begins:

- Consistent bedtime and wake-up time
- Practise getting dressed independently
- Morning routine practice (breakfast, brushing teeth, packing bag)

4 Encourage Independence

Help your child practise:

- Putting on their coat and shoes
- Using the toilet independently
- Opening lunch boxes and food packaging
- Packing and unpacking their school bag
- Small skills build big confidence.

5 Read Books About Starting School

Stories can help children understand and normalise their feelings. Consider:

- *Starting School* by Janet Ahlberg
- *The Kissing Hand* by Audrey Penn
- *Harry and the Dinosaurs Go to School* by Ian Whybrow

Talking About Feelings

Encourage open conversations:

- “What are you looking forward to?”
- “Is there anything you're worried about?”
- “What do you think your classroom might look like?”

Validate their feelings:

- “It’s okay to feel nervous.”
- “Lots of children feel that way.”
- “Your teacher is there to help you.”

Avoid dismissing worries — instead, acknowledge and reassure.

The Night Before

- Pack the school bag together
- Lay out clothes and shoes
- Have a calm, early bedtime
- Keep the evening relaxed and positive

On the First Morning

- Stay calm and confident (even if you feel emotional!)
- Keep goodbyes short and reassuring
- Avoid “sneaking away” — always say goodbye
- Use a simple, consistent phrase like:
“Have a wonderful day. I’ll see you after school.”

Children often settle quickly once parents leave.

After the First Day

- Offer calm connection time
- Expect tiredness or emotional ups and downs
- Keep questions open-ended:
 - “What made you smile today?”
 - “What was something new you tried?”

Some children need time before sharing details — that’s okay.

Final Reassurance

Every child adjusts at their own pace. With preparation, encouragement, and patience, most children settle well and quickly begin to enjoy their new environment.

Starting school is the beginning of a wonderful journey — and your support makes all the difference.