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HUDDLE

Empowering. Community. Connections

Transition to School:

A Guide for Parents and Carers for Starting Big School

KARABI

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CITY OF PARRAMATTA

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Acknowledgement of Country

(Both the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags are being flown in the Senate Chamber. Source: SBS 2022)

We would like to begin by acknowledging the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we stand on and their continuing relationship to land and water. Constitution Hill resides in the traditional country of the Burramattagal clan of the Darug people. This land has always been, and shall always be, belonging to its Traditional Custodians.

We pay our respects to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and their traditional processes and ways of living. We would like to further extend our respect to the Elders of the community, both of the past and those that remain present to this day.

Appreciation

We would like to express our heartfelt gratitude to Excelsia College and Karabi Community and Development Services and the Huddle Initiative for providing us with the invaluable opportunity to pursue our research in the Transition to School project. This journey would not have been possible without the support and guidance of so many individuals, and we would like to take this moment to extend our sincere thanks.

Firstly, we would like to acknowledge our supervisors, Ms. Anthea and Mrs. Nicole, whose unwavering support and mentorship have been instrumental in shaping our growth as social workers in this project. Your guidance, encouragement, and commitment to our development have been truly remarkable, and we are deeply appreciative of the time and effort you have invested into our placement project.

We would also like to extend our gratitude to the Social Work Department over at Excelsia College for maintaining an environment that fosters excellence and growth. We would like to further express our gratitude to our fellow group members, whose mutual support and shared experiences have enriched our time at Excelsia College and in this project. Our friendship and commitment have made this journey even more memorable.

Lastly, we are very much thankful to everyone whose continuous support, guidance and sharing helped us to successfully accomplish this research work, and has contributed to our final product.

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Introduction

About this eBook

This eBook has been assembled to help parents prepare their children who are under the age of five for starting primary school in NSW. It is designed for families residing in Constitution Hill who may require help with understanding and undergoing the school transition. This eBook covers topics such as enrolling children in NSW schools, how to prepare your children, what local transition programs are available, the importance of transitioning, and checklists for parents to look through. Furthermore, this eBook will function as a guide for culturally diverse families, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families, and families with children with disabilities on the available support services relevant.

Contributing Bodies

Excelsia College

This book has been written and designed by Social Work students from Excelsia College's Macquarie Park campus whilst undertaking their first-year placement with Karabi Community and Development Services. Excelsia College offers courses in a range of fields, including Business, Education, Counselling, Social Work, Accounting, and Creative and Performing Arts.

The Huddle

The Huddle is a collaborative project between service providers local to the Parramatta local government area (LGA) and community residents. Dedicated to increasing accessibility to important information of support services, The Huddle's goals are to foster empowerment and social inclusion, and to inspire the community.

The Demographics of Constitution Hill

Constitution Hill is a suburb in Western Sydney, built on the traditional country of the Darug people, specifically the Burramattagal clan. Located approximately 28 km west of Sydney's Central Business District, Constitution Hill falls within the Parramatta Local Government Area (LGA).

Within and around Constitution Hill are a range of services and public spaces. Within Constitution Hill is the Constitution Hill Library, home to playgroups and storytime sessions for the young ones, as well a small commercial known as the Constitution Hill shops directly next to the library. The only school that falls within the Constitution Hill suburb is Toongabbie East Public School, however Toongabbie West, Toongabbie, and Darcy Road Public School are all nearby.

16.3% of couples have young children

2.8% of residents identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander.

5.3% of the suburb are aged 0-4 years of age.

55.7% of families have both parents born overseas.

45.7% of couple families have children.

60.5% of school aged children go to a public school.

Overview of Transition to School

For young children, transitioning to primary schooling is one of the most significant transitions within their lives. Both children and their families will experience major changes when they start their first year of mandatory education, whether it be changes in interests, lifestyles, routines, or other. The Transition to School program is a set of events that occur over time to prepare children for their successful transition, starting well before the children even begin primary school, and extending until both the families and children feel settled in. The transition process involves not only the child, but also their parents, and the school, in order to foster the best environment for a smooth start to a new journey.

When should you start thinking about transitioning to school?

Typically, children begin primary school at the ages of 4-6. The preparation for the transition to school process therefore begins at the age of 3-4. When you can enrol your child for Kindergarten is determined by your child's age. If your child is turning five before or on the 31st July of that year, they should be enrolled in Kindergarten. In NSW, all children are required to be enrolled in mandatory schooling by the age of six.

Things to consider before starting school

Getting your child ready for NSW public school: A checklist

- **Find your catchment area school:** Use the NSW Government's 'school finder' tool to see which local public school they are eligible to attend.
- **Research school options:** Consider your own values and your child's interests when choosing a school.
- **Complete health check-ups and immunisations:** Ensure your child's immunisations are all up-to-date and discuss any health concerns or conditions with the school.
- **Budget for school supplies:** Plan for uniform, shoes, stationery, and extracurricular activity costs.
- **Organise out-of-school care:** If needed, research and book a before/after school provider. You can visit Starting Blocks Care Finder to find a service in your area.
- **Look into interpreter services:** You can call 131 450 for free phone interpreting assistance when enrolling into a new school.
- **Seek a transition to school statement:** If possible, request a transition to school statement from your child's preschool to help new teachers understand your child's current development.

Developmental milestones to hit before starting school

Be sure to remember that every child is different and therefore not all children are ready to start school at the age of five. Some children can benefit from starting school a bit later as it allows them extra time to develop the key skills necessary in adjusting to a new school environment.

Here's a breakdown of your child's development milestones by area.

1. **Language Skills**
   - Responds to conversation.
   - Communicates their needs.
   - Follows three-step directions.
   - Sings familiar songs and rhymes.
   - Recalls stories
   - Understands sequence of events.

2. **Social Skills**
   - Recognises their own name.
   - Plays cooperatively.
   - Shares and takes turns.
   - Engages in imaginative play.
   - Listens to stories for 10 minutes.
   - Shows interest in their surroundings.

3. **Cognitive Skills**
   - Recognises 4-6 colours.
   - Identifies shape differences.
   - Sorts objects by category.
   - Looks at pictures while reading.
   - Draws symbolically (2-6 body parts).
   - Beginning to write their name.

4. **Fine Motor Skills**
   - Copies basic shapes
   - Uses scissors to cut along lines.
   - Starts writing some letters.
   - Threads beads.
   - Uses various writing tools
   - Has a dominant hand (left or right)

5. **Gross Motor Skills**
   - Throws a small ball
   - Jumps forward 10 times without falling.
   - Starts, stops and turns while running.
   - Kicks a ball in various directions.
   - Hops on a preferred foot 4-6 times.
   - Catches a ball.

Bonus Tip: Practice your child's writing skills at home! Download and print the NSW public school's writing practice template here.

What if my child doesn't show these skills?

If you are concerned that your child is not demonstrating one or more of these skills, you can speak to your GP, Child and Family Nurse, or Paediatrician. They may have suggestions to support your child or refer you for an assessment. Early intervention can be crucial in addressing potential developmental delays and helping the child thrive academically and socially.

Determining school readiness

For the most part, the main determinant of a child's 'readiness' for school has been their age. However, whilst this is one element that can be used, it is not the only determining factor. A child's physical health, physical wellbeing, social competence, emotional maturity, language development, communication skills and general knowledge should also be considered to make a holistic decision about academic readiness.

One of the key factors in deciding if your child is school ready is their ability to help themselves and do things by themselves. In a classroom setting, there are often only one or two teachers facilitating an entire class of children. This means that your child will often need to perform basic tasks and skills for themselves as their teacher's attention may be elsewhere. This includes looking after their own belongings and being able to clean up after themselves.

Common parental concerns during the transition process

Behavioural Difficulties

A child's temperament may have an impact upon their ability to adjust to a new school environment, in particular, their ability to maintain self-control and their capacity to concentrate. Whilst these factors may impact upon the child's adjustment to school, there are ways to address these or better the child's chances. Such ways include attending more transition programs, practising self-control through play whilst at home, creating and sticking to a school routine, and open communication within the family about school.

Academic Ability

In early education programs such as preschool or childcare, educators will assist your children to better their literacy and numeracy skills through play, exploring skills in collaboration, creativity and critical thinking. However, if you're worried about your child's academic readiness for school, introducing literacy and numeracy into daily routine is a great way to help your child familiarise themselves with academics. Studies show that reading at least three days a week, and owning children's books at home increase children's readiness for school. Playing with numbers, singing nursery rhymes, and regularly visiting the library provide the same support for a child's academic ability.

Socialising with Peers

A big part of starting school is learning how to interact with teachers and peers. Some children find more difficulty in interacting with others. This is completely fine. Your child will eventually work their way to feeling comfortable in new social environments, including making new friends, asking for help, and joining in collaborative activities. To help your child develop their social confidence, you can arrange playdates with other children, teach them to resolve problems, practise sharing and taking turns, and encouraging your child to have empathy.

Preparing Your Child for Transition to School

Preparing your child for transition at home

There are many steps that can be taken to prepare your child for transition to school at home. These include toilet training, practicing skills such as reading, fine and gross motor skills, creating a bedtime and morning routine, and learning to eat independently.

- **Toilet Training:** Ensure that your child is comfortable using the toilet independently, if your child knows when they need to go to the toilet, they are ready to start school.
- **Reading Practice:** Encourage a love for reading by regularly reading books together. This helps develop language skills and a foundation for literacy.
- **Developing Fine and Gross Motor Skills:** Help your child develop fine motor skills such as using scissors, colouring and writing, and gross motor skills such as running, jumping, and balancing, to prepare them for physical activities at school.
- **Dressing Themselves Independently:** Teach your child to dress themselves, including putting on and fastening clothes as this fosters independence and saves time in the morning routine.
- **Eating Independently:** Ensure your child can eat without assistance, from using utensils to opening food containers, as they will eat independently at school.
- **Creating a Bedtime and Morning Routine:** Establish a consistent sleep schedule to ensure your child gets enough rest for the demands of school.
- **Talking about Expectations for School:** Discuss what to expect at school, the routine, and any concerns your child may have to help ease anxiety.
- **Practicing Good Hygiene:** Teach proper handwashing techniques to ensure your child understands the importance of hygiene, especially in a shared environment.
- **Preparing Through Play:** Engage in educational activities to help your child develop cognitive and social skills necessary for school.
- **Including them in back-to-school shopping:** Involve your child in selecting their school supplies and accessories to help them get excited about starting school.
- **Find a friend attending the same school:** If possible, help your child make friends who will be attending the same school to provide a sense of familiarity.

For more information, go to Learning Links for resources on preparing your child for school, or NSW Government for ways to help your child with literacy and numeracy at home.

Preparing your child for transition through Transition to School programs

Successful transition to school can be supported by several factors including the home learning environment and High-Quality Early Childhood Education, also known as preschool. It is not mandatory in NSW for children to attend preschool, but many preschools and childcare centres offer transition to school programs which can help children get ready to start kindergarten.

In Australia, the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) has been developed to guide early childhood educators to create quality early childhood education programs. The aim of which is to enrich children's learning from birth to 6 years of age to support them for a strong start to school. There are many transition to school programs available in the Constitution Hill area where families can consider enrolling their child. Attending these programs can have a positive influence on children's early development.

Here are some examples of available transition to school programs in Constitution Hill.

Click on the names below to find out more about each individual program.

Green Leaf Early Learning Centre

Location: 21 Greenleaf St, Constitution Hill NSW 2145

Little Thinkers Early Learning Services

Location: 125 Dunmore St, Wentworthville NSW 2145

Khin's Family Day Care

Location: 29 Ferndale Cl, Constitution Hill NSW 2145

First Steps Learning Academy

Location: 3 Reynolds St, Old Toongabbie NSW 2145

NSW Schooling System

NSW has a diverse and vibrant educational landscape with many variations within each of these school types. Families in NSW have the flexibility to choose the type of school that aligns with their educational goals, values, and financial capabilities. The range of possible school options, including public, private, and Catholic schools, provides families with choices that suit their individual preferences and needs. Each type of school system has its own characteristics, funding sources and governance structures.

Enrolment process in public schools

The enrolment process for public schools is determined by the Department of Education of NSW, meaning all public schools have a similar enrolment process. However, Private schools have their own policies and processes. Initially, in public schools, the process begins with the school selection process. The steps of enrolment are as follows;

1. **Find your local school:** The first step is to find your local school. You can use the 'School Finder' tool on the NSW Department of Education website to enter your address and see a list of schools in your area.
2. **Check your catchment area:** Each school has a designated catchment area. This is the area that the school gives priority to for enrolments. You can check if your address is within the catchment area of your preferred school on the school's website.
3. **Complete an enrolment application:** Once you have found your local school, you can complete an enrolment application form. This can usually be done online or by downloading a form from the school's website. Some schools also have enrolment forms in their main office.
4. **Provide required documents:** With the application form, you will need to provide some supporting documents to show;
    - Proof of your child's birth (e.g. a birth certificate)
    - Proof of your child's immunisation history (e.g. AIR Immunisation History Statements)
    - Proof of your residential address (e.g. a utility bill)
5. **Submit your application:** Once you have completed the application form and gathered the required documents, you can submit your application to the school.
6. **Wait for your notification:** The school will then process your application and let you know if your child has been offered a place there.

For more information about the enrolment process click here.

Enrolment process in private and Catholic schools

In NSW, although Catholic schools are a type of private school, there are differences in the enrolment processes between Catholic schools and non-Catholic private schools. Here are the key distinctions between them.

Affiliation

Catholic schools are affiliated with the Catholic Church and therefore follow Catholic teachings and values. Catholic schools may give enrolment priority to Catholic families, but also accept non-Catholic families.

Other private schools have various affiliations. They may be secular, meaning that they do not enforce or follow a particular religion, and may also follow alternative educational approaches, not particularly governed by religion.

Admissions Criteria

In Catholic schools, priority is often given to children who have been baptised and are involved in a local parish. However, there are also criteria to fulfil regarding academic performance, and an interview is often conducted prior to the enrolment process.

Other private schools tend to focus on academic performance and potential, looking at academic records, recommendations, results on standardised tests and also requiring an interview during the enrolment process.

Tuition and Financial Aid

Catholic schools in NSW typically charge tuition fees, though the cost varies by school. They may offer financial assistance and scholarships to families who demonstrate financial need, and these programs may be supported by the Catholic diocese.

Other private schools also vary in their tuition fees. They may also offer their own financial aid and scholarship programs which are often based on academic achievement, talent, or financial need.

Curriculum and Specialisations

Catholic schools in NSW incorporate religious education into the curriculum, emphasising the teachings and values of the Catholic faith as a part of their educational approach.

Other private schools may have diverse curricula. Some may have a secular approach, whilst others may emphasise alternative educational philosophies.

Application Process

The application process for both Catholic and other private schools in NSW is similar. The main difference between these schools and public schools is potentially holding an interview, paying an application fee and meeting application deadlines.

It is important to check with the specific Catholic or private school that you are interested in for detailed information on their process as schools may vary. Click here to find Catholic schools near you and here for private schools.

Enrolment process for temporary residents in NSW public schools

Temporary residents can enrol their child through the Temporary Residents Program. Each visa subclass may have different enrolment requirements. Click here for the Visa Subclasses and Enrolment Conditions Factsheet.

The Temporary Residents Program enrols school-aged children who are;

- Temporary Resident visa holders (except principal holders of the International Student visa subclass 500P or 571P).
- Bridging visa holders.
- Dependents of International Students.
- Visitor visa holders accompanied by a parent or staying with a direct relative. The direct relative must be over 21 years of age, of good character, and be able to provide the appropriate care for, and supervision of, the child.

Children cannot enrol through the Temporary Residents Program (TRP) if they are International Students holding visa subclass 500P or 571P, part of a group of students who attend NSW schools on an advertised tour, or a visitor visa holder who is not accompanied by a parent, or not staying with a direct relative.

The enrolment process for temporary residents in NSW Kindergarten differs slightly from the standard process. Here's a breakdown;

Eligibility

Your child must hold a valid Temporary Resident visa and meet the general enrolment conditions outlined by the NSW Department of Education International here.

Application Process

1. **Apply Online:** Submit an application through the TRP online portal here.
2. **Required Documents:** Have scanned copies of these documents ready to upload
    - Proof of your child's identity and age (e.g. birth certificate or passport).
    - Proof of your child's visa and immigration status
    - Proof of your residential address (e.g. utility bills).
    - Proof of your child's immunisation records
3. **School Selection:** While filling in the application, you can indicate your preferred school, however, placement is not guaranteed based on preference.
4. **TRP Assessment:** The TRP will assess your application and determine if there is space available in your preferred school or nearby schools.
5. **School Acceptance:** The chosen school will review the application and decide if they can accept your child, If so, the TRP will issue an 'Authority to Enrol'.
6. **School Enrolment:** Once you receive the Authority to Enrol, contact the school to complete the final enrolment process and provide any necessary documents.

School Fees
Most Temporary Resident students pay the Temporary Resident administration fee and education fee to enrol in NSW Government schools. The school can provide information about any fees that may apply. The fees are outlined here in the TRP Tuition Factsheet.

Fee Exemption
If the Temporary Resident student has a parent or stepparent who is an Australian citizen or Permanent Resident, you may be eligible for a fee exemption. The Exemption Review Panel is in charge of considering individual appeals for exemption from the education fee for low-income families.

Fee Refund
Your child may be entitled to a pro-rata refund of the education fee if;

- Their visa category changes to a fee-exempt category.
- Their visa is cancelled.
- Their application to enrol is rejected, or
- They leave school before the expiry of their paid period of enrolment.

Visit here to access the Application for a Refund of the TRP education fee.
Click here to visit the Application for Fee Exemption based on low income

Enrolment process for children with a disability or additional needs

Starting school is a big step for all children, regardless of ability. As such, which school you choose to enrol your child at influences and has the potential to determine your child's abilities and enjoyment of learning. This is particularly true for children with a disability or with additional needs, as choosing a school that may not be accessible for your child will greatly disrupt their learning.

Click here to learn more about how to choose the right school for your child.
Click here to learn more about what type of schools your child can attend.

When to Start
Education NSW recommends that a meeting should be scheduled with the principal of your intended school prior to enrolment, to explore the options that are available for your child as well as to determine if the school is a suitable environment for them.

For a child with a disability and additional learning and support needs, this meeting should take place during term two of the year before starting school. These meetings are recommended to occur:

- In term 2 of the year before starting kindergarten for a child with a disability and additional learning and support needs.
- In term 2, two years before starting kindergarten for children with a physical disability to allow time for significant changes to the school environment if needed.

What to Discuss

It's important to know what to discuss during these meetings in order to ensure that all facets of your child's needs are addressed or are able to be supported during their time at school.

During the meeting, parents or carers should share:

- Supporting information about the child's needs, for example, medical reports, or reports from other health personnel such as therapists, specialists or organisations.
- Details concerning any equipment that the child needs for day to day activities that may need to be accommodated.
- Potential changes that may be needed to be made to school property to meet the child's specific support needs.
- Procedures that need to be in place to address specific concerns such as asthma, anaphylaxis, epilepsy, or ADHD.

This information allows for the school to make a holistic assessment on whether or not they would be a suitable environment for your child, as well as to allow the school to make informed decisions about your child's individual learning and support needs.

Click here for more information about school supports to inquire into during the meeting.

Available Classes

Parents and carers should also explore what classes are available for their child. Students with a confirmed disability can be enrolled into any one of the following classes;

- Regular classes (determined by standard enrolment procedures)
- Support classes (determined by Placement Panel Procedures)
- Schools for Specific Purpose (SPP) (determined by Placement Panel Procedures)

Available Support Personnel

There are a wide range of support staff available to assist your child through navigating their school environment.

- **Classroom teacher:** The child's classroom teacher will be their main point of contact, being in charge of the learning for each and every student in the class. They will discuss your child's strengths, interests and areas of need, give feedback on their progress, discuss specific learning adjustments that could be made, and may even suggest any community support who could support you and your child.
- **Learning and support team:** The school learning and support team supports teachings in identifying additional learning needs, coordinates the planning process for students with a disability and additional learning and support needs. They also facilitate the collaboration between the child's school, parents and/or carers, and other professionals that may be involved.

- **Learning and support teachers:** Learning and support teachers are the direct providers of specialist assistance for students with a disability that may be in a mainstream class rather than a support class. They assist the classroom teacher to ensure that the needs of the student and the school's priorities are met.
- **Itinerant support teachers:** Itinerant support teachers work with students who have a confirmed hearing and/or vision disability or conductive hearing loss. They work to support the students, their teachers, and their families and caregivers from the point of diagnosis all the way up to Year 12.
- **School learning support officer:** School learning support officers are directed and supervised by the classroom teachers, providing assistance with school routines, classroom activities, and the care of students with a disability and additional learning and support needs within the classroom.
- **School counsellor:** School counsellors work alongside teachers by strengthening the school's student welfare provisions, and providing psychological assessments of students with specific needs. They are qualified teachers who have a degree in psychology, and a postgraduate qualification in school counselling, making them reliable sources for psychological support.

Every school will have a learning and support team, however, some schools will differ in the other personnel that are available as staff are often determined by the demographics of the children at the school. This is why it is very important to talk to the school beforehand and find out what supports are available for your child.

Click here to learn more about the roles and responsibilities of support staff members.

Support for students from diverse backgrounds

Students from CALD Backgrounds
Schools welcome students from all sorts of backgrounds. There are various programs that are designed to help students such as English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EALD) classes, and cultural celebrations and events during the school year such as Harmony Day and Multicultural Day. For parents, there are also interpreter services that are available to support you to talk to your local school during interviews and meetings.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Students
Schools welcome Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islnder students and their families and work to offer programs and events that celebrate Indigenous culture and history.

For more information
- Visit here to find out more about the different roles of public-school staff.
- Visit here to learn more about school initiatives to support Indigenous children.

Key Dates

Most NSW public schools begin accepting applications and enrolments in May of the year prior to starting school. Independent schools such as Catholic schools and private schools often have lengthy waiting lists and require applications and enrolments to be submitted much earlier. Check with your preferred school/s in order to find out more information about specific dates.

Click here to access a proposed timeline by the NSW Government on when to begin the enrolment and application process according to your child's age.

Attendance policies in schools

Going to school regularly is important for your child. What your child learns each day can build upon what they learn the day before. If your child misses class because of illness or family circumstances then you must give a proper explanation to the school. For short and long leave, an application must be submitted in the school app. For long leave, permission must be granted from the Principal or Deputy Principal.

Primary Schools in Constitution Hill and Nearby

Please click on the links below to find out more about the different schools in the Constitution Hill area and nearby.

Toongabbie Public School

Toongabbie East Public School

Toongabbie West Public School

Darcy Road Public School

Items to Prepare Before Starting School

Things to buy

Often, schools will provide a list of stationery items that the students will require prior to the beginning of the school term. However, other than stationery, there are other things that your child/ren will most likely need before starting school.

School Uniform and Shoes
The school uniform and shoe rules vary by school. However, most schools require students to wear enclosed black leather shoes. Uniforms can often be bought from the school uniform office and may include multiple sets of uniform (Summer uniform, Winter uniform, sports uniform). Make sure to buy extra sets just in case.

School Bag
Some schools have mandatory bags provided or bought from the school. Others allow any bag that is practical. Ensure that the bag is durable and has multiple pockets for the different things your child will be carrying.

Sun Protection
Most schools employ a 'no hat, no play' rule, where if a student does not have a hat they are not allowed to play on the field. Ensure that your child has a hat (most likely part of the school uniform) and that they have sunscreen that will always be applied to exposed areas to protect their skin from the strong Australian sun.

School Supplies
Check with your child's school to see if they provide supplies or if you need to buy them. If you do need to buy them, see if a list can be provided to ensure that the products are relevant to your child's work. Often, these supplies consist of notebooks, rulers, pencils, erasers, scissors and glue.

Lunch Box and Water Bottle
Choose an insulated lunch box or cooler bag to ensure your child's lunch stays warm and does not spoil. An insulated water bottle will also work well during Australian summers, allowing your child to drink cold water on a hot day. Practice opening and closing the lunch box at home, as well as good hygiene habits such as washing their hands before eating.

Schools also have a canteen where children can place lunch orders in the morning, or buy lunch during the allocated time. Teach your child how to place their lunch orders, which differs from school to school, and discuss healthy eating choices in the case that they buy lunch.

The Big Day

Tips for a smooth first day

The first day of big school may be daunting for both the parents and your child. Here are some tips that may ease anxiety of the first day, and may help to set your child up for a safe and fun first day of big school.

The Night Before

The night before the first day of big school, prepare all the necessary equipment and items for your child's first day of school. Lay out their uniform neatly so the morning can go smoothly. Pack their lunch and school bag with their pencil case, stationery and water bottle. It may also be a good idea to include an extra change of clothes just in case an accident occurs.

Talk to your child about their expectation of their first day of big school to help ease any anxiety. Talk about what to do in certain situations, if problems arise, or who to talk to if your child needs help while at school. Most importantly, make sure that your child gets a good night's sleep so they can start refreshed the next day.

The Morning Of

The morning of the first day of school, let your child dress themself to practice independence and encourage their confidence. Make sure that your child gets a good breakfast to help them learn as best as they can and make sure to get your 'first day of school' photos to look back on in years time. Make sure to apply sunscreen and leave the house on time for school to start.

Getting Safety To School

A few days before school starts, choose and practice the safest walking path for your child if they will be walking in by themselves. Ensure that you model safe and ideal pedestrian behaviour, teaching your child to only cross at crosswalks when the lollipop person is there, and to look both ways before crossing anyways.

Picking Your Child Up at the End of the Day

Especially in the first week of school, your child's classroom will be a central location for pick-up. Ensure to inform the school if you will be running late so the teachers know and to share the pick-up information to anyone who may also be collecting your child. Also make sure to discuss who will be picking up your child with them and if they need to stay behind for after-school care and where that will be.

Managing separation anxiety

For both children and parents, the first day of school is a significant milestone that is frequently embraced with joy and excitement. Tears and tantrums at school drop-off time are not unusual, and it is perfectly normal for children (and parents) to feel nervous about saying goodbye. Anxiety in children is often caused by not knowing what to expect. They must get used to a new setting with unfamiliar people, unfamiliar norms, and unfamiliar routines. Here are some tips for before the big day to help manage separation anxiety.

- **Practice being away from your child:** If your child is not used to being alone, practice being apart from them gradually. This could be done by leaving them with relatives and friends for a few hours and slowly increasing.
- **Make it a memorable day that your child will look forward to by preparing them for what to expect:** Your child's attitude towards starting school will be shaped by your own. By beginning to discuss school in the weeks before, there will be less uncertainty, and more likely to be less anxiety surrounding beginning school. Taking your child on excursions to pick new school supplies, or practising lunch recipes with them will help them to feel included in the preparation process.
- **Make some friends:** In case your child is unfamiliar with other students in their class, attempt to schedule some playdates with one or two other kids in advance. If there are familiar faces in the crowd, your child may feel more at ease.
- **Determine the meeting spot and arrive on time:** This is especially crucial during the first week of classes. Arriving on time and at the appointed location allows your child to develop a sense of trust and faith in you, easing any anxiety they may already have.
- **Pack something familiar:** Pack something familiar from home to reassure your child if they are anxious about starting school. This could be a favourite toy, a family photo, a special treat in their lunchbox, or many other items.
- **Short and sweet goodbyes:** While dropping off your child make sure that you appear happy to help ease your child's own worries. Make the goodbye short and sweet to help assure your child that it is safe to go.
- **Honour their first day together:** Express your pride to your child and that they should be proud of themselves for finishing their first day of school. Planning a special treat for them to look forward to after school will also show them that they did well on their first day.
- **Don't criticise your child if they are having separation anxiety:** Avoid criticising, being negative, or comparisons of your child to others if they are having trouble separating. Assure them that it is perfectly normal to feel nervous and that they can always try again on a different day.

Further Resources

Online Resources

NSW Department of Education

The NSW Department of Education website has a variety of informative resources designed for all those involved in the transition to school process, be it parents, carers, teachers, educators and schools, and even the children themselves.

Click here to access their resources for educators.
Click here to access their resources for parents and carers.

Raisingchildren.net.au

Raising Children is the Australian parenting website, providing free information to support the wellbeing of parents and children. They have developed the Raising Healthy Minds app, available on both Google Play and the App Store. This app has been built in consultation with parents and mental health experts with the intention of supporting children's social and emotional wellbeing.

Click here to access the raisingchildren.net.au website.
Click here to read more about the Raising Healthy Minds app.

EarlyEd

EarlyEd is a not-for-profit organisation whose primary role is to provide early childhood intervention services and strategies for children and their families. With a full team of educators, occupational therapists, physiotherapists, family support workers, speech pathologists and behaviour specialists, EarlyEd provides an active range of services.

Their individual Transition to School program used a family-centred approach. It involves working with a key worker to understand the goals the child may have and creating an Individual Family Service Plan (IFSP), working within any environment, be it schools, at home, in the community, etc, targeted support, and an individualised program.

Click here to learn more about their Transition to School Individual Program.

AskIzzy

AskIzzy is an online search engine designed to help you find the support services you need and in the locations you can access. Just search for what service you need into their search bar and they'll ask you which suburb you're in to tailor their results to your needs.

Click here to access the AskIzzy website.

Kids Helpline

Kids Helpline is a platform designed to support children and young adults. This includes kids aged 5-12, teens aged 13-17, and young adults aged 18-25. However, in addition to those resources, they also publish information for parents to access on topics such as helping your children express their emotions, anxiety in kids and teens, and provide an avenue to also talk to other parents who may be experiencing similar challenges as you.

Click here to access the Kids Helpline website's parents page.

Helplines

Parent Line

Parent Line is a free telephone helpline for parents and carers with children aged 0-18. Their counsellors provide free and non-judgemental advice and can help with questions regarding child development, understanding your child's behaviour, and much more.

1300 1300 52 - 9am to 9pm on weekdays, 4pm to 9pm on weekends.

Click here to access their website.

Karitane Careline

A Careline open for questions about children aged 0-5 where an experienced child and family health nurse will help you with your queries and questions.

1300 227 464 - 8am to 9pm on Monday-Thursday, 8am to 4:30pm on Fridays, 8am to 3:30pm on Saturdays.

Click here to access their website.

Tresillian Parent's Helpline

Tresillian Parent's Helpline has qualified nurses online to answer your calls and questions about your baby's sleeping, feeding, and development, as well as about their services.

1300 272 736 - 7am to 11pm everyday.

Click here to access their website.

Pregnancy, Birth and Baby

Pregnancy, Birth and Baby is Australia's leading pregnancy and baby website, providing support for parents with children up to preschool age. Their helpline has maternal child health nurses answering the calls, with the option for phone calls or even video calls.

1800 882 436 - 7am to 12am (midnight) everyday.

Click here to access their website.

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