

# AITKENBAR PRIMARY SCHOOL

## Preparing your child for starting school

### Help for parents.

- **Don't worry** - your child doesn't need to be able to read, write or do sums before they start school. Children start school with a wide range of abilities and their teacher will be skilled at helping them progress at their own level.
- Talk to your child about starting school. What do they think it will be like? What are they most looking forward to? Is there anything they're unsure or worried about?
- Try to be relaxed and positive. Avoid making comments such as "I hated school" or "I was rubbish at school", which might give your child a negative attitude. Don't bombard your child with endless talk about school - treating it in a matter-of-fact way rather than focusing on the "big step ahead" will help soothe an anxious child.
- 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. Although you might feel terrible leaving them, they will most likely be perfectly happy within a few minutes.



### Self-care skills



*It will make life easier for your child (and school staff!) if your child can master these self-care skills before they start school:*

- Going to the toilet - Support your child to be confident about getting to the toilet in time and wiping properly, using toilet paper.
- Washing their hands - Talk about the importance of good handwashing with soap and water, especially after going to the toilet.
- Dressing and undressing - Let your child practise putting on their school clothes, taking them off and folding them neatly in preparation for PE lessons, especially if there are fiddly fastenings. Shoes with Velcro are easier to handle for young children. Teach your child tricks such as putting labels at the back, holding cuffs to stop sleeves riding up. Please write your child's name on EVERYTHING!
- Feeding themselves - Children having school dinners need to be able to use a knife and fork and carry a plate or tray (their buddy will help them at the start of term). If your child is bringing a lunchbox, make sure they can open it as well as any containers and packets inside.
- Tidying up - Get your child into the habit of hanging their coat up, putting their toys away, and so on, to prepare them for doing these things at school. Practise opening their school bag, putting things in it and closing it again.



## GOOD COMMUNICATION is essential for learning.

*For a child starting school, being able to talk about what they think and explain how they feel are more important than any academic skills. Good communication has a positive impact on behaviour too. Children who can't communicate their feelings and concerns are more likely to become disruptive or withdrawn in the classroom. Here is how you can help...*

- **Reading together**

Research shows that children who are read to daily perform better in all areas of learning. Don't limit reading to bedtime stories - magazines, websites, catalogues, signs and recipes all provide opportunities for reading and discussion.



- **Talking together**

At the end of the day, encourage your child to talk about what they've done and any new things they have learned. Develop a love of learning in your child - "What do you know today that you didn't know yesterday?"

- **Coping with "why?"**

If your child's favourite word is "why", turn it back at them with: "Well, why do you think?"

## NUMBERS

Help your child to prepare for learning numbers at school with these simple games, rhymes and everyday activities.



- **Knowing numbers**

Play 'spot the number' - focus on the numerals 0 to 9, and challenge your child to find them everywhere - on front doors, clocks, car registrations, birthday cards etc. How many times can your child spot their age number in a day? Look how the figures 0-9 are used on phones, calculators and remote controls.

- **Counting**

Get into the habit of counting everything with your child, from birds on the fence to stairs up to bed. Counting songs and rhymes teach children numbers and order, as well as rhythm and rhyme. 'One, Two, Buckle my Shoe', 'Five Little Ducks', 'Ten in the Bed' etc. Play counting-based games such as dominoes, ludo, snakes and ladders or number snap.

- **Pattern and sequence**

Can they make a repeated pattern of building blocks, or beads on a string? Have a look at patterns in brickwork, tiles and paving.



## STARTING TO WRITE

*Before letters, numbers or pictures come simple marks. Mark-making is the start of formal writing.*

- **Pencil control**



As children get closer to school age, their 'mark-making' becoming more purposeful. Now's the time to encourage a three-fingered 'tripod' pencil grip and introduce activities to help them learn pencil control - try dot-to-dots, tracing and colouring-in.



- **Name the mark**

The first writing mark that most children recognise is the initial letter of their name. Help them spot it in books and on signs and posters when you're out and about.

*One final point - It is crucial that your child has plenty of sleep (easier said than done!) and that he/she is not over-stimulated by electronic games or TV before bedtime.*

