



Lanercost C.E. Primary School

'Care, Believe, Achieve'

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Ensuring your child is 'school ready'

Lanercost C.E. Primary School is a small, rural primary school with around 70 pupils on role. Nursery and Reception children are taught within the same Foundation Stage Class, which has given our Early Years Staff team the perfect opportunity to work out first-hand what works well when supporting children with the transition from Nursery into Reception; recognising the different challenges that face children coming into Reception from Early Years settings that are not attached to schools.

One of the main differences between Nursery provision and the Reception year, is the gradual shift from predominantly child-initiated learning through play, towards much more targeted and adult-led focused activities aimed at teaching the basics of reading, writing and number skills.

Reception children still receive plenty of opportunities to lead their own learning through access to high quality continuous provision both indoors and outdoors, but there is a much greater emphasis on direct teaching of knowledge and skills e.g. through discrete phonics sessions, whole class teaching of number knowledge and shared reading experiences. Children in Reception will also be expected to follow many of the same rules and routines as children higher up the school e.g. they may be expected to eat lunch in the same busy dining room, sit through whole school assemblies, play in the 'big yard' with everyone else, sit quietly on the carpet, line up patiently, wear school uniform and do some additional learning at home. Another significant difference for many children is the shift to attending five days a week rather than attending a setting part-time.

The expectations placed on a child in a Reception class, both in terms of behaviour and learning, are therefore very different to the expectations they may have experienced within their Nursery setting (even though they are still working within the same Early Years Statutory Framework). Rest assured however, that Reception teachers and support staff are just as passionate as other Early Years Practitioners, in terms of their commitment to providing your child with a safe, secure and nurturing environment in which all children can thrive.

In our experience, a strong partnership between school and parents is the key to making the transition from Nursery to Reception as easy and stress-free as possible and there are some simple ways that you can help your child prepare at home for the transition.

Here are some of the key areas of learning and development that you can support your child with at home along with practical ideas:

Developing physical strength and resilience

Whether your child is making a phased start to Reception or is attending full-time from day one, your child is likely to be exhausted by the end of the day. However, there are steps you can take to boost their physical resilience to cope with the demands of the school day. We would recommend ensuring your child has a well-established bedtime routine by the end of the summer holidays. This could include limited use of digital media in the hour before bed, a set time for going upstairs, a relaxing bathtime, story time and then sleep time. In our experience tiredness can have a significant impact on a child's ability to concentrate and learn in Reception.

Your child will be taking part in formal PE sessions, perhaps for the first time. In our school this might range from relaxing Yoga sessions to more high energy activities such as Zumba, Football coaching and Gymnastics. Many schools, like ours, also offer activities such as Woodland School, which require your child to be able to clamber over rough terrain and to cope with experiencing the outdoors in all weathers! If your child is not currently very physical, you could spend time in the Summer holidays going for short walks, exploring your local surroundings and helping your child to persevere when tired e.g. if they want to be carried, encouraging them to walk to the next landmark before offering to pick them up.

Supporting independence with self-care

If your child is not yet fully toilet-trained then now is the time to discuss this with the Reception Teacher and to come up with a plan as to how this will be achieved either at home before they start in September, or once they start, in partnership with school staff. It is vital that parents and school staff are consistent in their approach and that any concerns or anxieties expressed by your child about going to the toilet at school are passed on immediately – some children may just need an adult nearby the first few times they go, or they may not be able to reach the paper towels etc. Just let your teacher know and they will be happy to support your child to become confident and independent in using the school bathrooms.

It is really helpful if your child can start school with a coat that they can do up themselves so avoid difficult toggles, for example. Most children of Reception age are desperate to be able to dress themselves independently and see this as a mark of 'growing up'. So, consider warm mittens instead of fingered gloves, and shoes with velcro fastenings rather than ones that have buckles or laces.

Encouraging Mark making

One of the greatest demands placed on your child in Reception will be learning to write. Here are some practical ways you can help. Firstly, mark make with your child all the time e.g. let them add marks to your shopping list, use sticks to draw on the beach, chalk large-scale patterns on the patio together, do 'join the dot' pictures etc. Secondly, help your child to become more flexible around all the pivots required for writing – these include the shoulder pivot, elbow pivot, wrist and finger pivots. At Lanercost our children take part in Dough Gym and Finger Gym exercises to help them develop the flexibility and hand strength required for writing. At home you can make play dough

together (recipes can be found on the internet) and then spend time rolling, pressing, kneading and lifting the dough to give your child's upper body, arms and hands a work-out. It can be great fun if you do it to music! Also encourage your child to help with household chores that require them to reach upwards e.g. pegging out the washing, cleaning the windows or sweeping the patio. Finally, the more experience your child has of picking up a pencil or pen the better.

Preparing for travelling to school

Transport to school can be a source of anxiety for many parents in Cumbria due to the rural nature of our county. Some children will be taking a school bus or school taxi to school for the first time. If this is the case, then talk to the school before the Summer Holidays. They may be able to suggest an older child who travels on the same transport who could act as a buddy for your Reception child. Also drive the same route as the taxi/bus with your child in the holidays so your child knows where they will be going and has some idea of the length of the journey. If you are driving your child to and from school do a dummy run at the same time of day so you know what the traffic is like. Being late to school, or late to pick up, can be stressful for you and your child. The same goes if you are walking to school – do a couple of practise walks so you can see if your child has the stamina to walk the distance to and from school.

Developing Social skills

If your child has been going to Nursery or a play group, then they will already have had the opportunity to develop their social skills. It can still be daunting however, to start at a new setting and have to make new friends. If you already know the parents of children who will be in your child's Reception class then why not arrange a couple of play dates over the summer. During these play sessions support your children to play co-operatively e.g. to take turns, to share toys and to be gentle. We have found that social skills are best developed through close partnership between school and home. You can find out what your school's 'Golden Rules' for behaviour are and reinforce these, as consistent boundaries for behaviour at this age are essential. We have found that the key to success in terms of good behaviour is to adopt a firm but fair and nurturing approach that the children understand.

If you know your child is not used to being around other children and may find social situations challenging flag this up during the home visit by your Reception Teacher before they start.

Uniform

For many children it will be the first time they will have to wear a uniform. Most children adapt to this change very well and are proud to wear their new uniform, but for a few it can be a battle because they find change difficult, or may even have sensory issues that mean they don't like the feel of some clothes. If you are concerned, talk to school about any potential issues.

To help your child be independent, make sure their school trousers are not so tight that they can't pull them up or down when going to the toilet. You may want to opt for socks rather than tights for the first few weeks if you know your child tends to cut it fine when going to the toilet – tights can be a struggle to get down quickly! Think carefully about shoes – if they are too tight they can be very distracting to a 4 year old! Always 'wear-in' new school shoes at home if possible. Make sure your

child can actually take the jumper off over their heads by themselves – if not consider going up a size to aid their independence.

If your child's school has a Woodland School, like Lanercost, then make sure they have everything they need for being comfortable when outside in all weathers and check what your child needs for PE. Write a timetable and stick it on your front door so you know which days your child needs PE kit etc. Finally, label all clothing really clearly with your child's full name. Young children are very good at leaving their clothes lying around!

Lunch

Lunchtimes can be less structured within the school environment and children are required to interact with adults and children who are less familiar to them, therefore we try to keep lunch times as calm and easy for the children as possible. So for example, if you have opted for school dinners for your child, then we suggest you go through the weekly menu choices very carefully with your child. They may be young, but they will still be able to say what they do and don't like. Lunch is such an important meal for children at school, that it is usually better to choose something that you know they like, rather than opting for an option you think they might like to try. It is often best to leave being adventurous with food for home! Make sure your school knows of any special dietary requirements or allergies.

If your child is having packed lunches, talk to your child about what they want in their lunchbox, but check first what they are allowed to have – most schools will have some restrictions. Get your child to help pack their lunchbox, this way there will be no surprises at lunchtime when they are generally most tired and hungry!

Recognising their name

Not all children who start in Reception can write their own name. This is something that Reception staff will work on in the first term to ensure your child can write their name starting with a capital letter and using the correct letter formation. What is more important, is that all children starting Reception can recognise their own name. They will be expected to put their coats on a named peg, to find their own book bag and water bottle. To help your child do this, make sure that they see their name around your home. You could make a name label to go on their bedroom door, or label their favourite cup, or help your child to make place names for the dinner table.

Supporting emotional resilience

The best thing you can do for your child is to be 'available' to listen to them and to 'hold' them through emotional moments. Make time during your day, whether it is bath time, dinnertime or when walking the dog, to chat with your child. Before they start Reception, ask them what they are looking forward to about school. What are they not sure about? Help your child to develop the *vocabulary* they need to express their *emotions in words* and if your child is anxious or emotional about school, talk to their teacher. Visit your local library or bookshop, as there are many great picture books available about starting school or about emotions that you could share with your child as a safe way for them to think about their feelings.

Once they have started school, be prepared for them to be so tired when they walk out the school gates that they will give no response when asked 'What did you do at school today?' or burst into tears! This is perfectly normal, although can be frustrating as a parent. We would suggest having a small snack ready for them for the drive/walk home as their energy levels will be at the lowest by the end of the afternoon. Then allow your child 'downtime' to relax at home before trying to talk to them about school. If you repeatedly get no feedback about school from your child, then talk to their Reception teacher who will be able to chat about what your child has been doing and how they are settling. Over time you will find that your child will begin to talk more about their days at school.

Developing listening and attention skills

At Lanercost, one of the first skills we tackle is listening and attention. For example, it is really important that your child is able to stop what they are doing and listen when their name is called. It may seem like a basic skill, but in a busy classroom environment this is the first step to academic success! Next, we work on helping children to listen effectively during carpet time discussions or stories. You can help by creating spaces at home that are free from distractions, where you can read stories to your child and encourage them to actively listen by asking them what they think might happen next, or how a character is feeling. Gradually increase the amount of time you expect your child to sit quietly and listen.

Saying goodbye

Reception may be the first time you have had to leave your child with other adults, or your child may be well practised at separating from you as they have already been attending a Nursery or Childminder. Either way, most children in Reception will at some point become tearful when their parent/carer leaves the classroom. They may be particularly tired, or feeling a little unwell, or they may still be anxious about their new environment. At Lanercost, we talk with parents before their children start to agree how we will work in partnership with parents to support the handover of children into the classroom environment. Reception staff are well practised at supporting children through this transition and will adapt their approach to meet the needs of you and your child. Most schools are more than happy to give parents a quick call to let them know that their child has settled and rest assured nearly all tearful children will be happily involved in play by the time their worried parent is driving out of the car park. If your child continues to experience anxiety around separation, talk with your child's teacher to agree a new strategy.

Developing number knowledge

Help your child become confident with numbers, by singing nursery rhymes like '1, 2, 3, 4, 5, once I caught a fish alive!' and counting everything – pieces of fruit in the fruit bowl; steps up to bed; plates on the table. Point out numbers in the environment and make sure your child can recognise numbers that are important to them including their own age. It is great if children can recognise numerals up to 10 and rote count to 10 by the time they start Reception, but more important is that they understand that you can count anything e.g. objects and actions, and that they understand the 'oneness' of one, and the 'twoness' of two. For example do they understand that two cakes on a plate is more than one cake and that if they eat one cake then there will only be one cake left on the plate. Point out dice patterns when you play games and help your child to count the dots.

To summarise:

1. Establish a relaxing bedtime routine before September, which is age-appropriate.
2. Do a practise transport run to and from school with your child.
3. Actively mark-make with your child and ensure they can recognise their own name.
4. Work on developing your child's upper body core strength and flexibility ready for writing through physical games and helping out around the home.
5. Make sure your child is comfortable in their school uniform and practise getting them dressed.
6. Make sure your child is involved in choosing lunch options.
7. Support your child emotionally by 'holding' them through the emotional moments and making space to listen to them.
8. Encourage good manners, turn taking and sharing and help your child to begin to understand boundaries for behaviour.
9. Play games that help your child to practise following simple instructions and use story times to help them develop their listening skills.
10. Count with your child all the time and point out numbers in the environment.
11. Be positive with your child about the transition to Reception and make the most of the chances provided by the school to talk about your child and share any concerns e.g. home visit, induction visits.