

Starting school is an exciting time for young children and their parents but it can be a daunting time, too. With a little preparation and encouragement though, most children will settle in easily at school.

What does being "school ready" mean?

- Having strong social skills with an ability to communicate and share with both adults and children.
- Children can cope emotionally with being separated from their parents.
- Children are relatively independent in their own personal care going to the toilet and washing hands independently, feeding themselves and getting dressed.
- Have a curiosity about the world and a desire to learn.
- Children can follow simple instructions.

How you can help

- Chat with 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?
- Look at our website together with your child and talk about the pictures.
- If we are able to arrange visit dates this year please attend them, however if due to the government restrictions currently in place instead please watch our virtual video and powerpoint so your child knows a little more about what to expect on their first day.
- If you are friends with anyone currently or previously attended our school arrange a call so that they can share their positive experience with your child about attending St Simon's.
- Can do attitude! Help to develop your child's independence and a 'can do' attitude by giving them a few everyday responsibilities as they get closer to school age. Perhaps they could lay the table, feed a pet or put their own laundry away, help tidy up their toys and put their coat on.
- Help your child fill in their 'all about me' fact file so we can get to know them better, this will be more important than ever this year as the class visits may not be able to take place.

These picture books about going to school may be helpful:

- *I am too Absolutely Small for School (Charlie and Lola) by Lauren Child*
- *Starting School by Janet and Allen Ahlberg*
- *Topsy and Tim Start School by Jean and Gareth Adamson*
- *Harry and the Dinosaurs Go to School by Ian Whybrow and Adrian Reynolds*
- *Come to School too, Blue Kangaroo! by Emma Chichester Clark*

Some things to try

- Play some fun listening and doing games to help with following instructions. 'Simon says', 'I spy' (helps with initial sounds) or 'Can you find?' games are great for this.
- If your child seems anxious about school, try focusing on the things they'll like best – maybe the sandpit, playhouse or new friends. Perhaps they have some friends from preschool who will be starting Reception at the same time. It's natural to feel nervous about your child starting school, but remember that your child can easily pick up on your emotions. Try to be relaxed and positive, rather than showing your own nerves.
- Practise the school morning routine, including getting dressed and eating breakfast in time to leave.

What do children need to know before starting school?

- Children should be able to recognise their name and attempt to write it.
- Children do not need to read and write to start school but should be familiar with reading books as part of a routine, holding them and turning the pages and using the illustrations to tell the adult the story.
- They should be familiar with mark making tools such as paints, pens and chinks, showing an interest in using these to make their own creations that they can then talk to an adult about after.
- Similarly, children do not need to be competent mathematicians but should enjoy singing counting songs and recognising shapes and numbers in the environment. Lots of everyday activities can be turned into maths opportunities such as baking, when measuring the ingredients count how many spoonfuls you need, count objects and toys as you play, complete puzzles, going on a nature walk collecting objects and counting how many, comparing their size, colours and purpose, talk about before, now, later, yesterday, today and tomorrow. Once you think about it, you will find the learning opportunities endless. In school we learn through play and following the children's interests, try to find opportunities doing the same.
- Please see the 'before I read, before I write, before I do maths' documents for more detailed explanations of how these skills develop over time and what will be expected of your child.