

Supporting your child's independence as they start school

Links to further guidance for parents/carers



5 practical ways to help you support your child to be confident in developing their independence skills as they start school. This includes links to further guidance for parents/carers.

Family Centres in Hertfordshire provide a range of practical support to families which may be useful to you as your child starts school. For further advice on the subjects highlighted below please contact your local Family Centre.

<https://www.hertsfamilycentres.org>

1. Toileting – help your child to manage their toileting needs as they first start school

- On your visits to school ensure you take your child to the toilets so they know where they are, how to use the flush on the toilet, use the toilet paper, turn on taps and wash and dry their hands
- Provide the teacher with any specific information about your child's toileting needs for example words they may use, patterns of behaviour
- Provide your child with clothes that are easy to take off – for example no belts on trousers, socks not tights
- Discuss with the teacher your child's needs if they are not yet toilet trained, the local family Centre may be able to help
- Review the guidance on the ERIC website www.eric.org.uk

2. Sleeping – help your child to be alert and ready to learn each day after having a good night's sleep.

- Develop a consistent bedtime routine to help encourage sleep for example no screen time one hour before bed, bath time, read a book, quiet time
- Provide a suitable environment for sleep in the bedroom, quiet, well ventilated, dim lights, with suitable bed and bedding
- Parents/carers need to be relaxed at bedtime to install a sense of calm for the child and ensure the bedtime routine is consistent
- Children aged 4 – 6 years old need between 10.5 and 11.5 hours of sleep each night
- Review the guidance on the sleep council website www.sleepcouncil.org.uk

3. Healthy Eating – support your child in accessing a healthy diet both at home and school to support their all-round development

- Introduce your child to many different fruit and vegetables so they become familiar with a wide range of foods suitable for snacks
- Encourage your child to drink water, practice using the water bottle they will be using at school, help them choose the water bottle to encourage them to use it, practice carrying their own plate of food and using cutlery
- When providing packed lunches consider the nutritional value of the food, also ensure that food is easy for your child to eat, can they open the packets, are the lids secure, have you shown them how to open the packets, is the lunch box easy to open
- Inform the teacher of any allergies your child has and how these are managed; provide guidance on any medication to be administered
- Support your child to maintain a healthy weight (20.8% of 4 – 5 year olds are overweight or obese), provide foods low in sugar content. If you are concerned about your child's weight, talk to your GP or local family centre
- Review the guidance on the First Steps Nutrition Trust website <https://www.firststepsnutrition.org>

4. Physical activity – provide your child with opportunities for physical activity every day to help promote a healthy lifestyle and contribute to their learning and development.

- Aim for at least 180 minutes per day of physical activity for your child (recommended by the UK Chief Medical Officer for children aged up to 5 years)
- Provide easy to use clothes for outside shoes with Velcro, coats with poppers – so your child can get outside quickly and not be hindered by struggling to do up buttons
- All movement counts – the more the better; provide opportunities to get out of breath each day; running, jumping, skipping, climbing, throwing and catching
- Can you walk with your child to school each day, or maybe one way each day, to enable you both to exercise and be active outdoors
- Encourage your child to join in active games for example playing catch, using a skipping rope
- Review the NHS physical activity guidance for Under fives

<https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/physical-activity-guidelines-children-under-five-years/>

5. Being Safe – talk to your child about keeping themselves safe, and to talk to the teacher and other school staff if they are worried or upset

- Take your child to the school settling in sessions so they can meet and become familiar with the teacher and other adults who will be caring for them
- Talk about 'rules' with your child and support their understanding of rules and what they mean, talk about rules at home and rules at school, why there are rules
- Encourage your child to play with other children and learn about sharing, taking turns, managing their feelings and behaviour
- Take time to talk to your child about how they are feeling, what worries do they have
- Review the guidance for parents on talking about feelings with your child

<https://youngminds.org.uk/starting-a-conversation-with-your-child/>