



Preparing for Reception

Key information and top tips to ensure you and your child are ready to start Reception in September.



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Look out for my 'top tips'
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Being Prepared as a Parent

Starting school is an exciting time for young children and their parents. It can be a daunting time too. But, with a little preparation and encouragement, most children will settle in easily at school. It's not unusual for parents to feel anxious when their child starts primary school, so if you're feeling a bit wobbly about it all, that's okay. As well as making sure your child is ready for school, set aside some time to get the whole family prepared. It is a big change and it will affect you all in some way.

If your child has already spent time in a childcare or preschool setting, they're probably already well on the way to having the social and practical skills they need to succeed at school. They're used to spending time apart from you, mixing with other children, taking instructions from and communicating with other adults, taking some responsibility for tidying up after themselves and looking after their own belongings. Don't worry if your child hasn't attended a childcare setting or preschool. Playing with other children, whether friends and family members, or other children at the park or soft play area, is all good practice for forming friendships with classmates at school. Often children who don't know one another will make friends very easily, but if your child struggles, teach them some useful phrases such as "Can I join in?" or "Do you want to share?". There will be some more information about this later on in this information pack.

The Practical stuff

Your family routine

Families come in all shapes and sizes, so it's important that everyone involved in caring for your child knows what's going on.

Parents with children already at Nursery, or being cared for by extended family or a child-minder, will be pretty well-rehearsed in all this, but it can be tricky to start with. You'll need to be adaptable, but any routine is better than the chaos of no routine at all.

- Agree who'll be doing the drop off and pick up each day. The school will need names and a password for anyone other than yourself who'll be collecting your child.
- Walk or drive your route to school so you know how long it takes, then add extra time for school traffic. If parking is limited, you might want to get there a bit earlier to bag a space.
- Set regular times for everything you need to do between waking up and going to bed – try and stick to them as much as possible.
- Make sure your child eats a healthy breakfast every day, either at home or breakfast club. Playing bath time games and sharing stories instead of watching TV or playing tablet games will help children to wind down before bedtime.
- Allow time for reading, talking about their day and bedtime stories every night. Just 10 minutes snuggled up and chatting can be a lovely routine for sharing fun times and also allow your child to bring up anything that might be worrying them.
- If your child has a nap during the day, it would be wise to try phasing this out. This should be more manageable for them if they have a good bedtime routine.

Shop for the essentials

You can see the uniform list in our Welcome Brochure that has already been sent out, this also gives you information about where you can buy the uniform from. Get your child involved by letting them choose anything that doesn't need to be strictly uniform, like their coat, lunchbox and drink bottle.

Reception children can come home grubby, whether it's dirt from playing outside, or school lunch down their front. So, unless you want to spend your evenings washing, it's a good idea to buy plenty of uniform. T-shirts are relatively cheap and easy to get hold of, but jumpers and cardigans with the school logo can be quite expensive. We recommend joining our PTA Facebook page (Franche Primary School PTA) to keep up to date with any second-hand uniform sales coming up (or make friends with the parent of an older, only child – great for hand-me-downs!).

Label everything

If it's not permanently attached to your child, put their name on it! Labels help your child identify their own clothes. If they don't recognise their name written down just yet, it might help to get labels with little pictures on. Thankfully the days of spending hours sewing in labels are long gone (unless you want to). There's now plenty of choice – stick on, iron on, stamp on – or the old marker pen on the label trick will do. Because let's face it, rummaging through piles of unnamed jumpers and book-bags at the end of a long day isn't what you or your child want to be doing! We recommend that you check the labels in your child's belongings regularly, as they often fade in the wash.



The Emotional Stuff

Stay positive

Your child will be taking their cues from you, so try to stay positive. If you're enthusiastic about school, it's more likely they will be too, if you're anxious it sends a signal that there's something to worry about. Schools are used to children being worried in the first few weeks, so however your child reacts, the teachers will have seen it all before and have support systems in place.

Be realistic

Make sure your expectations about what your child will learn and how they'll develop are realistic. Relax and let them progress at their own pace, don't put them under pressure by expecting too much, too soon. The qualities that matter most in Reception age children are things like curiosity, independence, imagination, and enjoying playing with other children. As time goes on, if you do have concerns then speak to their teacher. We have an open-door policy and are more than happy to talk through any concerns that you may have.

Be a good listener

"Nothing" and "I can't remember" are typical answers to questions about your child's day. If you're used to detailed nursery handovers, this lack of information can come as a bit of a shock. Don't be discouraged; wait a while and the stories will come out, usually at an odd time – like in the bath, half-way through a bedtime story, or on the toilet. Try asking specific questions like "who did you play with today?" or "what made you laugh today?" The children will open up in their own time!

Preparing Your Child for Starting School

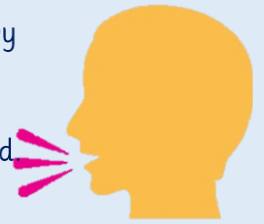


Your child doesn't need to be able to read, write or solve maths problems before they start school. Children start school with a wide range of abilities and our teachers are skilled at helping children progress at their own level.

What's most important is that you and your child have fun together in those preschool months – sharing stories, singing songs, playing games and talking about anything and everything.

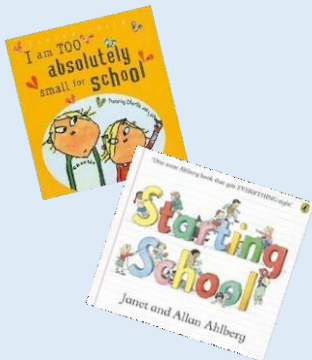
Some things to try at home

Chat with your child about starting school. What do they think it will be like? What are they most looking forward to? Is there anything they're unsure or worried about? Always be positive and enthusiastic about all the fun things that will happen at school. Once you know your child's class teacher, use their name frequently at home they it feels familiar to the child. Talk about the friends they will make, going to Forest School, having fun in the swimming pool... all of these conversations will promote excitement about their new journey.



Read books together about starting school...

- I am too Absolutely Small for School (Charlie and Lola) by Lauren Child
- Starting School by Janet and Allen Ahlberg
- Topsy and Tim Start School by Jean and Gareth Adamson
- Harry and the Dinosaurs Go to School by Ian Whybrow
- Come to School too, Blue Kangaroo! by Emma Chichester Clark



Find photos of you and other family members at school, and chat about happy memories from your own school days.



Look at the school's brochure, welcome video and website together and talk about the pictures.

Practise the school morning routine, including getting dressed and eating breakfast in time to leave.



If your child has a particular worry, perhaps about wetting themselves, not liking the food, or feeling ill – talk about these concerns with your child. This might be something that you also share with the class teacher when we start in September. Provide reassurance by discussing what to do and who to talk to in these situations.



If your child has a favourite comfort toy or blanket, try to get them used to being without it during the day. We encourage children to leave these at home when they join us in September. Maybe your child could make a special box to leave their comforter in whilst they are at school. Knowing it is safe and waiting for them when they get home may make the separation easier.

If you are planning on arranging childcare, before or after school, talk this through with your child. If the childcare arrangement is new, try putting together a wallchart or visual calendar of the week to help your child know their new routine.



Franché Fox Top Tip:

Listening games are great to help your child prepare for 'big school'. Play some fun listening games to help with following instructions. 'Simon Says' or 'Can You Find?' are both great for this.



Some things to avoid

It is natural to feel nervous about your child starting school but remember that your child can easily pick up on your emotions. Try to be relaxed and positive, rather than showing your own nerves.

- Try not to make comments such as "I hated school" or "I was rubbish at school", which might give your child a negative attitude.
- Try not to bombard your child with endless talk about school – allow them to come to you with questions and lead the conversation.

Getting Ready for Reception

Self-care skills

At Franche, we promote independence as much as possible. We think it is crucial that children become independent in self-care, social skills and academic achievements whilst in Reception.

Going to the toilet

Support your child to be confident about getting to the toilet in time and wiping properly, using toilet roll rather than moist wipes. We are, of course, always there to help if the children can't quite manage on their own. Practise going to the toilet when wearing their school uniform so they are able to pull their trousers down etc. Don't worry if they have the odd accident as they're settling in - it's okay, nobody will be cross with them. It's something teachers and teaching assistants are used to; and help is at hand when it's needed.

Washing their hands

Chat about the importance of good handwashing with soap and water, especially after going to the toilet or handling animals. A good way of showing how germs can linger is to let your child cover their hands in paint(pretend germs) and then try to wash it all off.

Getting dressed and undressed

Let your child practise putting on their school clothes, taking them off and putting them into a bag in preparation for PE lessons. Some extra practise might be needed for fiddly fastenings such as shirt buttons and zips. Teach your child tricks such as putting labels at the back, holding cuffs to stop sleeves riding up and wrinkling tights to put toes in first. Your child may have already mastered putting on their coat. There are some great techniques to help with this, including laying the coat on the floor, putting arms in and flipping the coat over the head – whatever works for your child! And when it comes to shoes, bring on the Velcro!

Eating independently

Free school meals are available for all of the children in Reception. There will be further information about these coming out in a few week's time. Children having school dinners are encouraged to use a full-sized knife and fork and carry a plate to their table. We join the children whilst they eat their lunch for the first few weeks and encourage them to use their cutlery correctly to feed themselves. If your child is going to have a packed lunch, make sure they can open it on their own and also practise opening food such as crisps and yoghurts independently.

Using a tissue

Introduce your child to the routine of 'catch it, bin it, kill it' – catching their sneeze or runny nose in a tissue, putting it straight into the bin and then washing their hands to kill the germs. Some children find blowing their nose difficult, so play games to practise nose control – blowing a feather into the air for example.

Tidying up

Get your child into the habit of hanging their coat up, putting their toys away, clearing away any toys and so on to prepare them for being a helpful friend at school. Why not turn it into a game? We use a song called 'Tidy UpRhumba' (search on YouTube) when it is time to tidy so you could listen to this at home when tidying away any toys. 'Mission Impossible' is another popular tidy up song choice!

Educational skills

You may want your child to be able to read and write a little before they start school. That's fine if it's what you want and your child is keen to get started, but it's definitely not a requirement. However, there are a few things you can do that will help on a practical level, and encourage your child to enjoy learning:

Fine motor skills

Little hands need to develop dexterity and strength before being able to write. You can help this process by encouraging children to play, explore and interact with a variety of items. Moulding play dough, threading beads and practising scissor skills are all tactile examples of practices that facilitate fine motor development. Head over to Pinterest and search 'Fine motor activities' for endless activities you can explore with your child.

Help them recognise their name

It's helpful if your child can recognise their name written down (you can practise this when you're labelling all their stuff!). But don't worry if they can't, *yet*, we have a little picture by each child's name on their pegs and trays to make it easier for them to identify.

Read to them

Research tells us that reading to your child is the best way you can support your child's early learning. So, make time for those special bedtime stories. At Franche, we have a passion for reading and hope that also shines through our pupils as well.

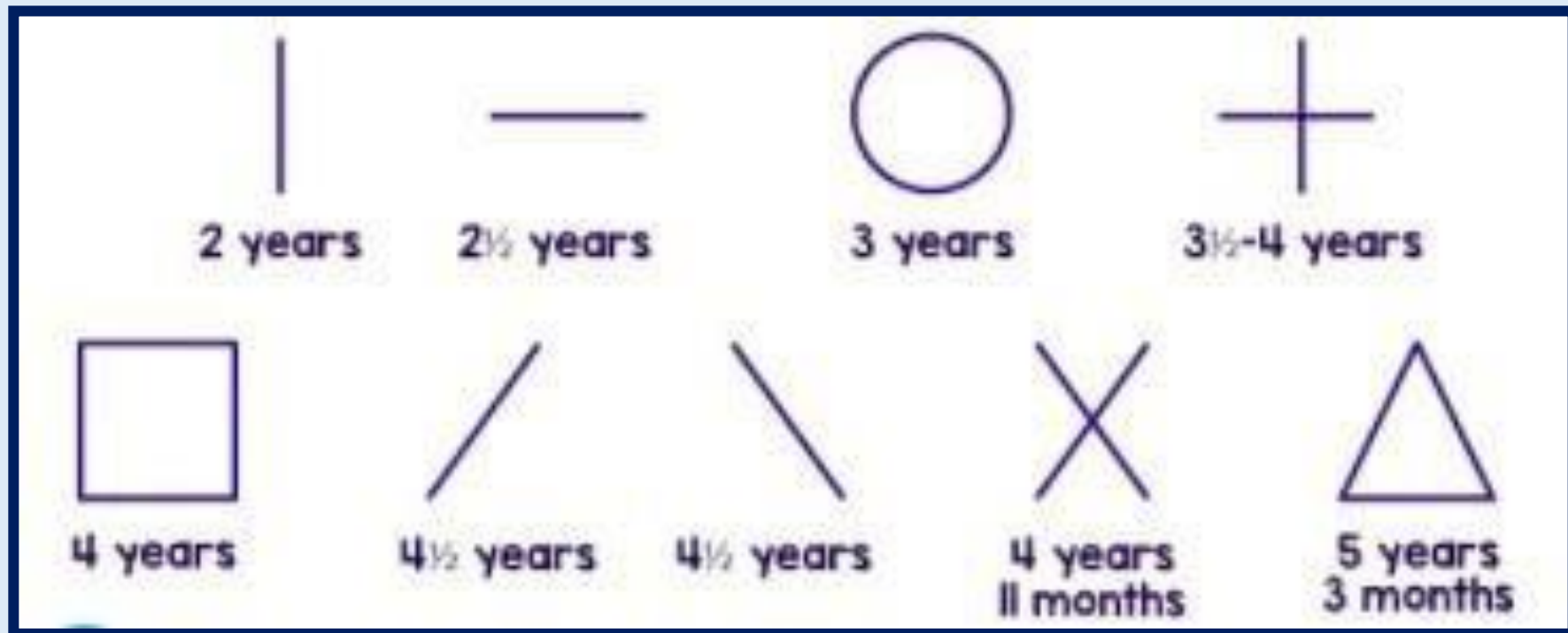
Become familiar with letters and numbers

This doesn't need to be anything more than recognising some letters of the alphabet and numbers up to 5 or 10. There are loads of really colourful and fun alphabet and counting books available – charity shops are great places to pick these up. Choose a few and you'll soon find a favourite.



Pre-writing skills

Pre-writing skills are the fundamental skills children need to develop before they are able to write. As mentioned above, fine motor activities will enable your child to strengthen the muscles in their hands but there are some other skills that are crucial to their writing development. These skills contribute to the child's ability to hold and use a pencil, and the ability to draw, write, copy and colour. A major component of pre-writing skills are the pre-writing shapes. These are the pencil strokes that most letters, numbers and early drawing are comprised of. They are typically mastered in sequential order, and to an age specific level. These strokes include the following strokes:



You might choose to practise writing these symbols whilst playing with your child. This could be by using a stick and writing them in the mud, painting them with a paintbrush or even practicing writing in shaving foam!

Social and emotional skills

Just like physical and educational skills, children develop socially and emotionally at their own pace. Mastering these skills early on will help them get used to school life:

Sharing and taking turns

If your child has brothers or sisters, or they've been to Nursery or pre-school, they'll be used to this already. But it's always good to check they've understood that sharing is a two-way process!

Listening and sitting still

In Reception class, at certain times your child will be expected to sit still and listen to basic instructions from their teacher. You can help with this at home by sitting together doing a jigsaw, colouring or looking at books. We use the 'Four Rules of Good Listening' at school which you might want to talk about with your child. You can also find some listening games on our school YouTube channel.



Talk, talk and talk some more

It is essential that children feel comfortable to talk to their family and friends. Provide lots of opportunities at home for them to open up about their feelings, without always being asked direct questions.

Being away from their familiar grown-ups

If your child hasn't been to Nursery, or pre-school, or been looked after by a friend or family member on a regular basis, have a think about what you can do to make sure they're okay being away from you. If you're at all worried speak to your child's teacher.

Franch Fox Top Tip:

The Worcester Speech and Language Team have some excellent talking games that you can play with your child – you can find them on Facebook.



Settling in and Making New Friends



Some children will settle in at school and make friends more quickly than others. And you can't always second guess how your child will react. Sometimes a really sociable and confident child can become very nervous in a new setting, while a more reserved child may suddenly come into their own. Don't worry, this is all expected and has been seen many times before. Saying goodbye to you at the door, when you drop your child off, may also be a time where we see different emotions. Whether they're a bit clingy or can barely stay with you long enough for a goodbye kiss – it's all normal and completely fine.

How you can help

There are some things you can do to help your child settle in and make friends.

- You might like to arrange a few playdates with other children that will be in the same class as your child. The classroom will feel more comfortable if there are a few familiar faces around.
- Let them know that if they're kind and play 'nicely', other children will be more likely to want to play with them. You could demonstrate this through role-play with their toys.
- Show interest in your child's conversation when they are talking about the friends they have made and the games they have played together.
- Encourage your child to solve problems, and squabbles, on their own.
- Don't be surprised if you hear one name a lot for a few weeks, then all of a sudden, a new 'best friend' pops up out of the blue. When it comes to friendships, children can be fickle!
- Be a good role model. If your child sees you making friends and talking to other parents, they'll do the same.

Franche Fox Top Tip:

If they have brothers or sisters, get them to practise sharing and being polite to each other, using phrases like "Can I join in?" or "Can we share that?", and not forgetting "please" and "thank you".



Starting School (The Early Days)



The week before

- Ensure you have some family routines in place with lots of time for talking
- Check you know where to drop your child off, and collect them from, at what time.
- Have their PE kit in a PE bag (all labelled) ready to bring to school.
- Prepare a bag of spare uniform and underwear to keep on their peg in case they have an accident during the first few weeks (again, all labelled).
- Talk to your child about who will be collecting them from school. If they are going to afterschool club make sure you inform the class teacher when we start school.
- Talk to your child about going into the classroom on their own and saying bye to their grown up at the door (don't worry, we have tissues at the ready for grown-ups and will support the children if they find this tricky to start with)
- Have you put names on absolutely everything? Show your child where the labels are so they are familiar with them.

Franche Fox Top Tip:

Keep an eye on your Parent Mail inbox. This is where we will be sending all communications from school.



The day before

- If possible, have some quality family time together as your child may be feeling different emotions about starting 'big school'.
- Manage any nerves by talking calmly and positively about the day ahead. Remind your child about the books you've read together and all the fun things they've been looking forward to.
- Get everything ready the night before. Lay out their uniform with their book bag ready for the morning.
- Check that everyone involved in drop off, pick up and after school care knows what, where and when they're expected.

The first day

- It's time to put your new routine to the test! If everything goes to plan, you'll have plenty of time for getting ready and eating breakfast, before a leisurely walk or drive to school
- Don't forget to plan in a bit of extra time for a first day photo-shoot.
- On the journey to school, stay calm and keep the chat positive and upbeat.
- Don't hang around after drop off. It's generally better to say a quick goodbye and allow your child to head into the classroom to all of their friends. If they can see you are outside the classroom, then it might make them feel more emotional.
- At pick up they might be tired, so don't be surprised if there are a few meltdowns. They'll probably be hungry too, after a busy day of playing and making friends, so you might want to bring a healthy snack for them to eat on the way home.
- Once you're home, let them have some quiet time or a snooze if needed. Wait until they've had a rest before you try and talk about their day. Watch their behaviour and listen to what they say. Follow up with a gentle reminder that they'll be going back to school again tomorrow.

The first few weeks

- Many children settle into school life easily, while others take longer. Don't worry if your child is tearful and clingy for the first few days – it's quite normal. Although you might feel terrible leaving them, they will most likely be playing quite happily within a few minutes.
- It's a good idea to keep the first few weekends quiet as they will likely need time to recharge, just as we do when we start a new job or a big project.
- Keep talking to your child about their feelings about school, and put aside some special time to chat about their day. Some children are enthusiastic at first, but once the reality of going to school day after day sets in, they can become reluctant. If this happens with your child, use a calendar to help them understand when weekends and holidays are coming up. You might want to arrange a few treats for them to look forward to as well.
- Establish a friendly relationship with your child's class teacher. We pride ourselves in building good relationships with parents and know that this helps support the child in many ways. We are experts at helping young children to settle in and thrive at school, and will be able to reassure you about most issues that arise. If you do have any concerns, raise them early to prevent them developing into bigger problems.
- Two or three weeks in, it's not unusual for children who initially enjoyed going to school to change their minds. Once the novelty has worn off, they may decide they've "done school" and don't need to go anymore. Manage their expectations, by reminding them at the end of each day that they'll be going again tomorrow. Watch to see how they react and listen to what they say. If they seem worried, they're probably still adjusting to the change, but if you're concerned about anything they tell you or how they're behaving, just speak to their teacher. Of course, some children take it all in their stride and settle straight in, so don't worry if there is nothing to worry about!

It is quite common for children's behaviour at home to change when they first start school. Don't be surprised if your little one becomes more clingy, argumentative, lethargic, excitable or prone to tantrums for a while. This is a big change for them, so these emotional reactions are likely to occur.





**We hope you have found
this information helpful.**

**We cannot wait to meet you
all!**

**Take care,
Mrs Arnold & The Reception
Team**



