



# St Dunstan's Catholic School

Drayton Road, King's Heath, Birmingham, B14 7LP

*As we grow with God, we learn from each other*

## Things your child's teacher wants you to know before they start school

Your child isn't the only one who has a lot to learn in their first year of school. Here's what their teacher wishes you would do – and would not do.

Starting Reception is the first big step in your child's education. It's a journey that'll last until they're at least 18, so it's understandable that you'll want to get things right. But knowing how to support your child best, and work together with their teacher, isn't always easy.

### **Social skills are more important than ABCs....**

Many parents focus on building academic skills before their child starts school, but **independence** matters far more. Their experiences at nursery or pre-school will have helped them develop good social skills, like sharing, taking turns and beginning to empathise with others.

### **..... but it helps if they can recognise their own name**

Knowing what their name looks like will help your child find their own peg, their PE bag, and their water bottle at snack time.

### **Teach them to wipe their own bottom**

It's really helpful if your child has basic independence skills, such as managing the toilet, putting on their wellies and coat for outdoor play, and getting changed for PE. Although teachers and support staff recognise that children will need lots of help, it can take a very long time to zip up 30 coats at playtime!

### **Diet and sleep are crucial**

Ensure your child eats healthy meals at home and gets plenty of sleep. Developing children use lots of energy in new situations, and it's important that their lifestyle supports this.

### **Keep your emotions in check**

It's normal to worry about your child starting school and to shed a tear on their first day – but **try to keep the waterworks under control**. Children pick up on parents' anxieties, so keep the new experience positive and upbeat.

### **Arrange a playdate or two**

Making friends with other new families is enjoyable for everyone. Ask your child's teacher who they like playing with and arrange some out-of-school get-togethers to help them forge new friendships.

### **Check their school bag daily**

All communication from school is now sent by email, to **keep abreast of all the information you need about school life** please ensure you have the latest version of the School Gateway app downloaded and school have your most up to date email address – no one wants to be the parent who didn't hear about the school trip until it was too late.



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## **Don't become stressed about reading levels**

All children learn in their own time, at their own pace, and **there's no place for competition over their ability to read and write**; the best way to develop their reading skills is to enjoy books, pictures and stories together at home.

## **Don't hog the teacher's time**

If you've got a question or concern to raise with your child's teacher, make sure you choose the right time and place to do it. Engaging the teacher in a long conversation when they're trying to get the class into school or hand them over at the end of the day is counterproductive. Please make an appointment via the school office to talk about any concerns you may have.

## **Label everything**

Reception teachers may be virtually superhuman, but expecting them to match up unnamed jumpers with the right owners at the end of the day is a step too far. **Label all items clearly!**

## **Update their reading record**

Reading with your child, and, eventually, hearing them read to you, is one of the most important things you can do to support their learning. Reading books may not be changed if you haven't signed your child's diary to say they've read them, so keep it up to date to avoid hindering their progress.

## **Don't grill your child after school**

OK, so we all want to know what our child had for lunch, who they played with and what they've been learning, but little good comes from ambushing them with 20 questions when they come out of school. Your child will not remember everything they've done; just relax and snippets about their school day will come out later.

## **Put your phone away**

Your child needs you to be attentive to them when you pick them up, so put your phone away and enjoy the stories they tell you, boosting their confidence by showing a real interest in their drawings, creations and their learning in school.

## **Dress for PE success**

Tights and fiddly buttons are the bane of many a teacher's lives. Reception children should have easy-to-wear uniform; trousers and skirts with elasticated waist, polo shirts not shirts, Velcro fastening shoes and slip on pumps.

## **Sickness policy**

Illnesses spread like wildfire among Reception classes, and if your child goes back to school too soon after being ill, they are likely to infect their classmates and the Reception staff. All children have to stay at home for 48 hours (2 clear days) after their last episode of vomiting or diarrhoea – and stick to it!

Please check your child's hair regularly for head lice and treat the whole family if found.



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## **Keep school up to date with dietary or medical needs**

Whether your child has problems with anxiety, is being assessed for autism or needs to take their asthma inhaler to school, make sure their teacher is kept in the loop.

If they know the signs that your child is struggling, they can do everything they can to keep them safe and well.

## **Bring a healthy snack to school pick-up**

Children are often starving when they come out of school. Being able to produce a healthy energy-boosting snack can prevent many a meltdown.

## **Avoid becoming a pushy parent**

**Don't get stressed if it seems as if your child 'isn't learning anything'.** 'The Foundation Stage curriculum is based on play,' says Margaret Travers, educational consultant, owner and senior educational trainer of [Crayon Generation](#). 'Children are encouraged to learn through activity-based experiences that bring together all aspects of personal and social development, communication, language, and physical development. These form the basis for later academic learning.'

## **Be prepared for ups and downs**

Some days, your child might bounce out of school, full of enthusiasm and energy. On other days, they may seem tired, withdrawn, crotchety or sad, both are quite normal.

Try not to panic if your child seems to be struggling; getting used to school is a steep learning curve. Talk to the teacher if you're concerned, but please keep in mind that teething problems are completely normal.

## **Enjoy yourself!**

Reception is the time for your child to settle into school, make new friends and grow in confidence and independence – many parents also find it's an opportunity to form their own friendships and get involved with the school community. Relax and enjoy this time.

*'Your child's brain is hotwired to develop curiosity and understanding about all aspects of their world,' Margaret Travers advises. 'Support their current interests, talk to them, encourage and support their emotional wellbeing, and they will be much more prepared for a school based learning environment.'*



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## Am I ready for school?

**When your child starts school there are a number of skills that they should have mastered. Use this guide to help you, help your child over the summer so they are ready to start school.**

### Self Care

- I know when to wash my hands
- I can wipe my nose
- I can ask for help if I don't feel well

### Speaking & Literacy

- I am interested in stories & looking at picture books
- I am able to talk about myself, my needs and feelings
- I am practising recognising my name when it is written down.

### Getting Dressed & Undressed On My Own

- I can button and unbutton my clothes
- I can put my own shoes and socks on
- I can put my coat on and use a zip

### Interest in the World & New Activities

- I enjoy learning about the world around me
- I am interested in exploring new activities and environments
- I like asking questions

### Eating

- I can use a knife & fork
- I can tell adults what I'd like to eat
- I am confident opening packets and wrappers

### Writing Skills

- I like tracing patterns and colouring in
- I enjoy experimenting with different shaped scribbles
- I am practising holding a pencil

### Going to the Toilet

- I can go to the toilet on my own, wipe myself properly & flush the toilet
- I can wash and dry my hands without any help

### Independence

- I am happy to be away from my mummy, daddy or main carer
- I am happy to tidy my belongings and look after my belongings
- I am feeling confident about starting school

### Listening & Understanding

- I am able to sit still and listen when asked
- I can follow instructions
- I understand the need to follow rules

### Sharing & Turn Taking

- I can share toys and take turns
- I can play games with others
- I can interact with other children

### Counting Skills

- I enjoy practising counting objects
- I like saying number rhymes and playing counting games
- I can recognise some numbers when they are written down

### Routines

- I have practised putting on my uniform & getting ready to leave on time
- I have a good bedtime routine so I'm not feeling tired for school
- I'm learning to eat at the times I will eat on school days

