



THE BIG LEAP

REAL SCHOOL READINESS

Helping you understand what children *really* need support with before they start school.

ROSIE JOYCE

PARENT COACH



MY WHY

I really care about the experiences of young children and the impact those experiences will have on their future. As someone who knows a lot about the topic of transitions, and about emotional development and how to support parents I see it as my duty to pass on as much information as I can to ensure that you are prepared and can support your child as best as you can.

I also know that the health and wellness of children is hugely influenced by the health and wellness of their parents and so I care a lot about supporting parents who are navigating new situations for the first time.

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION 01

INDEPENDENCE SKILLS 02

- USING CUTLERY
- SHOES, COATS &
GETTING DRESSED
- TOILET

SOCIAL SKILLS 03

- ASKING FOR HELP
- MAKING FRIENDS
- TAKING TURNS

EMOTIONS 04

- LABELLING

SKILLS FOR LEARNING 05

- CURIOSITY
- MEMORY GAMES
- RECOGNITION

NEXT STEPS 06



-01-

INTRODUCTION & FOREWORD

What to expect from the Reception Year. A bit about how children learn and remembering that all children are unique.

-02-

INDEPENDENCE SKILLS

Real school readiness is so much more about the basic life skills that children need in order to become happy, safe and healthy learners.

-03-

SOCIAL SKILLS

A happy transition and start will largely be down to making friends and feeling comfortable and confident with the staff.

-04-

EMOTIONS

Helping children to understand, verbalise and regulate their emotions is key to getting them ready for school.

-05-

SKILLS FOR LEARNING

Helping to develop key skills that will help children's future learning throughout school.

S E C T I O N

01

INTRODUCTION & FOREWORD

Child development is not linear. As you may have noticed, children learn new skills, get really interested in certain things and go through phases... but they also forget skills, or become less interested when something else comes along. This is totally normal and is to be expected!

Children's brains are growing at such a rapid rate with everything new they encounter, learn, see, do and feel.

That is why it is so super important that we don't compare our children to others and instead focus on where THEY are at, what they are interested in and how they are feeling at any given time.

In a Reception class, a child born in August is almost a year younger than those born the previous September, yet they will be in the same class. This is why it is key not to compare - in their short life span, that year is a huge percentage of learning time. The EYFS (Early Years Foundation Stage) fully embraces these differences and children are taught according to their learning styles, interests and unique needs.

THE RECEPTION YEAR

Learning in Reception

Children in the early years need to explore through their senses, get lots of physical interaction, engage through their own curiosity and have lots of conversation.

Therefore, learning in Reception is led by the children's interests and happens predominantly through play. When we say 'learning through play', people often think it is not 'real' learning or it has less impact on a child's development than more adult led teaching.

In the Early Years staff are highly trained and experienced in teaching children whilst they play, taking their lead and scaffolding the learning on to what the child is already doing or is interested in.

Children at this stage will also all differ greatly in their interests, skills and knowledge and through watching and observing them in their natural play states, the adults can know where to help them next to bring those skills and knowledge on.

This is not all about academia, at this age the focus is mostly about building the foundations of what will help the children become independent, motivated and happy learners as they go up through school.

THE EYFS (Early Years Foundation Stage)

Schools will all differ in their approach to teaching and learning but as mentioned, children in Reception should be playing for most of their day.

This will differ between schools however.

Within The EYFS there are seven areas of learning and development that must shape educational programmes in early years settings. All areas of learning and development are important and interconnected.

There are three prime areas:

- communication and language
- physical development
- personal, social and emotional development

These three areas are particularly important for building a foundation for children's future learning.

The importance and focus will be on igniting children's curiosity and enthusiasm for learning, forming relationships and thriving.

Schools must also support children in a further four specific areas:

- literacy
- mathematics
- understanding the world
- expressive arts and design

How is your child assessed?

In the Reception year there are 'Early Learning Goals' to work towards at the end of the year. These are gauged around age brackets and expectations of development to be met by the end of Reception. Obviously children will all differ in ages and abilities and the teachers will take this in to account. All children should be treated as unique individuals. .

Teachers will report back to you at different points in the year about how your child is getting on, and what they are working towards through a mixture of verbal and written 'reports'.

Baseline Testing

There is a new enforced government led assessment which schools are asked to undertake. This is called The Baseline Test and requires schools to test children in their first weeks of school. This is the government guidance:- <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/reception-baseline-assessment>

However there are many organisations pledging against these tests saying that they are unfair on the children who should have a gentle more playful start to their reception year, getting to know staff playfully and not under test conditions. You can find out more here:

<https://www.morethanascare.org.uk/what-we-do/baseline/>

<https://www.early-education.org.uk/no-baseline-assessment>



S E C T I O N

02

INDEPENDENCE SKILLS

INDEPENDENCE SKILLS

USING CUTLERY

Encouraging a child to use cutlery, (including non-sharp knives) prior to starting school is a very good idea. Not only will they struggle less with their school dinners (if they have them), but it is more hygienic, and very good for fine motor development.

PLAYDOH

An excellent way to encourage using cutlery in a playful, less pressured environment is through playing with playdoh.

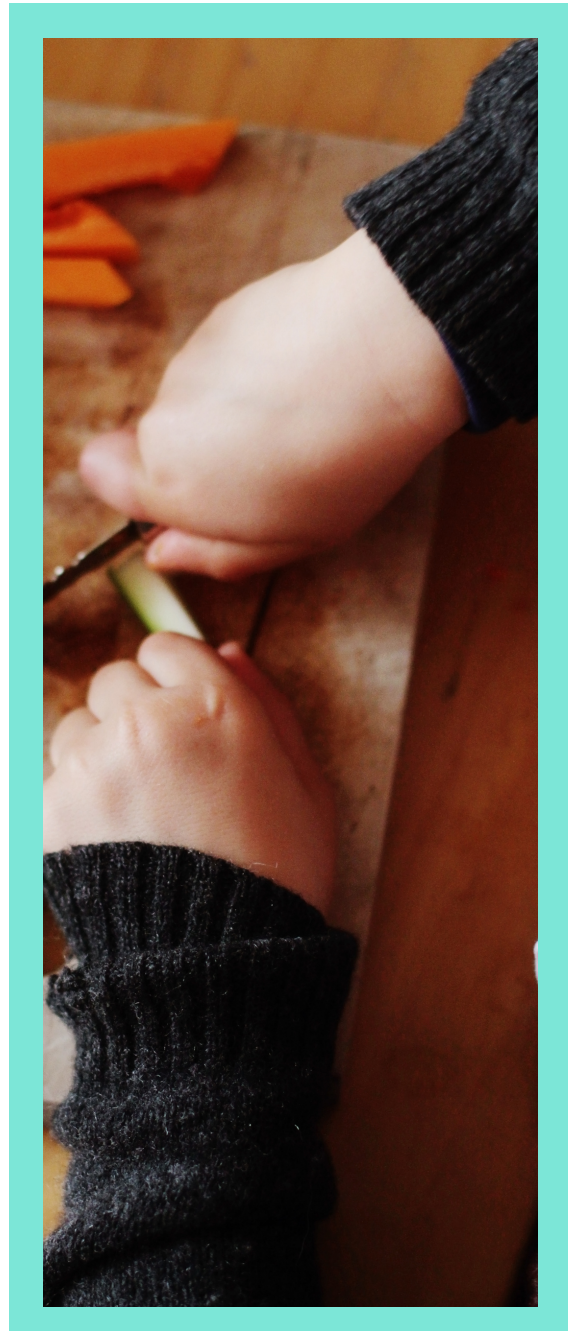
You can role play restaurants or cafes. Cutting playdoh with safe knives, practicing to hold the playdoh with a fork whilst you cut with the knife and using a spoon to scoop little pieces of playdoh are all fantastic ways to build these vital skills.

FOOD PREPARATION

Another way to practice is through preparing food together.

Your child can learn to spread their own spread on to bread or toast.

You can ask your child to help prepare food, such as cutting vegetables safely (mushrooms are a good way to start), or to help measure ingredients such as flour using a spoon.



SHOES, COATS AND GETTING DRESSED

Over the summer, start to try to give more time to these skills, allowing your child to master them.

We are so used to rushing from place to place, forgetting that these 'inbetween' getting ready parts for children are just as important as the final destination.

Putting value on building these skills and allowing more time will ultimately SAVE you time in the long run on those mornings when you need to get to school. It will also hugely help your child when doing things such as PE at school.



TOP TIPS

- Have dressing up items available and add some school uniform (once you have it) in there. It is a great way to introduce the idea of uniform in a playful way that is led by your child.
- Buy shoes only with velcro. No laces or buckles to start with.
- Buy trousers that are easy to pull up - no fiddly buttons.
- Lay clothes out with 'teddy' or favourite toy for your child to find. say that teddy has chosen the outfit for them.
- Show your child how to lay tops down on the floor as if the top is laying on its 'tummy' - with the top front flat to the floor. This helps them to get the top the right way around and not back to front.
- Coats - there are some great ways to learn how to put coats on.
 1. Hang the hood on their head first. Then put arms in one at a time.
 2. Lay the coat on the floor, open, zip facing upwards. Stand at the hood, bend, put arms in the sleeves and flip the coat over head and voila!
 You can see a clip here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-FaxBoCvNqM>

USING THE TOILET

This is a skill that children develop at very different rates and it is a skill that can easily be 'forgotten' when other milestones take place. If your child starts having accidents prior to starting school or afterwards, this is because other emotional impulses are taking up the 'brain space' and are affecting their ability to remember and control the physical impulses.

Put simply, children's brains have two parts - the 'downstairs' brain, which controls physical impulses such as breathing, blinking and eventually bladder and bowel control. The 'upstairs' brain is more complex. This is used to emotionally regulate, to think, imagine, make decisions and solve problems.

Both parts of the brain are used when toilet 'training', and you can see therefore why children vary so much when learning these skills and why some children can temporarily forget during times of change.



Skills to encourage once toileting is established.

1. How much paper to use and how to fold it. Teach children to use enough paper and fold it to wipe upwards so that they don't get any on their hands. Fold it again, wipe and repeat until the paper is clear.
2. Flushing. Making sure children flush before they wash their hands will encourage good habits and better hygiene.
3. Washing hands - Children are more used to washing their hands now but often will 'forget' if an adult is not present. Prompting them every single time will encourage better habits long term and for when they are going independently at school.



S E C T I O N

03

SOCIAL SKILLS

“

CAN YOU HELP ME PLEASE?

-

Explicitly teaching
helpful phrases



Teaching children specific phrases
and helping them to practice them...

We want to think that our children will be able to ask for help if they need it. We can really help them to do this by teaching them exactly what to say and helping them practice it. You can do this through role play as well, asking your child "oh no! I haven't got anybody to play with, who can I ask for help?"

Encourage your child to problem solve and help you or a doll to ask for help. Using affirmative language will also help develop confidence eg "Mr Price will keep you happy and safe. He will be able to help you if you need anything"



MAKING FRIENDS AND ASKING FOR HELP.

More than anything else, your main concerns when your child starts school will be that they are making friends and that they feel confident enough to speak up and ask for help from the staff if they need it.

Therefore the focus should all be around talking about scenarios and practicing what your child can say.

Giving children the words to use and giving them an opportunity to practice them will be a huge help and comfort to them when they do find themselves in a situation where they want to make a friend or when they need some help.

TOP TIPS: MAKING FRIENDS

Role play with small world characters, dolls or teddies. "oh no, teddy hasn't got anyone to play with - what should teddy say to bunny if he wants to play with him?"

Then you can extend this casually to talk about what your child could say if they want to make friends or join in a game.

Be explicit - what can you say to a new person to make friends?

"My name is X, what's your name?"

"Can I play with you?"

"Would you like to play..."



TOP TIPS: ASKING FOR HELP

If you can get a picture of your child's teacher and the staff (try the school website or ask the school) this can really help with the transition prior to starting.

You can discuss with your child as before, what you might do in certain situations...

- If you need the toilet
- If you have nobody to play with
- If you can't get your shoe on
- If you need the toilet
- If you aren't sure what to do
- If you miss home

Making affirmative statements such as 'Mrs Jones is very kind and she will keep you very safe' can really help build positive feelings and confidence.



”

YOU ARE BRAVE AND YOU CAN
ASK FOR HELP IF YOU NEED IT

-

Affirmations to build confidence

S E C T I O N

04

EMOTIONS

WHAT TO EXPECT

Children may have lots of emotions about starting school, but they won't necessarily know what they are feeling, how to name the feeling or how to express it.

This means that 'excitement' can also be nerves or worries and 'scared' can also mean unsure or confused.

Rather than talk about feelings, children express their feelings through behaviour. It is important to be very understanding and try and understand your child's needs and wishes in terms of reassurance and comfort.



ACKNOWLEDGE & NAMING EMOTIONS

Doing lots of talking about feelings in the run up to starting school is helpful. This not only helps children become more able to express how they feel verbally but it also helps them know that you can feel more than one thing at once!

You can:

- talk openly about your feelings
- talk about characters in books.
- draw basic faces and talk about the expressions.
- Help your child understand their feelings by saying what you see and naming their emotion. "I can see you are disappointed, I would be too"



S E C T I O N

05

LEARNING SKILLS

KEY LEARNING SKILLS



Curiosity

Children are born curious. It is unfortunately a trait many of us adults grow out of, but it is one of the most important skills to foster and encourage so that children develop in to active and engaged learners.

Motivation

Children are self-motivated to learn and through play they are able to do so, following their interests! To encourage motivation we need to build on childrens interests, and praise effort NOT perfection. The process in learning is always more important than the product.

Memory

Memory skills can be built through games and play. Memory is an important 'muscle' to build because all future school learning will rely on remembering facts and being able to recall information.

Recognition

When children start to become interested in things such as logos, signs, letters, numbers or words we can encourage this by having them around in the environment to play with.

“

PLAY IS YOUR CHILD'S LOVE LANGUAGE

-

Rosie Joyce



Skills for later learning.

As mentioned, children do NOT need to be able to write or read when they start Reception. The Reception year is all about learning through play, and developing skills for future learning. We want children to be happy, confident, curious and self motivated and by 'forcing' information or expectations on them too young will not only hinder them developing these amazing qualities...they will also not find learning fun.

A child needs to learn when they are ready, forcing information on them does not speed this up - the information will just be meaningless to them and boring.



MEMORY GAMES

Playing games such as matching pairs can help children develop their memory, attention and turn taking skills.

Start with only four or five matching pairs, line up in a grid face down in lines of 3-4.

Take it in turns to turn over two cards. The aim is to find two matching cards and keep them. If the cards don't match, turn them back over and the next person has a go. This exercise can really help children to use their short and longer term memory, remembering which cards are where when trying to make matches. Start small and gradually use more cards to make the game last longer and increase difficulty.

Encouraging children to remember two - three step tasks.

Giving children 2-3 step tasks to do can also really help children develop their listening, attention and memory skills.

You can do this in your everyday e.g. "go upstairs and get your cardigan and your hairbrush" and support children who struggle to do this using visuals (pictures) and highlighting that they are remembering two things. Lots of praise.

Play a version of 'Simon says' which you can make easier or harder depending on your child. eg "Simon says, touch your nose, tap the door and then sit on a chair".

RECOGNITION

ONLY TEACH CHILDREN LETTERS AND NUMBERS WHEN THEY ARE SHOWING AN INTEREST AND ARE SELF MOTIVATED.

Helping children to recognise things such as logos (CBeebies or Macdonalds) is the start of the early reading process. Way before learning letters, they need to show an awareness and interest in recognising things around them.

Before learning numbers, children might start RECOGNISING that two digits look the same. this is very different to knowing what those digits are or knowing that they represent a certain amount in value.



Name recognition

One thing your child might start to recognise is their name. They don't need to know what the letters in their name are (unless they want to know), but seeing the word as a whole and knowing that it is their name will really help when they are at school and they see their name on their peg or in the classroom.

It is one of the first things the school will help teach so please don't worry if your child can't recognise their name!

Ways to support this at home could be:

- Having a name sign on their bedroom door or in their bedroom.
- Having a picture of their face with their name next to it along with some other family members, friends or favourite tv characters. Finding their name from the selection (you must use pictures of the people to support the learning).
- Activities like the one in the picture.

S E C T I O N

06



NEXT STEPS

NEXT STEPS

Come and join me on
The Big Leap Live where I will
be running **two live workshops** -
one before the start and one
afterwards to walk you through
managing the transition and the
emotions that come in the weeks
leading up **and** afterwards.

We will be talking logistics,
emotions, what to expect
throughout those transitional
months and how to reduce worry
and stress.

You will also receive more
resources to support you and your
child.

I'd love to see you there!

Book here:

www.orchidsanddandelions.co.uk/realchoolreadiness