

School readiness

I. Activity type and description

School readiness is a measure of how prepared a child is to succeed in school cognitively, socially and emotionally, but it also relates to how ready the school is to receive the child. These are some tips on how schools can do their part.

II. Material/resources needed

III. Instructions

Be proactive by:

- Trying to find out as much as you can about the children in advance – from pre-schools, childminders, Early Years centres, etc.
- Including information about skills children will ideally have at the start of school (e.g. should they be able to put on their own coats?) when preparing information for parents.
- Considering creating a transition package for families to read ahead of arrival.
- Adding a section to the school website called 'Getting ready for school', packed with little film clips showing parents around the school. Remember you can involve pupils or existing parents in any video clips. Hearing from existing parents can really put new parents at ease.
- Be friendly and welcoming, explaining how parents can give their children a head-start by doing certain activities with them ahead of the new term.
- Considering the inclusion of a bank of songs and nursery rhymes on your website for parents to tap into.
- With each passing cohort, consciously building a clear picture of what children generally do and do not know as they come in. Use this information to inform the support you're preparing for parents, as well as to inform your own practice and expectations.
- Asking current parents what they wish they had known or what would have helped them. Can they help prepare your materials for new parents?
- Creating a parent buddy system where current parents can support new ones.
- A mobile-friendly website is an ideal place for any parent-facing information.

IV. References

Goodall, J., & Weston, K. (2018). *100 Ideas for Primary Teachers: Engaging Parents*, Bloomsbury Publishing. Page 14-15

We often talk about children being 'school ready' in developmental terms but taking that phrase apart can uncover some interesting assumptions. We know that children from lower socio-economic backgrounds often start school months, and sometimes even almost a year behind their more advantaged peers. They are often not, in the view of schools, 'ready'; they don't have the language, the motor and social skills that school staff expect. But school readiness isn't just about the child and family – it's also about the school being ready for the children who will arrive. At first hearing, this sounds rather odd – how can schools not be school ready? It's better to rephrase this: schools need to

be ready for the children who arrive, for all the children, rather than just the few who might fit into expectations. This requires more on the part of school staff than waiting passively to assess the new arrivals.

V. Alternatives

n/a