First Year
at school
ESSENTIAL TIPS FOR PARENTS AND CARERS
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Children tell us how they feel about starting school and what is important to them. You help your child across the bridge to school when you listen sensitively to the child's messages and ease them over first-day hurdles.
‘Knowledge is power’ and children feel more relaxed and secure if they are ready to fit in with school expectations.

So, find out what the main school rules are and when events occur during the week. You can remind your child that, ‘Today is PE day; you need to take back your library books tomorrow’. Check your child’s bag for notes about special occasions so you can both be prepared.

Make sure your child arrives at school on time. Children like to have a few minutes before the day starts to catch up with friends, do their classroom jobs and pass in their notes.

If your child finds separations difficult at the beginning of the school year, talk with the teacher about how you can support them through this phase. You may be able to stay for a while, reading a story or helping to set up the art area. Be honest with the child, telling them when you must leave and reassuring them you’ll see them at the end of the day.

Find out if the school has a ‘buddy’ system where an older student can help your child find facilities and manage the play equipment. If it’s accessible, take your child to the playground at the weekend to build their confidence and understand their limits with you there to support them.

**THINGS YOU CAN DO**

... to give your child confidence about starting school:

- Show your child how they will get to school each day and where they will be collected.
- Practise getting ready for school, dressing, packing the lunch, bag, sunhat, spare clothes.
- Make sure your child can manage things such as taking off jumpers and zipping up jackets.
- Use shoes with Velcro fasteners until your child can manage laces.
- Check that your child can open their lunch box and drink bottle and get them to help choose the contents.
- Make sure your child can go to the toilet independently, or talk with the teacher about how to manage toilet problems.
- Label all belongings—including shoes!—and provide spare, labelled undies in case of accidents; putting labels on the outside of clothing minimises ‘accidental swaps’.