

SCHOOL READINESS

A GENTLE GUIDE FOR PARENTS

The
Early Years
Advisor



Introduction

Starting school is a big step for children — and for parents too. It's normal to feel a mix of excitement, pride, and anxiety. This guide offers gentle, practical advice to help you and your child feel more confident and supported as you prepare for this new chapter.

What School Readiness Means

School readiness isn't about academic achievement — it's about helping your child feel confident, curious, and ready to learn. Key areas of readiness include:

- Confidence separating from caregivers
- Curiosity and willingness to explore
- Basic communication skills
- Ability to follow simple routines
- Emerging independence (e.g., toileting, dressing, tidying)

Ready Steady Reception Skills

Based on guidance from Birmingham Early Years Networks (BEYN), key skills include:

Communication & Language

- Listening to simple instructions
- Recognising their name
- Using words to express needs and feelings

Physical Development

- Putting on coats and shoes
- Using the toilet independently
- Beginning to use cutlery confidently

Personal, Social & Emotional Development

- Separating from parents or carers
- Managing small frustrations
- Playing alongside or with other children

Extra Tips

Visiting the School

- Walk past the school regularly
- Look at the playground and gates
- Visit the classroom if possible

Meeting Teachers

- Show children photos of their teacher
- Practise saying the teacher's name
- Talk about how teachers help

School Meals

- Look at the school menu together
- Practise carrying a tray
- Try school-style meals at home

Routines

- Start waking up closer to school time
- Practise getting dressed in the morning
- Use visual routines

Journey Practice

- Walk or drive the school route
- Talk about landmarks

Play

- Role-play school with toys
- Pretend to line up or tidy up

Feelings

- Name emotions like nervous or excited
- Share stories about being brave

Independence

- Putting on shoes and coats
- Opening lunchboxes
- Using the toilet independently

Supporting Different Temperaments

Every child is different. Here are ways to support common temperaments:

Shy or Slow-to-Warm Children

- Visit the school more than once
- Practise short separations

Sensitive Children

- Prepare gently, not intensely
- Use stories and play to explore feelings

Energetic or Impulsive Children

- Practise turn-taking games
- Build in movement breaks

Gentle Timeline

3–4 Months Before School

- Visit the school
- Talk casually about school

1–2 Months Before

- Encourage independence
- Read school-themed books

Final Weeks

- Keep things calm and predictable
- Focus on connection, not perfection

Reassurance

Your child doesn't need to be perfect — they just need to feel loved, supported, and safe. School readiness is not a finish line — it's a journey you and your child take side by side.