

Starting Nursery at Keston Primary



There's a lot you can do in the weeks before to get ready for the big day. But try to keep your efforts low-key. If you make too big a deal out of this milestone, your child may end up being more worried than excited. Here are some ideas to keep the focus on fun.

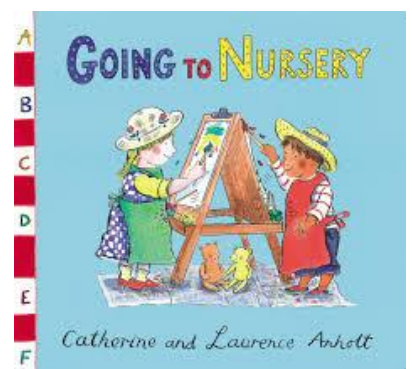
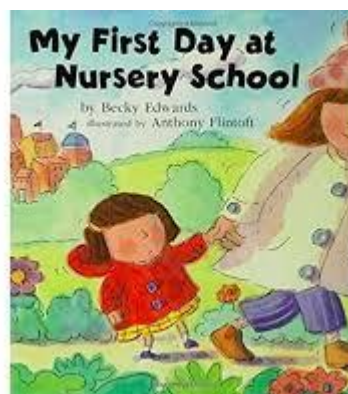
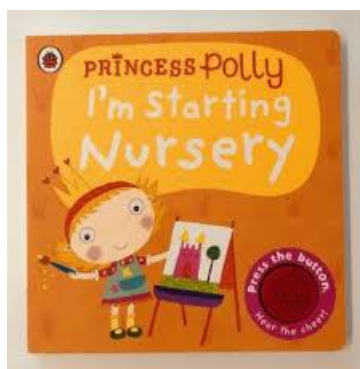


Use pretend play to explore the idea of Nursery

Take turns being the parent, child, and teacher. Act out common daily routines, such as saying good-bye to mummy and/or daddy, taking off your coat, singing songs, reading stories, having Circle Time, playing outside, and taking naps. Reassure your child that Nursery is a good place where they will have fun and learn. Answer their questions patiently. This helps children feel more in control which reduces their anxiety.

Read books about Nursery

There are many books about going to Nursery available from the local library. Choose several to share with your child over the summer before school starts. Talk about the story and how the characters are feeling. Ask how your child is feeling.



Make a game out of practicing self-help skills.



These skills include putting on and taking off and unzipping their coat, hanging their coat on a hook, fastening their shoes. For example, you might want to have a "race" with your child to see how quickly they can put on their shoes.

When you play school together, you can give your child the chance to practice taking off their coat, zipping it up and sitting with their legs crossed. If your child will be bringing lunch, pack it up one day before school starts and have a picnic together. This will give them the chance to practice opening their lunch box and unwrapping their sandwich—important skills for the first day!



Worries and Watching

Your child may also have some questions or concerns about starting Nursery either before or after they start in September. Help them get ready with these two key strategies:

Listen to your child's worries.

Although it's tempting to quickly reassure your child and move on, it's important to let your child know that their worries have been heard. No matter what they are, big or small, children's worries about Nursery can significantly influence their experience there. Will you remember to pick them up in the afternoon? Will the teacher be nice?

Let your child know it's normal to feel happy, sad, excited, scared or worried. Explain that starting something new can feel scary and that lots of people feel that way. It can be helpful to share a time when you started something new and how you felt. When you allow your child to share their worries, you can help them think through how to deal with them. For example, if they are worried about missing you, the two of you can talk about ways they can help find someone to play with if they feel lonely.



Notice nonverbal messages.

As much as 3-year-olds may talk, most are not yet able to fully explain how they are feeling or what they are worried about. Your child may “act out” their worry by clinging, becoming withdrawn or by being more aggressive. Another common reaction as children take a big move forward is to actually move backward in other areas. For example, if your child is fully potty trained, they may start have toileting accidents. They may ask that you feed or dress them even though they can do these things by themselves.

It is natural to be frustrated by this regressed behaviour and you may be concerned that if you do these things for them they won't go back to doing it themselves. In fact, letting them play this out often leads to children returning to their “big kid” selves sooner. Remember that your child is facing—and managing—a big change in their life. They may need more support and nurturing.

The Preschool Countdown: What to Do and When

The last few weeks before starting preschool seem to fly by! As you begin the countdown to the first day, here are some things to keep in mind:

During the 2 Weeks Before Nursery Starts:



- Label all items—bookbag, jacket, shoes, uniform etc. with your child's name in permanent ink.
- Ensure you have completed and returned all forms to the school office, including medical, allergy and contact detail forms.
- Figure out how your child will get to school and how they will come home. Talk to your child about the morning and afternoon routine so that they understand that they will be safe and cared for. Make sure your child meets their before and/or after-school caregiver, if you are using one.

Start using your child's “school bedtime.” Children often go to bed later as the summer months as longer days kick in. Help your child get into a Nursery schedule by keeping to their school bedtime, beginning about 2 weeks before school starts.

The Night Before Nursery:

- Answer any last-minute questions from your child.
- Let your child choose (weather and uniform appropriate) clothes for their first day.
- Make sure that your child goes to bed on time.

Pick a bedtime that gives your child a good night's rest before the first day. Keep the bedtime routine soothing and relaxing. Don't focus too much (or at all) on the first day of school unless they want to.



The First Day:

- Wake up early enough so that you and your child don't have to rush to get to Nursery.
- Make breakfast for your child and, if possible, sit down to eat together - or at least talk with them as they eat and you get ready.
- Review the day's routine (what Nursery will be like, how your child will get to school/come home).
- Pack your child's bookbag together. If your child is staying for lunch, select foods that you know are their favourites. Having some familiarity on their first day is helpful as they adjust to so many changes.



Saying a Good Good-Bye

These strategies can ease the jitters of separating on your child's first day at Nursery:

Plan to stay a little while

Staying for 15-30 minutes on that first morning can help ease the transition. Together, the two of you can explore the classroom, meet some other children, play with a few toys. When you see that your child is comfortable, it is time to leave. If your child is having a harder time getting engaged, you may want to ask their teacher to stay with them as you say goodbye. When you leave, they will have a caring adult to turn to for support.



Keep your tone positive and upbeat

Children pick up on the reactions of the trusted adults in their lives. Try not to look worried or sad and don't linger too long. Say a quick, upbeat goodbye and reassure your child that all will be well.

Think about creating a special goodbye routine

For example, you could give your child a kiss on the palm to "hold" all day long. Or, the two of you could sing a special song together before you leave. Goodbye routines are comforting to children and help them understand and prepare for what will happen next.

Resist the Rescue!

Try not to run back in the classroom if you hear your child crying, as upsetting as this can be. This is a big change and your child may, quite understandably, feel sad and a little scared. But if you run back in, it sends the message that they are only okay if you are there and it is likely to prolong your child's distress and make it harder for them to adapt. Rest assured, our teachers have many years of experience with helping families make the shift to Nursery. Instead, you could wait outside the classroom for a few minutes to ensure that all is well, or call the school later in the morning to check in.

