

Helping your children to be ready for school



What does school readiness mean?

“Childcare professionals, parents and teachers...agree that the term should be defined as children who:

- have strong social skills,
- can cope emotionally with being separated from their parents,
- are relatively independent in their own personal care,
- have a curiosity about the world and a desire to learn.

...They recognise that play best supports children’s social and emotional development, as well as their creativity.”

Quote from pacey (the Professional Association for Child care and Early Years)

So what does school readiness look like?

- When we think about a child who is ready for school. We might think that they should look like this...



In fact it looks more like this...



- Strengthening the connection between brain and body through movement.
- Underpinning all future learning.

And this.....



Fostering a love of stories and story book language. Expressing ideas, developing social and communication skills. Building positive attachments with peers.



Developing core strength, gross and fine motor skills through pouring, lifting, digging, building, moving.



Building social and emotional skills through playing, sharing and negotiating with others and preparing for reading, writing and maths through cooking, messy play and mark making in different forms.











Moving, handling toys, materials and using talk to communicate ideas, instructions and negotiate.



Developing independence and the ability to negotiate with peers. Being able to use techniques (such as the sand timer) to support sharing or waiting or taking turns.

Developing the confidence and skills to be independent and to follow routines.



How can we support children to be school ready?

In the following slides we will talk about the skills and support children need to have to help them to flourish at school.

Being ready to read, write and count...

- When children start school they will begin to learn to read and write letters and numerals:
 - They will begin to learn the sounds that letters make.
 - They will begin to learn to recognise common words.
 - They will begin to form letters and numerals using taught handwriting techniques.
- Before they can do that they need us to concentrate on a vast amount of other skills which are vital in underpinning those described above.
- Often adults make the mistake of thinking that to ensure success we should teach these skills earlier and earlier.
- We must not ignore the essential building blocks of development that underpin these skills.
- We would not ask a baby to try to walk at 2 weeks!

Play is the work of children....

- It is not play OR learn, it is play IN ORDER TO learn.
- Very often their instinct for play is linked to a skill they need to master or develop – child led play is essential.
- Play helps children:
 - Increases self-awareness, self esteem and self respect.
 - Promote a sense of security and safety.
 - Develops language skills through talking and listening.
 - Teaches how to negotiate
 - Improves and maintains physical and mental health.
 - Provides the opportunity to mix with other children.
 - Increases confidence.
 - Promotes imagination, independence and creativity.
 - Provides opportunities for developing social skills and learning.
 - Promotes risk taking and problem solving.
 - Provides experiences of new and novel situations.
 - Provides opportunities to learn about their environment and the wider community.

From RMTi for School Readiness

When children are engrossed in their play their brain is making new synapse connections and they are making progress.

The Characteristics of Effective Learning (described below) are outlined in the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum. They describe the qualities that enable children to learn and make progress.

Playing and Exploring

- Finding out and exploring.
- Using what they know in their play.
- Being willing to have a go.

Active Learning

- Being involved and concentrating.
- Keeping on trying.
- Enjoy achieving what they set out to do.

Creating and thinking critically

- Having their own ideas.
- Using what they already know to learn new things.
- Choosing ways to do things.

Synapse density is greatest at around age 2 or 3

Your children's brains are working very hard!

Remember how it felt, or feels now, to master new skills and how it feels to be developing many at once.



Newborn



1 Month



9 Months



2 Years



Adult

In order to become 'school ready' children need to master many skills...

Personal, Social and Emotional

Independence

- Coping with separating from their carer.
- Dressing and undressing.
- Using the toilet.
- Ability to organise and look after their belongings.
- Feed themselves.
- Find their way around a new environment.

Confidence

- To speak to unfamiliar adults and children.
- To express their needs, feelings, thoughts and ideas.
- Having the confidence to join in, instigate and collaborate.

Social and emotional skills

- Making positive attachments.
- Sharing, coping with others.
- Negotiating with peers.
- Learning to consider that others have needs and feelings.

Communication and Language

- Children need to be able to express themselves:
 - their needs,
 - their feelings,
 - their thoughts and ideas.
- Children need to be able to listen.
- Children need to be able to understand what they hear.
- Children need to be able to follow instructions.
- They need to be given time to think and to know how to respond appropriately.

Physical Development

- Children need an efficient brain and body which works well.
- In order to build the foundations and muscle control for writing and reading and maths they need to have a full range of integrated reflexes and good postural control.
- Children need to move in different ways. They need to climb, run, swing, slide, pull, push, run, jump and have opportunities to be bare foot.
- It is interesting to note on the following 2 slides what children's brains are typically doing at different ages. *(These are taken from Carla Hanford's book, "Smart Moves" and RMTi School Readiness training with permission of Gaynor Ralls).*

It is useful to think about what the brain can do at different ages

Approx. age	Area of development	What is happening?
Conception to 15 months	Hind brain/Brain stem (Reptilian brain)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Basic survival needs: touch, food, shelter and safety. • Sensory development starting with the vestibular system then hearing, tactile, smell, taste and finally seeing – rich sensory activation. • Motor development moving from reflexes to core muscle activation, neck muscles, arms and legs to leading to rolling over, sitting, crawling and walking – motor exploration
15 months to 4 .5 years	Limbic system/relationship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding of self/others, self/ emotions, self/language • Emotional exploration • Language exploration/communication • Imagination • Gross motor proficiency • Memory development • Social development
4.5 to 7 years	Gestalt hemisphere Elaboration (Right)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whole picture • Image/movement/rhythm/emotion/intuition • Outer speech/integrative thought

from RMTi



Approx. age	Area of development	What is happening?
7 to 9 years	Logic Hemisphere Elaboration (Left)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Detail and linear processing/cognition • Refinement of elements of language • Reading and writing skills development • Technique development – music, art, sports, dance, manual training • Linear maths processing
8 years	Frontal lobe elaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fine motor development – skills refinement • Inner speech – control of behavior • Fine motor eye teaming for tracking and foveal focus (2 dimensional focus)
9-12 years	Increased Corpus callosum Elaboration and Myelination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whole brain processing
12-16 years	Hormonal Emphasis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning about body, self, others, community and meaningful living through social consciousness
16-21 years	Refining cognitive skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whole mind/body processing • Social interaction • Future planning • Play with new ideas and possibilities
21+	Elaboration and refinement of the frontal lobes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Global systems thinking • High level format reasoning • Refinement of emotions – altruism, love, compassion • Insight • Refinement of fine motor skills

Becoming successful readers and writers...

- Often the most successful readers and writers have not spent their early years industriously practicing their handwriting and chanting the alphabet...they love to share books and stories.
- Do not underestimate the value of sharing stories, songs and rhymes with your children.
- It helps to develop a rich range of vocabulary, familiarizes children with language structures and the language of stories. Once upon a time...
- It can also help to strengthen attachment and a sense of being loved, snuggling up to share a book can be a precious time together.
- Audio stories are also fantastic if your children aren't yet keen to sit and focus on a book with you. Visiting a local library can help to stimulate their interest.
- Share picture books, comics, information books...Read to them, read to them and then read some more:

“From the day our children are born (yes), to the day they tell us to stop, we should read to them.” *Michael Rosen, in 'Good Ideas'*

What you can do to support your children...

Play with them...

- Make time to listen and talk to your child.
- Share activities (cooking, playdough, painting, mending, making, constructing...) together and talk about what you are doing and what you enjoy.
- Encourage your child to share and take turns, for example playing board games. Empathise that it can be a hard to do and praise their efforts.
- Sit with them whilst they play with their toys and join in with their play commenting and taking their lead.
- Share books and enjoy stories together. Try listening to stories.
- Sing nursery rhymes and songs together.
- Encourage your child to be active: running, jumping, playing with balls/bean bags, swinging, sliding, rolling.
- Encourage your children to make marks for writing, e.g. writing the shopping list with you, writing birthday cards. Value the marks that they make.
- Encourage your child to talk about patterns and amounts that you see.
- Notice the features of the things around you and talk about them.

Encourage your child to experience different things that can help them to learn to cope with changes

- Eat with other people other than family.
- Visit different toilets to try out and talk about different ways of flushing toilets, turning on taps and drying hands. Let boys experience using a urinal.
- Play with other children who they are less familiar with.
- Do things such as play at a friend's house without you.
- Talk to your child or children about how they feel about starting school.
- Reassure them by reading books about starting school and talking to them about what will happen during the first few days.
- Try to avoid using the term, 'big school' or the phrase, 'You'll have to do when you go to school' as it can make the prospect of school more daunting.

Helping your child to do as much for themselves as possible...

- Help your child to learn to dress and undress on their own.
- Help them to recognise their own clothes and belongings.
- Help them to recognise their own name when they see it.
- Practice using a knife and fork, eating packed lunches and working out how to manage tupperware and/or food wrappers.
- Help them to become more confident with wiping their bottoms after using the toilet and in washing their hands.
- Encourage them to make choices about what they want to play with or what they want to eat.

What local teachers advise...

“Playing board games with their children, which will not only support with turn taking, but also with maintaining attention and focus on an activity for a few minutes.

Teaching children to recognise their names would help with finding their pegs/ drawers/ jumpers.

Being able to hold a knife and fork, put on an apron/ jumpers themselves.

Being able to wipe their bottoms independently.

Being able to listen and take turns to speak; understanding that they may need to wait for others to speak.

Sometimes parents worry about trying to do/prepare for phonics and we would say not to worry about this side of things as every school covers different schemes. More important is the listening and attention: singing songs, rhymes, clapping games etc. to tune into listening effectively. Also, lots of talk and encouraging language through conversation, and less through screen time!

Also, maybe worth mentioning not teaching capital letters (other than the start of their name). Some parents teach these and then it has to be un-learned for beginning writing!”


“I think playing, communication, independence, self help skills and reading...are all vital and exactly the message we would want parents getting.

For me, not feeling like they have to teach their child phonics using something a scheme. All schools use different verified schemes, and it can be hard to un-teach actions and incorrect pronunciation! Also, they don't need to know letter names or to write in capitals!”


'Let's Get Ready for School' from SBC...

Let's Get Ready for School Part 1
I am happy to go to school

Is your child happy to be away from you? Does your child know about their new school?




Steps to Success



Talk about school

Talk to your child about what school life will be like. If their school is holding any pre-visits, take your child along. These can be very positive and help your child develop their confidence.

Your new school may be able to provide a picture of your child's teacher and classroom to help with your discussion about school.



Say goodbye

Try to make 'saying goodbye' a positive time. Don't sneak away, but make sure to say goodbye and tell them that you're leaving. Even if you are feeling sad or worried, if you can smile and say goodbye confidently, your child will feel more confident.

Looking after you


For some parents, leaving your child at school can be hard. It is natural to feel worried, guilty or upset especially if your child cries as you leave. Be reassured that your child will settle and this experience will allow them to become more independent. Make sure you plan something nice like a slice of cake with friends for those first few days of school.

Useful websites

- <https://www.annafreud.org/early-years/early-years-in-mind/common-difficulties/separation-anxiety/>

Let's Get Ready for School Part 2
I enjoy playing and exploring new things

Is your child confident to explore the fun, exciting and unfamiliar experiences of school?



Go with the flow

Give your child time to engage in activities and process what they are seeing/feeling. Talk to them about their interests. Let them take the lead.

Steps to Success



Ask questions


Develop your child's confidence in expressing themselves by encouraging them to ask questions. You don't need to know the answer! You can find it out together.

Ask your child open ended questions- questions that can't be answered with yes or no and don't have a right or wrong answer.

Examples include:
Can you tell me about what you've made?
How are these the same?
Why do you think that happened?

Go for a walk

Talk about what you can see, hear, smell, taste and feel. Can you collect some items to take home? Help to expand your child's interest in new things and extend their language.




Useful websites


- <https://www.bbc.co.uk/tiny-happy-people/getting-outdoors>
- <https://www.bbc.co.uk/tiny-happy-people/play>
- <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/support-for-parents/look-say-sing-play/>

Let's Get Ready for School Part 3
I enjoy books

Does your child enjoy looking at books? Do they get opportunities to listen to you read? Are they curious about books?



Steps to Success




Bedtime stories

Reading together is a time to connect and comfort your child. Bedtime stories help your child relax ready for sleep. It's also a perfect opportunity for you to spark a love for reading.


Picture Books

Picture books are highly valuable in developing children's enjoyment of books. The bright illustrations make them fun to read and allow the child to develop their own understanding of story structure without worrying about reading text. Can your child tell a story just from the pictures?



Build up their vocabulary

Use pictures to start building vocabulary. Talk with your child about what the pictures show. Ask them to point to things as you say them. Use opportunities in everyday life. Build vocabulary and listening skills by talking through what you're seeing and doing while cooking, driving or visiting new places.




Useful websites

- <https://www.bbc.co.uk/tiny-happy-people/the-toddler-club-sharing-stories-tips/zhw2ys>
- <https://wordsoflove.org.uk/parent-support/reading-your-child/>

Let's Get Ready for School Part 4
I enjoy mark making

Does your child use their hands and fingers to draw, colour and paint?



Steps to Success



Mark making opportunities

Although it is tempting to think about early mark-making as using a pencil, crayon, or paints, there are lots of different materials your children can use to make marks. This could include mark-making in natural materials such as mud, sand or snow. They can also use different tools to make their marks, including natural materials such as grasses, sticks and feathers. The key is that they're exploring the media in a way that is engaging and creative to them.



Writing is part of physical development

A key area for development in the early years is around this physical aspect of mark-making – building the strength and coordination needed to make those marks to begin with. To develop these skills, play should focus on activities that promote both fine and gross motor skills. Ideas include: climbing frames/trees, swimming, playing catch, threading beads, playdough.

Don't Panic!

It's fantastic if your child can recognise their name but we do not expect children to be able to write their name when they start school.


Useful websites

- <https://www.pacey.org.uk/parents/resources-for-parents/tips-factsheets-and-downloads/mark-making-tips-for-parents/>


Let's Get Ready for School Part 5

I can use the toilet

Can your child recognise that they need the toilet, how to wipe themselves, pull their clothes up and down, flush the toilet and wash their hands?



Steps to Success



Use the toilet on their own

Start by helping your child use the toilet, moving to simply supervising them. Having a poo can be tricky for some children, especially when it comes to wiping. Once they have mastered this, build their confidence with toileting by allowing them to go on their own. Get your child used to the sound of the flush. Whilst training your child, think carefully about the clothing your child is wearing. Make sure they can remove them easily.

Understanding toilet rules

Using the toilet at school can be different to using the toilet at home for some children. Remind your child of the following steps:

- Close the door
- Underwear down
- Wee or poo
- Wipe
- Underwear up
- Flush
- Wash your hands


Praise

Remember to praise your child throughout this process.



Useful websites


- www.bbc.co.uk/tinyhappy-people
- <https://www.eric.org.uk/poo-and-wee>
- <https://localoffer.swindon.gov.uk/content/send-local-offer/landing-pages/health-landing-pages-and-content-pages/toilet-training/>




Let's Get Ready for School Part 6

I can get myself dressed and undressed

Can your child get themselves dressed? Can they undo buttons, use a zip and put on their own shoes and socks?



Steps to Success



Practice putting on their uniform together

Provide your child lots of opportunities to wear clothes with buttons, zips and tights. This will help with most school uniforms.


Children learn in different ways so you might need to vary your approach. There are different ways you can help:

- Physically assist your child. Put your hands over your child's and help them to get dressed.
- Show your child. Put your clothes on at the same time as your child and show them what to do.
- Tell your child. Talk your child through the steps.

Fine motor activities


Play together to complete a range of fine motor activities as these will help build their skills in undoing tricky buttons and zips. Ideas include:

- Lego
- Puzzles
- Threading
- Role play with figures eg Paw Patrol
- Playdough
- Cutting and Sticking



Useful websites


- <https://www.hct.nhs.uk/media/1255/developing-dressing-skills.pdf>
- <https://www.nhs.uk/guidance/childrens-life-skills/self-care/dressing-myself/>




Let's Get Ready for School Part 7

I can put on my coat

Can your child take their coat off and put it on again? Are they able to zip it up? This self-help skill will ensure they stay warm outside.



Steps to Success




Let them take the lead

It can be tempting to take over when your child is struggling to put on their coat, especially when you are running late! Give your child time to practice their skills and recognise by themselves when their coat isn't on quite right. Give them lots of encouragement and talk them through what to do if they get stuck.

Start with a bigger coat

Loose fitting coats are easier to manage. Let your child practice by putting on your jacket or maybe an older sibling. Can you make it into a game? Who can get their coat on first?

Practice makes perfect when it comes to putting arms into sleeves. Use different tops to develop this skill.



Choose the best way for your child


Did you know that there are many different ways that you can put on a coat? When you find what works best with your child, share it with your child's network to ensure everyone is helping them the same way.

<https://youtu.be/DVRn0GYQBM>

<https://youtu.be/lkx-f8-1lw>

Useful websites


- <https://www.nhs.uk/guidance/childrens-life-skills/self-care/dressing-myself/>
- <https://www.nhs.uk/guidance/childrens-life-skills/self-care/dressing-myself/>
- <https://teachpreschool.org/2013/02/06/how-to-put-on-a-coat>




Let's Get Ready for School Part 8

I have enough sleep

Does your child have a good bedtime routine? Having enough sleep is important to ensure they are not tired for school.



Steps to Success




Routine is key

Routines help children feel safe and build healthy habits. A routine helps to support children's body clock and aid relaxation. Top tips from "the Sleep Charity" include:

- Do the same thing at the same time each day, including having a set wake up time each morning. We know this is difficult at the weekend, but it is important to have these set times to support your child's body clock.
- Turn off all screens at the start of the routine, they may suppress the body's production of melatonin, the sleep hormone, and make it more difficult to nod off.
- A bath 30 minutes before bed can help to promote sleep, the decrease in body temperature after a bath can help us to nod off more easily.
- Once in bed sharing a story is a great way to end the day or older children may prefer to read independently.
- Take some time to plan your routine and write it down. Work out what time it will start, this should be an hour before your child goes to sleep. Display the new routine somewhere where everybody in the home can follow it.

Useful websites

- <https://localoffer.swindon.gov.uk/content/send-local-offer/landing-pages/health-landing-pages-and-content-pages/sleep/>
- <https://thesleepcharity.org.uk/information-support/children/bedtime-routines/>
- <https://www.bbc.co.uk/tinyhappy-people/top-tips-for-a-calmer-bedtime-routine/z7cw2tr>



Let's Get Ready for School Part 9
I can tidy up and look after my belongings

Can your child tidy up their toys when they have finished playing? Can they recognise their coat, water bottle and bag?

Steps to Success

Tidy up time at home
Encourage your child to help tidy up after themselves at home. This will encourage them to do the same with resources at school. Develop your child's confidence by asking them to tidy away specific items such as 3 red bricks.

Label everything!
Anything your child takes into school, make sure it has a label. Staff will be much more likely to find it if it goes missing! It will also help your child find their belongings at the end of the school day. A labelled water bottle is easier to find amongst 30 other bottles.

Remember this rhyme...
Choose it!
Use it!
Put it away!

Useful websites

- <https://www.earlyyearsprofessionals.org/ehc/enabling-environment/top-tips-encouraging-children-tying>

Let's Get Ready for School Part 10
I can eat meals sitting at a table

Can your child use a knife and fork? Are they able to open fruit or packaging by themselves? Can they drink from an open cup?

Steps to Success

Meal Time Environment
Sitting at a dining table allows your child to be part of the group and enjoy the social benefits of eating together. It also aids skill development as they can watch how you hold your cutlery, lift your cup etc. You can model for them, and sitting side by side or opposite your child is a good way to do this.

Open it alone
Model and support your child in opening wrapped items such as biscuits or crisps. Assist them in peeling fruit as this may be given at snack times.

Using a knife and fork
Think about the utensils you are using. Spoons or forks with thick and/or textured handles are easier to control. A spoon or fork with a short handle is easier to control. Consider the weight of the cutlery. Sometimes something heavier can be easier to control. Use a bowl or plate with a raised edge so the child has something to scoop against. Place a non-slip mat underneath the bowl or plate to prevent it sliding when your child is learning to scoop, stab, spread or cut. Encourage a good cutlery grasp right from the start; your child's index finger should point down the back of the fork or knife towards the prongs and blade.

Useful websites

- <https://www.nhs.uk/media/272352/sitting-at-table-information-sheet.pdf>
- <https://www.nhs.uk/media/272346/using-cutlery-information-sheet.pdf>

Let's Get Ready for School Part 11
I can follow instructions

Can your child follow instructions? Are they able to understand the importance of rules in keeping them safe?

Steps to Success

Get your child to help
Give your child simple tasks to do such as putting their shoes away when they come home or tidying away toys before dinner time. These simple expectations will help your child understand the importance of following rules and instructions.

Play games
Games are a great way to introduce simple instructions and rules to young children.

How to give effective instructions to children

- Gain your child's attention by saying their name and getting to their level.
- Be specific in your request e.g. "pick up 4 blocks" instead of "tidy up".
- Use "wait time", a three- to seven-second pause after you say something or ask a question. Research shows that kids process better what you have to say — and respond to it appropriately — when they let it sink in.
- Give instructions one at a time.
- If possible, use visual clues.

Simon Says is a great game to play to develop your child's skills in following instructions.

Useful websites

- <https://www.understood.org/en/articles/10-tips-to-help-your-child-follow-directions>

Let's Get Ready for School Part 12
I can share

Is your child able to share toys? Can they take turns when playing?

Steps to Success

Play turn taking games
Games are a great way to sharing and taking turns. Use language such as "I have had a turn, now it's your turn".

Empathise with your child
Learning to share can be challenging. Tell your child you recognise how hard it can be to share and that you know they are feeling upset.

Praise
Praise! Praise! And more praise! Stay positive and notice your child sharing or waiting for the turn. Highlight to your child how good it feels to be shared with. Slowly they will realise that sharing can be a powerful way to connect with other people.

Support your child
Teaching a young child not to snatch an item that they want from a child is also a much more age appropriate strategy than expecting the other child who is involved to share with them. This is because you will be teaching the child how to control their impulses. This is a key skill that toddlers need to learn - and it helps them understand that there are sometimes 'boundaries' that they need to respect. They will also learn about what is not theirs to take.

Useful websites

- <https://www.annafreud.org/early-years/early-years-in-mind/common-difficulties/sharing/>
- <https://www.emmasdiary.co.uk/baby/child-behaviour/teaching-your-toddler-to-share>

SBC also recommend ensuring your child is up to date with vaccinations before starting school. We can email or print out any of the information you feel might be useful. Do let us know.

It's hard work!!!

- Play and learning should be fun, but it can be tiring for families.
- Children often need to 'let go' at home, where they feel safe. They may have more melt downs and tantrums as they progress and manage more challenges and big feelings out in the world. Try to take it as a compliment!
- The iceberg approach to understanding behaviour is helpful.
- Children need to rest and play at home.
- Getting enough sleep is important; somewhere between 9 and 13 hours per day.
- You need support too! Parents and carers are counsellors, play mates, health care assistants, educators and children are all different. Remember that and try to ensure that you give yourselves time to rest and recharge and to feel cared for too.
- Love, strong attachments and quality time together underpin happy children who love to learn.
- Good relationships with settings will also support children's success.

A little quote to finish...

This was shared on social media, but resonates for us as parents and practitioners and will hopefully help to remind us what matters most when rearing happy and rounded children:

“What a four year old should know...

- They should know that they are lovely wholly and unconditionally, all of the time.
- They should know that they are safe and they should know how to keep themselves safe in public, with others, and in varied situations.
- They should know that they can trust their instincts about people and that they never have to do something that doesn't feel right, no matter who is asking.
- They should know how to laugh, act silly, be goofy and use their imagination.
- They should know that it is always ok to paint the sky orange and give cats six legs.
- They should know their own interests and be encouraged to follow them. If they couldn't care less about learning numbers, their parents should realise that they'll learn them accidentally soon enough and let them immerse themselves instead in rocket ships, drawing, dinosaurs or playing in the mud.
- They should know that the world is magical and that so are they.
- They should know that they're wonderful, brilliant, creative, compassionate and marvellous.
- They should know that it's just as worthy to spend the day outside making daisy chains, mud pies and fairy houses as it is to practice phonics...

(continued from previous page)

...here's what parents need to know

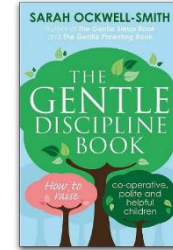
- That every child will learn to walk, talk, read and do algebra at their own pace and that it will have no bearing on how well they walk, talk, read or do algebra.
- That the single biggest predictor of high academic achievement is reading to children. Not flash cards, not workbooks, not fancy preschools, not blinking toys or computers but Mum or Dad taking the time every day and night (or both!) to read them wonderful books.
- That being the smartest or most accomplished kid in the class has never had any bearing on being the happiest. We are so caught up in trying to give our children “advantages” that we’re giving them lives as multi-tasked and stressful as ours. One of the biggest advantages we can give our children is a simple, carefree childhood.
- That our children deserve to be surrounded by books, nature, art supplies and the freedom to explore them. Most of us could get rid of 90 percent of our children’s toys and they wouldn’t be missed, but some things are important – building toys like Lego and blocks, creative toys like all types of art materials, musical instruments, dress up clothes and books, books, books..
- They need to have the freedom to explore with these things too, to play with scoops of dried beans...(supervised of course), to knead bread and make messes, to use paint and play dough and glitter at the kitchen table while we make dinner even though it gets everywhere, to have a spot in the yard where it’s absolutely fine to dig up all the grass and make a mud pit.
- They need parents who sit and listen to their days,...join in and make crafts with them,...take the time to read them stories and act silly with them. They need us to take walks with them and not mind the slow pace...They deserve to help us make dinner even though it takes twice as long and makes it twice as much work. They deserve to know that they’re a priority for us and that we truly love to be with them.
- Our children don’t need tablets/Nintendos, computers...,after school activities nearly as much as they need US.”

Useful books and websites

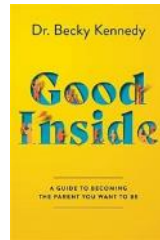
- ‘What every parent needs to know. The remarkable Effects of Love, Nurture and Play on your Child’s Development’ *by Margot Sunderland*



- ‘The Gentle Discipline Book’ *by Sarah Ockwell Smith*



- ‘Good Inside’ *by Dr Becky Kennedy*



- *If reading isn’t your thing try audio books and podcasts.*
- [Children - The Sleep Charity](#) this is a useful resource for any sleep related concerns
- *There is more information about reflex integration and child development on the RMTi website: www.rhythmicmovement.org*
- *pacey.org.uk (Professional Association for Childcare and Early years settings) What does School ready really mean? [Being school-ready | PACEY](#)*

Remember that we're here if you'd like to talk more about helping to prepare you child for starting school.

*Pop in to see us, send us an email,
manager@croftplaygroup.co.uk or give us a call
01793 512882.*