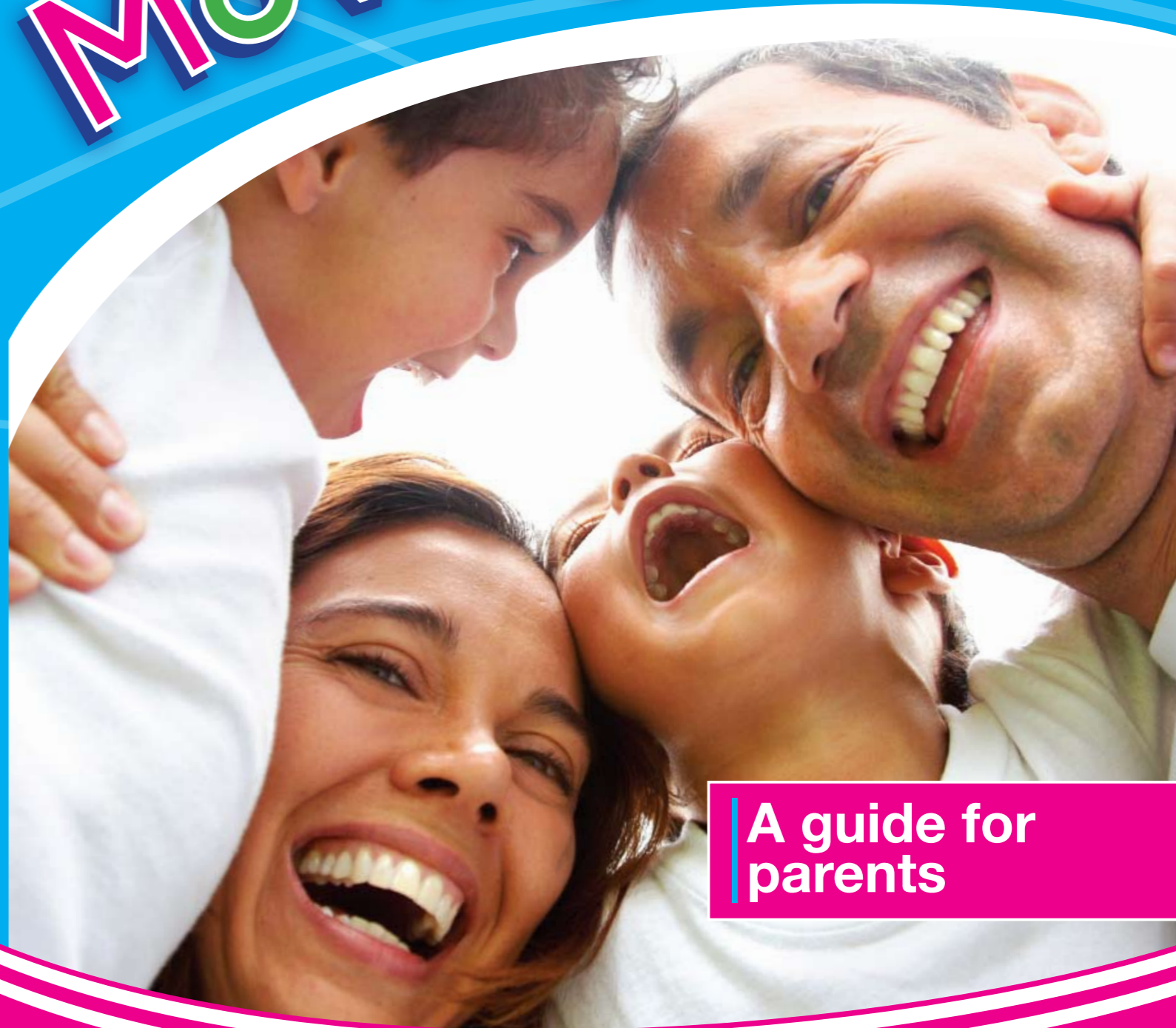


Moving Up...



A guide for
parents



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Sure Start
Children's Centres

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A guide for parents



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Why do we need to support young children with transition from pre-school to nursery or primary school?

For many very many young children this will be the first time they have separated from their parent or carer and they can find the changeover difficult.

A child who is worried and anxious will not be able to undertake all the new learning experiences of school. One of the many adjustments that children must make in their new setting is being one of many which can cause your child frustration and disappointment. Lots of love, support, praise and encouragement from the people at home will help your child at this difficult time.

Very young children take time to adapt to the changes and routines of school and need to progress at their own pace. Sharing a book together about your child's school can help your child feel reassured about a new situation.

Young children's behaviour can sometimes change at this time, both at home and at school, possibly becoming more babyish. One moment your child wants to be independent, the next dependent, so parents will often notice a big difference in their child's moods.

Sometimes a cuddle, a drink and a snack is what your child wants at the end of a very busy day – just being at home with you and relaxing.

Should you have any concerns mention them straight away to your child's key person/teacher who will be happy to talk with you to ensure your child can be supported during this sensitive time as they move up into a new school environment.

Some parent's concerns...

What if my child hasn't slept well the night before and he's really tired and grumpy and doesn't want to join in?

What if my child didn't want me to leave her whilst she was settling in – how would she be supported?

What if he was a bit lost whilst settling in – would someone notice him and guide him?

What if she pushes a child – how will the adults deal with this?

What if he gets hurt – how will staff comfort him?

At what point and after how long would you call me to collect her if she was distressed/hurt/unwell?

How will his day be planned – can you talk me through the routine?

Can she play outside whenever she wants or will she have to do things at certain times?

What if he isn't joining in – how will you encourage him or will it be his choice?

If children have a good idea of what school is going to be like and have already experienced some learning activities either at home or in other settings they are less likely to find the experience stressful.

Games, reading and role play at home can help your child get into the right frame of mind and boost their confidence. Activities at home could include reading books about starting school, playing with children of a similar age to develop social skills or playing games that involve taking turns and sharing.

How parents can help.

Parents can help their children in a positive way by ensuring they try to have opportunities to visit the school with their child and to meet with their child's key person. In addition, talking to your child about school and helping to develop their practical skills.

Things that will make transitions easier for the child and parent/carer.

- Talking to your child is one way to help them overcome their fears.

Explain where they are going and what they will be doing.

- Focus on the things they may enjoy doing – like playing, painting and riding scooters.
- Let them know you or their carer will be there to meet them at the end of the day.
- Home visits can be arranged for staff from your child's nursery/school to visit the family. Often two staff members visit. One to gather personal information for admission forms and "about me" child information. A second member of staff will bring a small selection of toys, puzzles or books to share with your child to find out about their preferences.
- At your child's school there will often be a display board featuring photographs of staff and their names, areas of the nursery (water play, sand play and creative play) and maybe items of school clothing such as a sweatshirt for the children to recognise.
- The school may have a copy of a child friendly transition book for parents to borrow and share with their child.
- Parents, please remember to mention any concerns you may have straight away.

Things to think about.

Very young children like to play with things that interest them. Initially, they will often play alongside other children who are interested in the same things as they are.

Friendships between young children develop around 4 or 5 years of age but all children are individual.

The nursery/school will probably arrange for you and your child to visit them. Take every opportunity to take your child to see their new environment it will help to give them confidence with their new surroundings and they will have the chance to meet some of the other children who will be joining them.

At home encourage your child to take turns with you or with other family members and praise them for sharing. At their new setting they will learn how to co-operate with others and there should be plenty of toys for everyone. Anything you can do beforehand such as helping your child to use words "can I have my turn now" will make things easier for your child to share with others in their new environment.

So don't worry when you ask your child "who did you play with today" the answer is "no-one"! They were probably very engaged in learning experiences that interest them.

"Rainbow Fish" is a lovely story to share with your child and to talk about feelings and sharing.



Self-help skills

Things to think about.

How can we make it easier for very young children to become independent.

Allowing young children the opportunity to gain personal skills will assist them for the rest of their lives.

Very young children need time to be able to learn how to get dressed independently. You often want to help them to get the job done quicker! However, allowing young children lots of time now means when they are ready to go to nursery/school they will have the confidence to try to help themselves when needing to access the toilet or to play in the garden area.

At nursery/school being able to go to the toilet independently, put on a coat, or socks and shoes means your child can spend more time engaged with learning experiences rather than waiting for the teacher to help them.

Helping your child to remember to wash their hands after going to the toilet, or showing them how to blow their nose and throw the tissue away will help them develop good hygiene practices.

Your child's clothes need to be easy for your child to pull on and take off. Trousers with fiddly belts can prevent a child who needs to get to the toilet quickly – jogging bottoms are great – pull down and pull up.

Shoes with laces are great when you are six or seven and your physical skills are more refined – but for very young children Velcro straps on shoes or sandals are great for little fingers.

Coats/jackets with zips – but remember to attach a bit of ribbon to help little fingers pull up the zip more easily. Or a duffle coat type with big toggles/buttons.

Please, please remember to LABEL your child's belongings. To a very young child they know their coat is blue – but which one when there are six others just the same?!

“The Smartest Giant in Town” is a great story about clothes and getting dressed or undressed!

Just remember, eventually, we all learn how to get dressed.



Outdoor Play

Things to think about.

Most children love the freedom and space of playing outdoors.

At your child's nursery/school children will have the opportunity to access learning experiences both indoor and outdoors.

Access to a garden area daily allows young children the space to run and jump and develop their physical skills, as well as learning to negotiate space around other children.

The garden area changes throughout the seasons and gives young children the opportunity to find out about the natural environment and living things, as well as experiencing changes in nature.

Some nurseries/schools have a small area where children can grow plants, find mini-beasts and have the opportunity to explore natural processes.

So don't worry when your child comes home messy and muddy they have been little explorers and learning lots!

“Jack and the Beanstalk” is a great story and together with your child you could plant a bean seed to see how tall it grows and how we need to take care of it.

Or, find a snail and watch how it moves on one foot leaving a slimy trail!

Perhaps take a walk in the park to see how many different colours and shapes of leaves there are.



Things to think about.

“Play is the business of children.” (Anon)

Activities which allow children to use not only their hands and arms but all their other senses too, lead into the skills they will need to begin emergent writing.

Thick paint mixed with flour allows children to use their arms, hands and fingers to explore colour and texture and at the same time they will be able to see the marks they begin to make.

Cornflour mixed with water in a large baking tray. Add some little yoghurt pots and teaspoons for young children to use their hands to scoop and pour the mixture from one pot to another. Co-ordinating both their eyes and hands to enable them to transfer the mixture from one place to another will also help children’s skills for emergent writing.

Playdough. This wonderful material can be used in so many different ways with children and at the same time develop strong hands and fingers ready for when they start to use paintbrushes and crayons.

Just a thought, children love messy play. They love the textures, they love the effects they can create and things they can make. They need the freedom to engage in these experiences to become confident using their hands and eyes without the fear of being told off for being messy.

Getting your child to make their own sandwiches, using a butter knife spreading butter, spreadable cheese or jam is one of the best activities to help children with pre-writing skills.

Something for parents to try out. The skills used when you butter a slice of bread are very similar to the skills used when you hold a pen and write!



Things to think about.

Why do we write? Writing has a purpose, whether it is to send a card to a friend, writing a shopping list or a sign for shops and roads. For young children it is just the same, probably more so, as it is a new experience for them and we want it to be positive.

Mark making (early writing skills) needs to be fun. The more fun we have doing something the more we want to do it. Whether it is painting a room in the house, going to the gym or meeting up with friends and for young children it is the same. Making marks with different coloured pens/crayons whether it is lines, or circles or spots can be fun for very young children especially if they can have access to brightly coloured highlighters!

Very young children need lots of space, which is why they often draw on the walls! Lining paper from a DIY shop comes as a long roll of paper so there’s plenty to draw on even if friends are around.

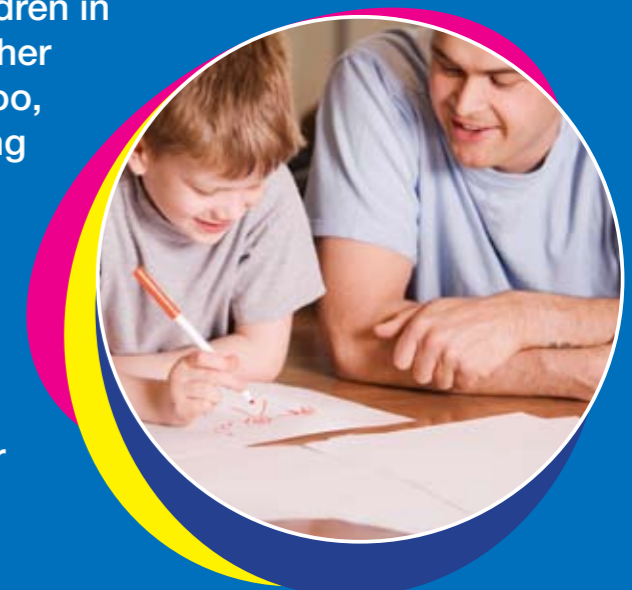
Provide old envelopes for your child to “write” on and some brightly coloured washable felt pens or chunky crayons.

Old birthday cards can be re-used in make believe play. A drawing by your child can be put into an envelope and with your help the envelope can be addressed to your child. We all love receiving letters!

Most children enjoy using post-it notes, “writing” messages and sticking them on the fridge, the bedroom door or even themselves!

Shopping lists are a good way to engage children in active learning whilst shopping. Mum needs her easy to read list and the child can have one too, substituting pictures for words with very young children.

Children will engage in mark making (writing) activities when they feel they are ready. When they have good control of their arms, hands and fingers and when their hand-eye co-ordination skills enable them to move their hand across the page with a crayon in their hand and they are able to make marks.



Things to think about.

It's not just about numbers and counting, there's a little bit more. Think about all the different practical things you do that are maths related. Cooking and calculating, weighing and measuring, painting and wallpapering – working out quantities, using numbers on the telephone and just using money!

Sandwich making is a great way to introduce opportunities to cover lots of different areas. Choice of bread – brown or white, cookie cutters in different shapes, counting number of slices and of course, fractions – halves and quarters. As well as the opportunity to eat something!

Pasta jewellery. Use food colouring to create different colours with large macaroni, some coloured wool for threading and children will develop their hand and eye co-ordination as well as create patterns. Boys and girls enjoy threading pasta and creating long or short pieces of jewellery. So counting, sorting, matching, length and sequencing are all encompassed in this one activity.

Box modelling. Recycling and using yoghurt pots, different sized boxes, tubes and egg cartons is a great way for children to use their creativity and critical thinking skills to create a 3D model. Either masking tape, sellotape or glue can be used to join pieces together to create either a 2D or 3D model. It also provides great opportunities to talk about shapes, positional language and size as well as refining those hand and eye co-ordination skills.

Dear Zoo is a great story if you have any wild animals (pretend ones!) at home that need cages (made from re-cycled materials). Your child could look at the size of the box (cage) and decide which animal would best fit inside!

Maths is not something to be frightened of. We use it every day in a practical way and we need to make it fun for our children so that they become competent and practical users. Knowing if the lion will fit into the empty tissue box will go a long way for when they are older and need to work out whether the sofa will fit in the room!



Things to think about.

When we are tired, or having to go flat out all the time we become irritable and emotional. Just remember how it feels to have to try to cook a meal, look after the baby and clean the house – exhausting! For very young children their play at nursery or school is their “work”. They have to build towers, learn how to share with friends, remember where their coat is and have fun! So, quite exhausting for them when there are so many new things to find out about and you're only three... What can parents do to help?

Just allow some TIME for your child to have access to a quiet space if they wish either on the sofa (without the television on) or on their bed. A good time for very young children to relax and maybe even have a short nap is after lunch. They can rest and recharge themselves and will probably be much happier, than if they are kept constantly rushing around.

Sharing a book with your child is a great way to encourage your young child to rest a while and relax. Children love hearing a story, often more than once, or perhaps sharing a photo album, where children can participate with sharing their knowledge about their past experiences. At the same time it will provide a good opportunity to develop their communication and language skills.

Bath time or water play is quite calming for very young children. Warm water, bubbles and some empty bottles and sponges will make for a valuable experience as well as relaxing your child.

