

## Supporting Children with SEND

Your child starting school is always a big step for parents and carers; and during the current COVID pandemic any worries are likely to be even greater. If your child also has special educational needs or disabilities, you may have additional concerns about how your child will manage.

Your child's key person and the SENCo at your child's setting will be helping your child to prepare and will be liaising with the new school to make sure that they have everything they need. This guide provides advice about how you can also support your child to get ready for this next step in their life and your SENCo will be able to provide guidance about how it relates to your own child's individual strengths, needs and interests.

Many families are worried about how their child will manage new morning routines, eating, toileting and dressing.

- Build up in small steps so that the child gradually completes more of the task without help.
- Use visual prompts to support understanding and help the child to remember the sequence.
- Model as much as possible whilst thinking aloud to reinforce what you are doing.
- Keep the activity as distraction free as possible and have a consistent routine.



**HAND WASHING** should be encouraged regularly and properly, especially:

- Before food/eating.
- Any time you are leaving or returning to your house.
- After using the toilet and flushing
- When you come in from the garden
- Blowing or wiping their nose

If you can sing a 'washing hands' song with your child this can help make it fun and a routine. For example:

*"Wash, wash, wash your hands  
Wash them very clean  
Wash, wash, wash, your hands  
Get them very clean."* (Tune row your boat).

Using visuals alongside will also help remind your child of the process and will help develop their independence.



**DRESSING AND UNDESSING** themselves will help your child develop their confidence, independence and motor skills.

- Can your child recognise their own coat and shoes?
- Can they put their coat on, but may need with zips or fastenings?
- Can they push their foot into their shoe, but may need help with fastening?
- Can they hang up their coat on a coat peg?

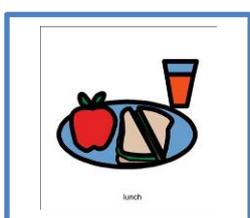
These are skills that can be practiced at home before going to school. Build up in small steps, with consistent simple prompts.



**POTTY TRAINING** children with additional needs can be done in much the same way as teaching a child without additional needs. The ERIC guidance advises:

- Children with additional needs can't always communicate so you can't rely on their signals to tell you when they're ready to potty train. Knowing how often your child goes for a wee or poo will really help. You can then create a potty or toilet routine based on the information in the chart.
- It's important that your child feels relaxed, comfortable and secure about using a toilet or potty. If you start with the toilet you should use a footstool to help your child feel confident and safe.
- Drink plenty: Make sure your child is having 6-8 drinks of water-based fluid a day to help keep their bowel and bladder healthy.
- Check for constipation: Your child should poo at least four times a week and the poo should be soft and easy to pass.
- Use easy clothing: Clothes that are easy to pull up and down are the best. Choose clothes that are easy to wash and dry.
- Get into a routine: Don't ask your child if they need a wee or a poo as they might not know what this is to begin with. Call it 'potty time' or 'toilet time' and go every couple of hours.
- Keep it short: Don't let them sit for too long on the potty or toilet, two or three minutes is fine. Keep some toys handy to occupy them while they sit.
- Encourage boys to sit down to wee: They might also need a poo and sitting down will help them to go. They may empty their bladder better sitting down too.
- Give lots of praise: For each little step like sitting on the potty, washing hands and getting dressed. Rewards are a good incentive – make them small and instant, like a sticker.
- Be patient: It may take some time to learn, so don't be surprised if there are lots of accidents to start with. You might decide your child isn't ready, in which case stop and have another go in a few weeks.

Using visuals alongside will also help remind your child of the process and will help develop their independence.



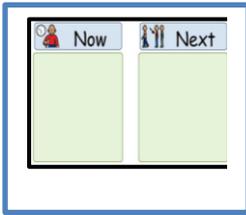
**EATING** a hot meal or a packed lunch is an important skill for school. Encourage your child to use at least a spoon for hot meals and then move on to a child size knife and fork. Aim to sit and eat your meal with them at the same time so that you can support the social interaction and model using the cutlery.

Packed lunches can be encouraged by having picnics in the garden or front room, encouraging your child to eat savoury items before fruit or yoghurt

Encouraging these skills will support children develop independence, help to teach them how to have awareness of their bodies and how to be healthy. They are also working on fine motor skills and hand-eye coordination as they eat. Fine motor skills are important for later holding pencils or tools.

Sources of support available to help you to help your child:

- **Toileting:** <https://www.eric.org.uk/early-years-and-education-professionals/contact.org.uk/parent-guide-toilet-training>
- **Sleep:** <https://cerebra.org.uk/download/sleep-a-guide-for-parents/contact.org.uk/parent-guide-sleep>
- **Feeding and eating:** [contact.org.uk/parent-guide-feeding](https://contact.org.uk/parent-guide-feeding)

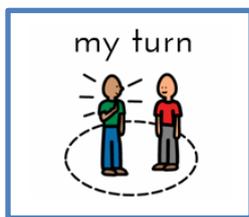


**ROUTINE** is very important to help children feel secure and to support their understanding. Having a consistent routine at home that is supported by a visual timeline will help children. The reception class is also likely to use a visual timeline, so by introducing your child to the same pictures, they will be more independent and reassured when they start.

As you get closer to the date that you are due to start at your new setting, you begin to adjust to the new routine.

- Introduce new uniform, bags, shoes etc.
- Walk past the new building as part of your daily routine.
- Introduce a countdown calendar for 2 weeks before the start date, you can add all the 'exciting' things which will happen and let your child cross off the days.

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Aug 17	Aug 18	Aug 19	Aug 20	Aug 21	Aug 22	Aug 23
Aug 24	Aug 25	Aug 26	Aug 27	Aug 28	Aug 29	Aug 30
Aug 31	Sept 1	Sept 2	Sept 3	Sept 4	Sept 5	Sept 6

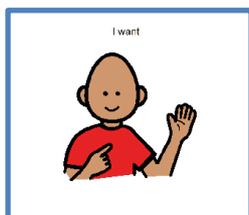


**PLAYING TOGETHER AND SHARING** are really good skills to practice with your child before they go to school, particularly if they find interactions difficult or have spent a long time away from other children.

If the new school has photos on its website, or if you have been given a photobook, you can look at the pictures with your child – the rooms, the activities and the toys. Communicate with your child using these visuals so help them anticipate playing with new friends with these new activities.

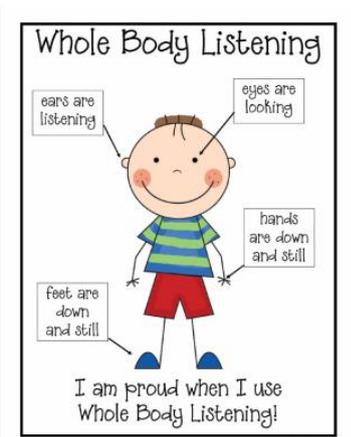
A few ways to practice turn taking:

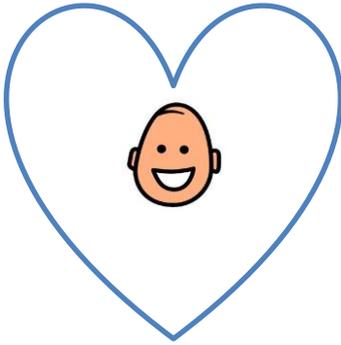
- Rolling a ball between each other stating "Mummy's turn and as you roll it Henry's turn"
- Blowing bubbles "Molly's turn to pop." Blow some more saying "Daddy's turn to pop".
- Put all the pieces of a favourite jigsaw into a bag and 'take turns' with your child to pull one out saying "Henry's turn" then "Mummy's turn" until the puzzle is complete. Use a 6/8 piece puzzle so the child doesn't have to wait too long for their turn.
- When playing cars, play alongside your child with a different car. After a few minutes ask "Molly can Daddy share your car. You have this one and I will have that one".



**COMMUNICATION SKILLS** are important whatever stage your child is at and whatever their preferred mode of communication. Being able to express their worries or frustrations, being able to follow instructions, keeping safe and showing what they want or like will all help them to settle successfully. Ensuring that the receiving setting knows the best way to understand your child and to help them understand is essential. Continue to develop their skills before they start by:

- Using visuals for transitions, to encourage choice making and to support activities will help with this.
- Being consistent with language that you model will help children learn new words, Makaton signs or PECS symbols.
- Join the child in what they are choosing to play with and follow their lead. Watching, copying and responding will help develop key interaction skills.
- Provide reasons to communicate whenever you can. Leave gaps for them to fill and provide choices for them to communicate. 'Ready, steady.....' games are great for this, and holding out and labelling a choice of two snacks or toys is a good way to encourage communication.
- Support good listening skills, for example:
  - Being outside and stopping to label what you can hear.
  - Clapping syllables of names and words.
  - Encourage whole body listening, providing sensory support such as fiddle toys if needed.





**RELATIONSHIPS AND WELLBEING** are at the centre of any successful transition.

Many children and their families will be feeling anxious about what to expect and the more that we can provide security and reassurance, the better our emotional wellbeing.

Building trusting relationships with new adults and children, who understand our needs, value our strengths and show interest in our favourite things will give children a sense of belonging and security.

By showing them what to expect and how to enjoy it, they will be able to develop trust and enjoy the next stage of their learning.

Support this by:

- Helping your child to develop the communication skills they need to be able to label and express their emotions. The adults in their new setting will be learning how to understand them.
- Helping your child to prepare for their new school day by putting in place regular routines with visual supports. The new setting will be adjusting their routines and environment to welcome them.
- Helping your child to play, share and take-turns so that they can look forward to making new friends. The new setting will be put in place support to help them with this if they find it difficult.
- Helping your child to know what to expect by looking at simple social stories with them. These will show them what their classroom will be like, what things will be the same, what things will be different and what they need to try and do. Most importantly it will reassure them that it will be fun and that they will be going home at the end of the day.