

n. family club

GETTING PREPARED FOR SCHOOL

Introduction

We know that your child starting school can be a daunting prospect. You will no doubt have lots of questions. From which school is best and how the admissions process works, to wondering if your child will be ready and what important things they need to know.

At N, the 'Prepared for School' aspect of our curriculum has been specifically designed to ensure all our children are ready for the big move. We give each child a wide range of opportunities to develop the skills, knowledge and understanding they will need to succeed in the next stage of their education.

Sarah Mackenzie
Chief Academic Officer

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Emotional readiness

Children feeling emotionally prepared for the transition to 'big school' is the most important aspect of school readiness. It is completely normal for both you and your child to experience a range of emotions and we invest time in exploring their feelings around leaving nursery and starting school with the other children.

Once school places have been confirmed we start preparing the children for the specifics of their next stage:

- Your child's key person will talk to them about their school
- Research experiences will be used to look up the different schools the children are going to
- We create information books on each school

These activities will all help to gently familiarise your child with the new place they're going to.

As we head into the summer term, the make believe area will be transformed into a school. Uniforms for dressing up and registers will all encourage the children to explore school experiences through play.

During small group time we use a range of strategies to talk about starting school including stories, puppets, dolls and referring back to the 'Colour Monster' feelings.

We will also arrange an opportunity for the children to ask a Reception-aged child questions to give them a chance to discover more about what to expect from a child's perspective.





Independence

The nature of the classroom environment and the greater ratio of children to teachers means your child will need to be able to be relatively independent at school. They may need to carry out independent tasks set by the teacher; work in small groups without the direct instruction and support of an adult; and follow instructions in larger group time.

At N, we have a strong focus on building independent skills throughout your child's final year of nursery. These include:

- Getting dressed in waterproofs for outdoor learning
- Changing into different clothes for P.E. (shorts & trainers)
- Carrying lunch on a tray
- Scraping their own plate at mealtimes
- Using the toilet independently

If your child still has a daytime sleep we will work with you to ensure their routine is adapted in line with school expectations.

We gradually increase small group sizes so that in the summer term before school starts the children are familiar with being in larger groups for learning experiences. This prepares them for the whole class teaching they will have at school.

Academic Readiness

Many parents are concerned about their child's academic readiness for school. At N, our broad curriculum ensures children have rich, varied experiences. Incorporating all of the EYFS areas plus our own added N extras provides each child with an excellent foundation for starting their school career.

When your child joins Reception, the principles of what and how they are learning will be the same as at nursery. They will still have the opportunity to play both indoors and outdoors every day and to explore different play-based learning experiences. The sense of challenge will naturally be increased and the day may be structured differently but they will still be learning under the EYFS framework.



Mathematics

We believe that mathematics skills should be developed from the earliest age, and so your child will already have been exposed to a vast array of concepts and vocabulary during their time at nursery.

In their final year, we work on applying this knowledge to real-life situations. Particular focus is given to:

- Counting small groups of objects
- Confident recognition of the numbers 0-10
- An understanding of 'one more' and 'one less' as the basis of addition and subtraction

Your child will be offered regular opportunities to solve problems and work with numbers, shapes and other useful concepts such as measurement, capacity and size. Learning how to record their mathematical thinking is extended through our Science, Technology and Engineering curriculums.



Reading & writing



Reading and writing are fundamental skills required to access further learning.

They are a big focus of the Reception year and our Phonics curriculum concentrates on the initial stages – developing the auditory and oral skills needed to read and write simple words.

Your child must also be physically able to hold a pencil in order to form letters correctly. We created our Doodle Dance programme as part of our Physical Activity curriculum in answer to this challenge.

During your child's last year at nursery we use this fun and energetic approach to mastering forming shapes on a large scale before putting pencil to paper. These pre-writing shapes are the building blocks of all the letters in the English alphabet.

Starting handwriting too early can result in poor formation habits which are tough to break and can present a struggle for children throughout primary school.

Once ready, we introduce the formation of each letter, taught in particular sets that correspond to the sound sets learned in Phonics. The combination of these experiences means that your child will have the best opportunity for success in reading and writing at school.

What to do at home

Here are some suggestions specific to supporting your child to feel confident and secure about their transition to school.

1. Talk about and acknowledge feelings

- Ask your child how they are feeling about going to school and provide them with options of emotional vocabulary if needed - worried, excited, nervous, etc.
- Acknowledge any feelings they mention and reassure them that they are totally normal emotions
- It can be helpful to talk about the specifics of what is worrying them in order to try and come up with solutions together. Can you find out who will be in their class and set up some play dates before school starts?

2. Read books about starting school

Stories are a great way to delve deeper into how your child is feeling about school, through identifying with the characters and their emotions. They also provide a range of contexts for seeing and talking about the school experience.

Some great book recommendations are:

'Little Owl's First Day' – Debi Glori and Alison Brown
'Starting School' – Allan Ahlberg and Janet Ahlberg
'Charlie and Lola: I Am Too Absolutely Small For School' – Lauren Child
'All You Need to Know Before You Start School' – Felicity Brooks and Marina Aizen
'Usborne First Experiences: Going to School'

3. Walk to school

Practise your journey to school and take the opportunity to peek at the playground and point out all the fun places your child will be able to play! Doing this regularly will help to make the concept of going to school feel more familiar when the time comes.

4. Shop for school uniform and supplies

Make an event about buying uniform and supplies and give your child choices where possible – perhaps they can pick their new water bottle or school bag? This will give them a sense of control and also increase their excitement.

Once you have their uniform, let them try it on a few times to get used to it – this will help them become familiar with it and is good practice for getting dressed and undressed independently.

Applying for school places

The exact deadline for school applications changes each year but it is usually mid-January. You will then normally find out about your child's school place in April. Please check with your Local Authority for the exact dates and process followed where you live.

If you have an independent school in mind, their enrolment window may start earlier than this, so please do check with the specific school.

Deferring school places

If your child is summer born (an April to August baby), or you do not feel they are ready to start school, then you are able to apply to defer their school place by a year.

We ask for notice if you are considering this option and you wish for your child to stay with us until the following school year. We need to be told an academic year in advance to avoid reallocating your child's space.

Working in partnership with schools

Once school places are confirmed we always make contact with your child's new school. We invite their teacher to visit your child at nursery or arrange for your child to visit the school with their key person. This allows important information to be passed on to the teacher by your child's key person and means their new teacher will be a familiar face on your child's first day at school.

Your child's final assessment against the seven areas of learning in the EYFS will act as a school leaver's report and will be shared with you and their new teacher. This gives them a clear picture of development to build on as they take over the next stage of your child's learning journey.





Any questions?

We always have mixed feelings when we say goodbye to our N graduates. It's a very proud moment seeing our children ready to take the next step in their education but we're also always sad to say goodbye.

We hope that when they do leave us you'll stay in touch and share how they're getting on in their new schools. As always, please do not hesitate to let us know if you want to talk about your child's readiness for school and the ways in which we can work together to ease their transition.
