

A HERTFORDSHIRE GUIDE TO SUPPORT FAMILIES AND CHILDREN AS YOUR CHILD STARTS SCHOOL.

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children as your child starts school.



Our aim

In Hertfordshire we believe that children who are school ready are happy, healthy, curious and ready to learn and will benefit the most from what schools have to offer. We recognise that all children develop at their own pace and will ensure children who need more support receive this so that they can reach their full potential.

Parents and carers are the child's greatest teacher and role model.

Hertfordshire is committed to ensure all children are:

- ambitious
- safe
- healthy
- resilient
- independent
- happy.

We want to work alongside families, early years providers and schools so they are confident in supporting children in making the smooth transition to school life.

All children develop at their own rate and no two children are the same; they all have different ways of communicating their needs.

With children and families at the centre of everything we do, we aim to:

- develop capable and confident children and families
- ensure that all children get the best start to their school life
- ensure that all early years and school practitioners feel valued for the work they do.

The following pages include important areas to consider around school readiness for the majority of children. Those children with individual needs will need specific help, advice and reassurance.

In Hertfordshire we support UNICEF's description of school readiness which states that three elements working together will ensure a child's best start to their school life (Unicef, School Readiness: A Conceptual Framework).

- *Children's readiness for school impacts on their future learning and development.*
- *Early years settings and schools' readiness ensures the learning environment is child friendly and reflects the diverse needs of young learners and their families.*
- *Families' readiness for school promotes a positive and supportive approach to education, their children's learning and the transition from home to school.*

Give your child the best possible start to their early education to prepare them for their future success

Are you and your family ready?

Engage with the school to find out all you can, visit the school, talk to other parents, talk to your child, ask questions and gather the information you need to know to best support your child.

Is your child ready?

Your child is ready – below are a few ideas to help your child feel extra confident.

Is the school ready?

The school will provide a safe, secure, inclusive environment for all children and their families.

There will be opportunities for you and your child to visit school prior to starting.

How can you support me with...?

1. Being Independent and safe

- Give me the opportunity to go to groups and meet other children as this will help me to begin to build relationships with others and be happy away from my family at home.
- Give me the chance to talk to new grown-ups when you are there and experiences of being left with other known adults and family members. This will help me understand that you will come back and I will learn to say goodbye to you, knowing you will return.
- Give me opportunities to play independently so I can learn to become engaged in my play and will be able to play happily on my own for short periods of time.
- Help me develop skills over time, give me time to practice, to make mistakes and to try for myself, so I know to tell a grown-up when I need help.
- Only buy clothes that are easy for me to manage e.g. velcro shoes, elasticated waistbands, manageable fastenings, and practice putting on my new uniform lots of times as this will enable me to be confident and care for myself.
- Teach me about safety from an early age and let me know that I need to ask you before going off with another adult.
- Give me lots of praise.

2. Feeling good – being happy and healthy

- Take me to groups to meet other children, this will help me learn to play and interact with other children, take turns, share toys and learn social skills.
- Give me time to chat to my friends and my family about the things I know so I know that others are interested in what I have to say.
- Help me begin to recognise emotions in other people so I can give my friend a hug if they are upset.
- Don't always let me be first or be the winner so I can understand that this is OK and I can learn to manage my feelings of disappointment.

- Spend time with me playing games and reading books as I like to have some time with you one to one.
- Give me opportunities to play on my own to help develop my concentration skills.
- Let me be active. The NHS recommended physical activity time for under-fives is 3 hours every day. This can include activities such as moving around, rolling and playing, but should also include active play such as using a climbing frame, riding a bike, chasing games and ball games. Give me lots of opportunities to play outside, visiting parks, playing on equipment and having space to run.
- Talk to me about the foods we are eating. Help me begin to understand the importance of a healthy diet without added sugar or salt. Provide me with healthy meals and drinks and allow me to sit at the table to eat my meals.
- Make sure I get a good night's sleep and let me have a good bedtime routine. The NHS recommends that five year-olds need 11 hours sleep a night.
- I will get very tired when I start school; keep other activities to a minimum when I first start.

3. Loving learning and being ambitious

- Talk to me about new things when I notice them, like what a spider's web is for, items floating or sinking in the bath, how some items are heavier than others as I am curious about the world around me and I ask questions.
- Help me to count claps, jumps, stairs as well as cars and grapes on my plate. This will start to develop my understanding of numbers and quantities.
- Take me to the library so I can choose my own books for us to read together.
- Give me the opportunity to find out about things that interest me, like dinosaurs, farm animals.
- Encourage me to talk to you about my drawings and squiggles and begin to tell you what my marks mean.
- Let me know that it is OK to make mistakes and that I can try again and again.
- Make sure I know simple actions that keep me safe like holding hands when crossing roads, not to run off when shopping, so that I understand rules and boundaries that keep me safe.

4. Making my voice heard and being resilient

- Give me experiences of sharing books and singing rhymes; this will help develop my communication skills and I will begin to learn about words, rhymes and patterns. I will begin to see that words in a book have a meaning.
- Give me the opportunity to play listening games and introduce new words, as this will help me sit still and listen for a short while and develop my listening and concentration skills.
- Use simple language and show me how to use words to make my needs known. I can then talk about myself, my needs, ideas and feelings.
- Tell me new words and name things as we see them; add new words to help extend my vocabulary. This will help me talk about lots of different things; what I've done, who I'm with or where I'm going.
- Listen to me. Talk with me.
- Wait for me to respond to a question and try to use a range of question words: who, where, why, what?

- Make talking, singing, reading, tidying away, doing activities together part of your daily routine.
- Give me time to join in when sharing a book.
- Talk to me about the sounds I hear when we go to the shops or the park as I am interested in the world around me. This helps me begin to hear different sounds.
- Give me the opportunity to make choices about what I might like to eat or play as this will help me express myself if I need something.
- Have times every day where there are no mobile phones or electronic devices.
- Let me make choices and allow me to contribute in the family as this will help build my resilience and allow me to adapt to change.

5. Doing my best: I am ready to start school, here I come

- Make sure that you do not miss the new parent's/carers' talk that the school is running; take me with you so I can visit my new school and classroom and meet some of the people who will care for me.
- Make sure that you have completed all the paperwork and sent it back in good time so that the school gets to know all about me.
- Make sure you go to the school's summer fair or any other event, so we can see the school informally.
- Talk to me about your own happy experiences of school.
- Be positive about me starting school, (don't let me see that you are at all anxious). This will help me talk to you about anything that is worrying me about starting my new school.
- Talk about the similarities between home and school and talk to me about the activities I will be doing at school.
- Give me lots of praise.

- **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.**
- **Let your child get used to school life before introducing lots of after school activities.**
- **Talk to your child about their day.**

Further support

As a parent/carers you know your child the best. You need to share your knowledge of your child with the school so they know how best to meet your child's individual needs.

There are a range of professionals who can offer you advice and guidance to support your child as they start school.

School	The teacher in your child's new class can provide details of opportunities for you and your child to visit.
Pre-school, nursery, childminder	The keyworker for your child will be able to provide details of your child's developmental progress and activities your child enjoys.

School admissions	www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/admissions
Family centres	Family centres bring children's centres, health visiting and school nursing together to give consistent and responsive support to children and families from pregnancy until a child is 19. www.hertsfamilycentres.org
Speech and language service	The Children and Young People's Speech and Language Therapy service offers a child and family centred approach to support children and young people with speech, language, and communication needs (SLCN), and eating and drinking difficulties. For further advice and guidance about your child's development, please go to the service's website: https://www.hct.nhs.uk/our-services/childrens-speech-and-language-therapy/
SEND information, advice and support	SEND information, advice and support team provide impartial and confidential information, advice and support to parents and carers of children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), and young people and children with SEND. https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/microsites/local-offer/support/sendiaass.aspx
Local offer	Hertfordshire's SEND Local Offer is your one-stop shop for information, support, services and activities available for children and young people with special educational needs, and their families. This includes information on occupational and physio therapy, integrated services for learning and the 0-25 team. www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/localoffer
Kids Hub	The HUBs offers information and support for parents and carers of disabled children and young people aged 0-19 in Hertfordshire. https://www.kids.org.uk/hub
Hertfordshire libraries	https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/services/Libraries-and-archives/Libraries-and-archives.aspx
Hungry Little Minds	Hungry Little Minds is a campaign to encourage parents to engage in activities that support their child's early learning and help set them up for school and beyond. https://hungrylittleminds.campaign.gov.uk/
Unicef	School readiness, a conceptual framework https://www.unicef.org/earlychildhood/files/Child2Child_ConceptualFramework_FINAL(1).pdf