



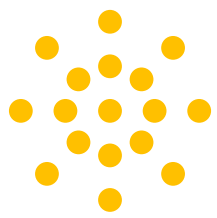
# Preparing for School



**Starting Year R**



**Ideas to support children previously in care.**  
(adoption / special guardianship & child arrangement orders)



# Information, Guidance and Support

We all need a little information, support and advice from time to time.

Here are some helpful starting points for parents and guardians of children who were previously in care.

This guide is not a manual for all children, it is a starting point to help and assist with some common challenges. Not every child will need all of the suggestions / strategies listed.

Please remember, if you have any concerns you can seek advice from your child's pre-school, nursery, school, SEND Services, the Virtual School or Adopt South (see contacts page).

Please be aware that the Early Years curriculum continues from pre-school / nursery into the reception year in school; so that much will be familiar and the same for children.



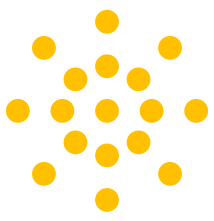
Starting school can be a very emotional time for both child and parent / guardian.

Make sure you consider the needs of your child and what extra or additional support they will need.

Also make sure you prepare yourself for the first days, saying goodbye. Remember to be positive in front of your child.

You will want to make sure your child feels safe, secure and settled in the presence of new adults and other children.





# Summer Term

## before starting school

Find the photo gallery on the school website, have a good look at how the school works, who the staff are, and what your child might look forward to.

Attend any school preparation meetings to gather key information.  
Complete all forms to share key information about your child.

School might ask you to contribute towards a Pupil Profile / Pupil Passport / This is Me form.

Ensure the team around the child are linked with the new school and all key information / copies of reports are shared; such as Speech and Language Therapy (SALT), Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS), Portage, Social Worker etc.

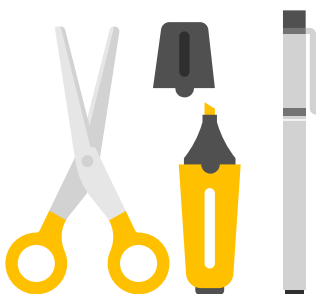
If you don't feel like key information has been shared fully, ask to have an additional meeting with the new school.

In some exceptional circumstances it might be appropriate to ask if a phased start might be needed, discuss your child's needs with school staff and agree a timetable that gradually increases time in school. All children should be attending school full time by the term after their 5<sup>th</sup> birthday.



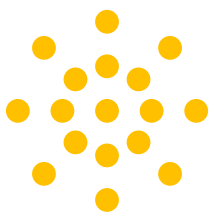
*Support your child to feel safe, settled and secure by becoming familiar with school and surrounding environment.*

## Top Tips



### Prepare & Plan Ahead

- Arrange transition visits (additional ones if needed) for your child to tour school site, meet key adults, meet peers, practice doing activities, practice lunch arrangements, use the toilets, be shown safe spaces, see coat peg, see lunch rack (Covid dependant).
- Practise the route to school (using whatever method will be used i.e. walking, driving, bus). Making sure the arrangements are in place ready for any other transport if required.
- Get used to the environment around the school; walking around the school area so it feels safe and natural by the time they start (going to nearest shop / using the park nearby etc).
- Watch children going to and from the school entrance, see how they travel, cars, scooters, bikes etc. What do the adults do? Is there a system?

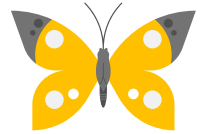


# Summer Term

## before starting school

Consider asking for a photo card of all of the key adults who will keep your child safe. Make sure your child knows who to go to for help if they feel unwell, need reassurance or can't do something.

Consider asking school or pre-school to buddy with another appropriate peer / role model to establish a safe connection in advance of the transition.



Find out if any friends / familiar peers are transitioning to the same school and ask the school to group them where appropriate.

Find out who the Designated Teacher (DT) for LAC/ Post LAC is in your school. Consider arranging a meeting with them to discuss the needs of your child.

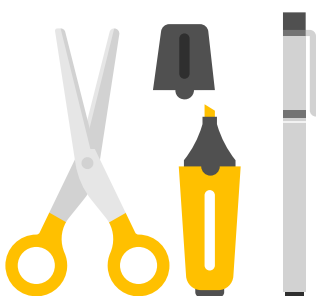


Book a regular termly meeting to review your child's needs in school with the DT (PLAC PEP-Portsmouth / PLACE Plan - Southampton / E-PAC/SGO Education Plan - Hants & IOW).

Be aware with Covid restrictions schools may have virtual tours or induction visits at the start of autumn term only.

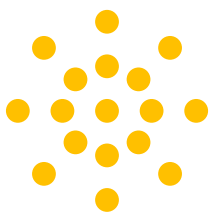
*Support your child to feel safe, settled and secure by supporting and managing positive endings and new relationships.*

## Top Tips



### Transition Planning

- Explore an appropriate nursery goodbye plan; having a positive ending. Creating a memory book / box which support your child's life story.
- Consider if a check in from the previous setting would be helpful during first half term of starting school (face to face or simply a postcard home).
- Work with settings on a transition plan with the whole network (including nursery, school, parents) - sharing details of needs, planning and support required.
- Working with settings creating a social story with personalised pictures of the child/family/setting.
- Use of a transitional object(s) such as photo keyring, handkerchief smelling of parent, squirt of perfume.



# Summer Holidays

## before starting school

Prepare yourself emotionally so you are ready for your child to start school! You need to be positive in front of them so seek your own emotional support and have a planned activity for yourself for while your child is at school - it can be hard to return to an empty house.

Rehearse and relay routine - 'I will be dropping you off every morning for school and picking you up after from this space'.

Prepare your child with messages that school is safe - being explicit 'this is your teacher, she will keep you safe'.

Buy uniform that is easy for the child to use independently i.e. Velcro and elasticated.

Encourage your child to tidy up after activities before moving on to another in readiness for doing this in school.

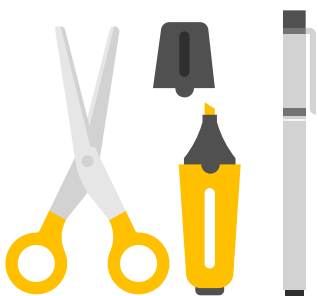
Do activities with your child and encourage them to sit still for short periods focussing on one activity.

Establish a clear bedtime routine well in advance of your child starting school; be prepared for them to be very tired.



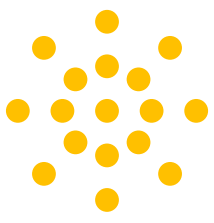
*Support your child to feel safe, settled and secure by practising the many aspects of school life they will need to get used to.*

## Top Tips



### Practise & Prepare

- Practise using buttons, zips, doing up shoes etc before starting.
- Doing activities which develop pincer skills and hand/eye co-ordination - using tweezers to pick up objects, using pegs etc.
- Practise putting the school uniform on and off (day uniform and PE kit), allow your child to wear it so they start to feel comfortable.
- Take your first day photo in advance to reduce stress on the first day!
- Share your child's social story regularly to allow them time to process, understand and be familiar with this.
- Practising toilet training, hand washing and wiping noses.
- Practising using a knife, fork and spoon.
- Buy school water bottle in advance. Practise drinking water from this, especially if this isn't a usual thing in your house.



# Summer Holidays

## before starting school

Having the child's name up around the house and encouraging name recognition (or initial) even if they can't write it.

All pupils in reception, year 1 and year 2 in state-funded schools are eligible for the universal infant free school meals.

If your child will have packed lunches buy the box in advance and practise having these at home - only eating your own food, learning to open packets.

Find out what time the school lunch break is and try to have meals at around this time.

Build a positive relationship with books - visit libraries, share books regularly.

Find out from your school what the popular playtime games are in school and explore these with your child before they start.

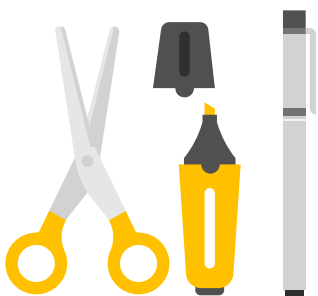
Try to encourage social opportunities to develop social skills such as turn taking and safe play; go to the park, library and groups and be alongside other children, modelling appropriate skills.

Introduce opportunities for your child to be separate from you so they are used to spending time without you before school begins e.g. sleepovers or having tea at family members homes or with friends.



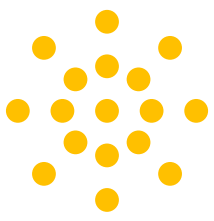
*Support your child to feel safe, settled and secure by having a calm and settled morning routine.*

## Top Tips



### Uniform

- Label uniform in advance with your child's name and maybe even a picture so they know it is theirs.
- Accept hand me downs – you really can never have too much uniform!
- Washing school uniform so it smells like home (before starting).
- Keep the uniform in one box or drawer. Always know where it is to avoid the panics.
- Have a designated place for school shoes and make your kids stick to it! Then they are easy to find in the morning rush.
- Have bookbags, coats and all school equipment in one place.
- Keep all letters and forms in the same place/drawer for easy access.



# Starting School

## First Term

Give your child a 'keeping in mind' message at goodbye 'Have a great day, I'll be here waiting for you when you finish and you can tell me all about your day'.

After a busy day at school don't be surprised if you see an increase in unwanted behaviour when you get home.

Be aware of your child's sensory and emotional needs when they get home; children may express these in different ways.

Your child will likely be physically, mentally and emotionally exhausted from the day at school.

It maybe your child needs to just rest on the sofa and have a little nap when they get home. Or they might need to run around the garden and bounce on the trampoline.

If this continues after the settling period talk to the school about ways to reduce the daily pressures.

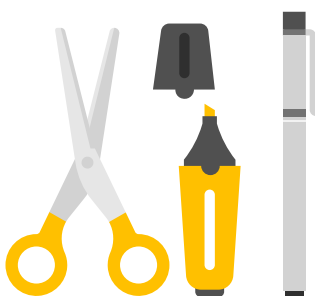
Avoid too many after school clubs, play dates and activities in the first few weeks as your child will be tired!

Meet your child from school with a small snack, they will be hungry. Or have it ready on the table at home for when you walk in the door.



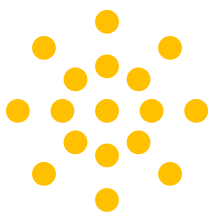
*Support your child to feel safe, settled and secure by having established methods of regular communication with school.*

## Top Tips



### Communication

- Agree a communication method with school to share key information and updates at appropriate times and with the right people e.g. not in front of your child or other parents.
- Keep communication open; don't hold on to concerns and let them fester, share them and problem solve together.
- Start with open questions - 'I was wondering ...', 'Please can you let me know ...', 'I'm a bit confused, can you shed some light on...!'
- Take time to build a relationship with school staff. A new school will bring new routines and expectations; it will take time for staff to get to know you and your child.
- Take photos of school letters and key info such as logins / homework to avoid losing key information.
- Allow school time to respond to non-urgent issues, they made need a day or two to get back to you.
- Set aside a box for key school documents.



# Starting School

## First Term

If needed, ask school to give your child a responsible role or job to keep them occupied during busy periods (breaks etc).

If needed, ask school if they will put up a piece of the child's art work in school before they start so there is something familiar when they begin.

If needed, ask for and book a regular termly meeting to review your child's needs and explore how your child is getting on.

As a previously looked after child your child may be eligible to unlock additional funding for the school, check eligibility with school and then ensure that your child is included on the School October Census as Post Looked After.

School should ask to see evidence of your child's legal status (Adoption Order (AO) / Special Guardianship Order (SGO) / Child Arrangement Order (CAO) and proof of previous LAC status).

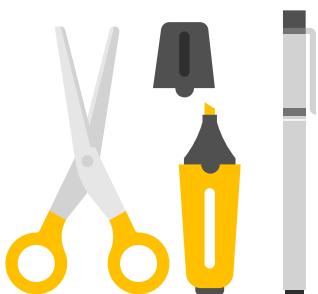
If school ask to copy documents, please be careful with personal info on birth certificates or court documents, such a birth parents details (this could breach General Data Protection Regulations).

[Pupil premium: conditions of grant 2020 to 2021 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)



*Support your child to feel safe, settled and secure by having prepared and planned ahead for the new school routine.*

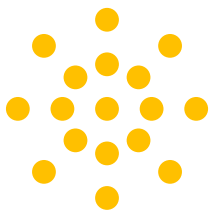
## Top Tips



### Prepare & Plan Ahead

- Be prepared for the first day; have all uniform and equipment out and ready to go in advance.
- Practise the route to school, making sure the arrangements are in place ready for any other transport if required.
- Get used to the routine and new demands associated with the school day.
- Don't forget to plan/prepare your goodbyes, drop off routine to ensure you leave as settled a child as possible.
- If needed use transition (hold in mind) object from home to reassure in school.
- Add note or picture to lunch box / school bag as a nice connection to home in the day.





# Suggested Reading & Resources



**Say Goodbye Say Hello** by Cori Doerrfeld

**Super Milly and the Super School Day** by Stephanie Clarkson

**Will You Be My Friend** by Sam McBratney & Anita Jerram

**A Little Bit Brave** by Nicola Kinnear

**Let's Get Ready for School** by Jane Porter

**Don't Worry Little Crab** by Chris Haughton

**Starting School** by Alan Ahlberg

**Topsy and Tim go to school** by Jean and Gareth Adamson

**I am too absolutely small for school** by Lauren Childs (Charlie and Lola)

**The Colour monster Starts School** by Anna Llenas

**Harry and the Dinosaurs Go to School** by Ian Whybrow

[Boris Starts School](#) by Carrie Weston & Tim Warnes

**Come to School too, Blue Kangaroo!** By Emma Chichester Clarke

[Hampshire County Council Ready for School](#)

[Portsmouth 10 Top Tips for Starting School](#)

**Comprehensive information on BBC Bite Size**

[Starting primary school - BBC Bitesize](#)

**TV Programmes found on YouTube and BBC iplayer**

Charlie and Lola – starting school

Topsy and Tim – starting school

[Lucy's First Day at School | Time for School Full Episode](#)

[Ben and Holly's Little Kingdom | Lucy's School | Cartoon for Kids](#)

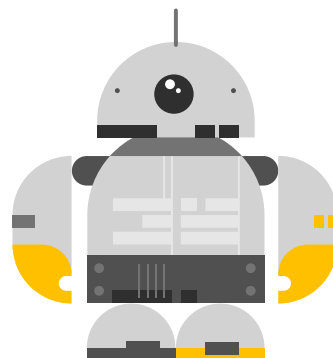
**Read aloud stories on Youtube**

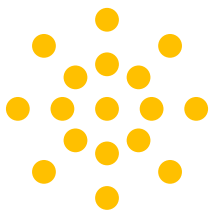
[Starting School By Janet Ahlberg and Allan Ahlberg](#)

[AMELIA BEDILIA FIRST DAY OF SCHOOL | Amelia Bedelia Books for Kids | Children's Books Read Aloud](#)

[The First Day at School: Story Time - In The Book](#)

Children with disorganised attachments may find a personal connection difficult, making reading together difficult. Using read aloud stories / you tube stories etc can be an alternative, positive way to introduce books and stories.





# Contact Details



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Phone: 01983 814680  
Email: [virtual.school@iow.gov.uk](mailto:virtual.school@iow.gov.uk)



<https://www.hants.gov.uk/socialcareandhealth/adoptsouth/iHAVEALREADYADOPTED>

Post adoption support **0300 3000 001**

