The Hendreds Preschool

Stay-n-Get Ready for School Session

Tuesday 21st June 2016

What do we mean by ‘School Readiness’?

The Professional Association for Childcare and Early Years (PACE) research (2013) states that most practitioners identify the following terms to define what ‘School Readiness’ means:

* Having strong social skills.
* Can cope emotionally with being separated from their parents.
* Are relatively independent in their own care.
* Have a curiosity about the world and a desire to learn.

Strong social skills

They need to be able to recognise and control their own emotions; so it’s OK to feel sad, angry, frustrated etc. but they must be able to control these emotions, otherwise this can hinder their ability to focus, and thus learn. The ability to accept that their own needs cannot always be met immediately, for example they may have to wait to partake in an activity. They need to be able to demonstrate empathy within play and activities. Be able to understand that boundaries and routines need to be met, for example, during carpet time being able to sit with an awareness of other children’s personal space, not to shout out, and to maintain focus for a period of time.

Successful separation (for support ideas see Independent in their own care)

A child that can cope emotionally with being separated from their parent will be able to engage with their learning from the moment they enter their classroom. Often teachers will have set activities already available that the children need to complete. The time before the lessons begin also allows the children to build and develop their friendships with the other children in their class. A child who is distressed about separation will be less able to focus on their learning, their self-confidence is likely to be negatively affected and they are less likely to engage in social interactions.

Independent in their own care

You need to be aiming for your child to be doing the following independently:

* **Arrival** – Your child should be able to: find their own name peg, remove and hang up their coat, change their shoes, put their own book bag in box/drawer (this is important because then they will know where to find it when asked by the teacher during the day).
* **Toileting** – Recognise their needs, be able to self-clean and have clothes that they can unfasten/fasten themselves – belts can be a nightmare on trousers for a child needing to get to the toilet quickly! IMPORTANT: *Get your child used to the noise of electronic hand-dryers* as most schools will have these fitted!
* **Playtime** – This is where it is really important that the coat and shoes you have bought your child are ones that they can quite easily put on and take off themselves, otherwise they may find that they have missed playing with their friends due to the length of time it has taken to change their shoes and get their coat on.
* **Lunchtime** – There are less adults to child ratio, so support to open items in a lunchbox may take some time. If your child is having school dinners, they should be able to use a knife and fork in order to cut their own food. Also, the time available to actually eat their food may be restricted.
* **PE** – When getting ready for PE your child will be expected to collect their own PE bag from their peg, take off their uniform, place it into their PE bag and put their PE kit on and vice versa. If your child’s clothes are inside-out, can they turn them the right way? Make sure every item of clothing, including shoes, plimsolls etc. are clearly named – and *show* your child so they know where to look for their name inside each item of clothing.
* **Home Time** – Again, your child will need to be able to change their own shoes and get their own coat on. They will be expected to collect their own belongings, which is why it is important that they are responsible for putting all their own bags etc. into the right places when they arrive in the morning.

Desire to learn

In order to learn, your child needs to be able to focus for more than 5 minutes. They will probably be expected to sit on the carpet in a large group and maintain attention on a focused activity. You can support your child by sitting with them and talking about something of interest to them for a minimum of 5 minutes. This will also support your child’s communication skills, as you can practice conversation etiquette. Attitude and dispositions to learning are also important; they need to be excited, motivated and have the desire to learn – you can help support this by talking positively about learning and development at school.

Helpful, but Not Essential!

Here is a short list (but not exhaustive) of things that may be useful for your child to be able to do: scissor skills, using cutlery, holding a pencil correctly, recognising their own name. Did you know, only 4% of teachers felt that being able to identify some numbers and letters, or produce letter formation was important in relation to school readiness! (PACE, 2013).

Practice Routine:

You can start to support your child to achieve a smoother transition right now by:

* Let them be responsible for their own book bag, coat and shoes when attending preschool.
* Be more assertive when saying goodbye (spend less time).
* Encouraging them to stay focused on specific activities for at least 5 minutes.
* Supporting them to become independent at dressing and undressing. Practice changing for PE!
* Practicing using cutlery correctly.