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Preparing your child for the start of school

Preparing your child for the start of primary school will help them feel more confident about the big changes that are about to happen and what to expect at their new school.

In preparation for this important chapter, you can help your child to develop a love for learning so the move is a happy and positive one.

From the year before until the day they start school, there are a range of ways you can prepare your child for their new environment.

The year before school

In the year before your child starts primary school, you can begin to focus on different aspects of school life. Having discussions about school and encouraging your child to become more independent can help them better adjust to the new learning environment.

Things that you can do to help your child prepare include:

- asking your child what they think about school
- encouraging your child to ask questions about going to school
- encouraging your child to do things on their own, such as dressing, washing their hands, going to the toilet, unwrapping their food, and opening their drink bottle
- talking to friends and other families about what school is like
- attending transition-to-school programs at your child's new school
- talking to the school about how you can be involved in your child's life at school
- talking to your child's early childhood professional about other things you can do at home to help your child's learning and development.

Over the summer holidays

With school just around the corner, the summer holidays are a good time to reinforce what your child should expect on their first day at school.

Some things you can do for your child to help them prepare include:

- showing your child where the school is and talking about how they will get there

- arranging playtimes with other families whose children will be going to the same school as your child – it helps if your child knows another child at their school before they start
- practising the things your child will need to do to get ready for school (such as putting things in their bag and remembering to take a hat)
- confirming your before and/or after-school care arrangements, showing your child where the Outside School Hours Care facilities are and talking about how they will get there
- being positive about starting school and enjoying your child's excitement
- asking the school what time school starts on the first day and where to take your child.

The first day of school

There are a range of things you can do to help your child have a successful and stress free first day at school including:

- helping your child to pack their school bag with a snack, drink, lunch and a hat. Include a change of clothes and a spare pair of underpants in a plastic bag and let your child know these clothes are there in case of any accidents
- when dressing for school look for easy fasteners and encourage your child to dress themselves, so they can manage things like taking jumpers on and off. Label all belongings and find out where lost property is held at school
- put sunscreen on your child in the morning if it is needed
- leave home on time allowing time to say goodbye. At first, you may stay a while to ensure your child feels secure, but once they have settled in, a short and reassuring goodbye encourages independence
- show your child where you will meet them at the end of the school day
- check what time school finishes and arrive in plenty of time to collect your child
- at the end of the day talk to your child about what happened at school.

