

Getting Ready for School

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January 2017

I was caught off guard this winter with the realisation that my little boy would be due to start school next September. He only celebrated his third birthday in August and now I feel that time is rapidly slipping through my fingers.

I may not feel ready for this milestone but is my son? He transferred up the Pre-School Room at Nursery in September and I have to say I've noticed a big difference in him after a term socialising with a group of older children. His confidence has grown, as has his vocabulary and he has just reached the point where he has started to form special relationships with his peers. I know that the practitioners in his room are supporting him in the lead up to September and I know that we'll be playing our part with this at home.

With this in mind I wanted to find out more about what we could be doing to help support our little chap between now and starting school. Firstly I wanted to know about what schools expected from new pupils, should they be able to write their name, carry out mathematical equations and read? Because if that's the case I'm panicking! My three year old won't sit down at a table unless there's food at it, holding a pencil is not on his priority list unlike scaling the bookcase and 'borrowing' Daddy's bicycle torch!

So, I got in contact with St Michael's Prep School in Otford and was fortunate enough to be put in contact with Mrs Jeffery, Deputy Head of the Pre-Prep and Reception Class Teacher...

"The first term is all about settling. A child who can take off and put on their own coat often finds the first few days less daunting. This is also true of a child who can toilet themselves and feed themselves independently. These are all things which the children encounter from the word go, and feeling confident in these areas will ensure that a child settles in much more quickly. These self-care skills can really make a difference and are worth spending time developing over the summer holidays.

As a Reception teacher I have absolutely no expectations with regard to academic ability when my new class arrives in Reception in September. A child does not need to be able to write their name, or recognise letters and numbers. We can teach these things, it's what we do, and children often find it easier to learn with their peers, at their own pace in a carefully thought out learning environment. We make learning fun, and often a child has acquired a new skill without them even realising it!"

I found this to insight to be greatly reassuring and this message has been reinforced with visits to other prospective schools prior to the school application process.

Nursery has also helped calm any nerves and worries I might have by using not only their knowledge of my little man but mine as well to track his progress and identify which areas of development to focus on next, a process that is used for all children in the setting to identify and support their individual needs.

Top Skills for Starting School

- Can put on and take off own coat
- Can toilet by themselves
- Can independently feed themselves

Having identified the abilities that Reception Class Teachers are looking for in their September intake I think I shall undertake an online search for some activities to support the self-help and independence skills which will make the journey over from Nursery to School a smooth one.

Look out for further articles on Supporting Pre-Writing Skills and Encouraging Independence.