

Best Goodbyes and Healthy Hellos Supporting Your Child to Start School

Guidance produced by Your Space Therapies commissioned by St Nicolas and St Mary CE School



Starting school is an amazing milestone that can be filled with many emotions: excitement, worry, tiredness to name but a few! There are things that you can do to support you and your child with their entry into school.

The 3 C's: Calm, Confident, Consistent

Calm:

- * It is important that the mornings before school are as calm as possible so that your child feels emotionally ready to start school.
- * Remember the morning mission is to give your child a great start to the day. Getting school uniform ready the night before, book bags and shoes by the door, breakfast planned, tooth and hair brushes accessible, can really help make things run smoothly. Be kind to yourselves too- the washing up is not a primary part of the morning mission!
- * Play games on the way to school: phonics or colour eye spy, count the number of animals you see, guess what might be for school lunch, pretend to spot a dinosaur... Let your imaginations run wild! The more playful the interactions are, the more receptive their brains are to learning and calming emotions. If you are driving to school choose some uplifting music rather than the radio.
- * Remember to breathe steadily, be generous with your hugs, always talk positively about school and talk about how you are looking forward to seeing your child again after school.

Confident:

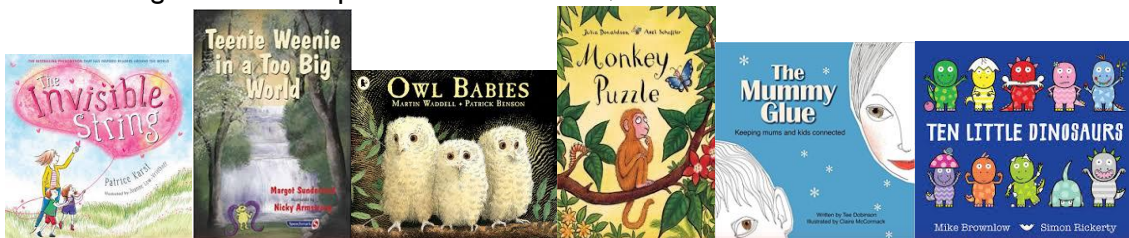
- * In new situations, parents are the barometers for children's anxiety and confidence levels. Always approach school with confidence. Think about how you show your child this through your body language, eye contact and tone of voice and model to your child that school is a great place to be.
- * If you do have any worries or concerns about school eg. friendships, it is best to talk to school about this out of ear shot of your child. Catch the member of staff on the Early Years gate who can pass messages on to your child's class teacher or email the class teacher through the Office. We will get back to you.
- * Confidently choose a drop off and pick up place in the playground. It gives your child confidence when they know where they say goodbye every morning and where you (or the person picking up) will stand to greet them again.
- * Have a confident script when you say goodbye, something like "Mummy says bye, Harry has fun and then Mummy comes back. I love you, bye!"

Consistent

- * Make the morning mission as consistent as possible, this keeps everyone's stress levels down.
- * You might feel tempted to call your child back or follow them into the classroom but it is really important to be consistent so your child can feel confident walking into their classroom with their friends- stick to your special drop off and pick-up point.
- * Ask interesting open questions on pick-up (and not too many!) like:
 - ⇒ *What was the best thing that happened today?*
 - ⇒ *I wonder if you made any amazing choices today?*
 - ⇒ *I wonder what made you laugh today?*
 - ⇒ *I'm guessing your teacher smiled today, what made them do that?*
 - ⇒ *I bet you put your hand up today, I wonder what for?*
 - ⇒ *What was the tastiest thing on your plate at lunchtime?*

The little extras that will help:

- * Have a good bed-time routine: regular bedtimes, warm bath, warm milk, limited screen time before bed and share a story.
- * Give your child a chewy healthy snack or a thick drink through a straw after school. This helps keep emotions steady by calming the nervous system down.
- * Start the day with foods that boost serotonin (happy brain chemicals) and lowers cortisol (stress hormones) like pineapple, eggs, wholegrain bread and oats.
- * Chill out after school, the school day is a full day! It is important to help children learn what helps them relax: let them watch their favourite show, play hide and seek (great for experimenting with hellos and goodbyes), bounce on the trampoline, make Lego...we're sure you child will have their own chill out ideas.
- * It is important to remember that not all 'goodbyes' will go to plan. We are all human and that is OK – tomorrow is a new day!
- * As parents and carers, we will want to make our child feel better if they feel wobbly about going to school and it is tempting to try and rescue and solve all of your child's worries. *Depending on what the worry is*, sometimes you can bring your child comfort by just acknowledging their worry, showing them empathy and really witnessing their feelings. You could say things like, "I imagine you might feel wobbly about XXXX today." Ensuring your child feels 'held in mind' can also be really powerful. "I will be thinking of you at lunchtime and wondering if you will choose milk or water to drink." If in any doubt, do let school know and we can work together to solve any worries.
- * Read stories together about separations and reunions, here are some ideas:



Very important! Make some 'you time'. It is so important for parents and carers to take a break, relax and unwind- this keeps you and your children **C**alm, **C**onfident and **C**onsistent!

Please contact school if you need extra ideas about how to support your child's transition. You can email your child's class teacher through the Office, talk to our Home School Link Worker who is on the playground in the mornings or let the member of the Early Years team on the Reception gate know. We are more than happy to help!

