



How can I help my child with SEND prepare for school?

Starting school can be an anxious time for children and parents, especially if a child has special education needs. But with planning and support from the professionals involved with your child, the transition can be a positive experience. Here are some useful tips about what you can do to help:

Plan visits to ensure that your child gets the opportunity to visit the school and become more familiar with the surroundings. This might be done by a video tour - many schools are using technology to show young children their new environment. The tour might include the classroom, cloakroom, playground...meeting the teachers and key staff is also important at this point, either virtually or face to face.

Request a transition meeting: (preferably face to face, but can be virtual): Parents/carers, class teacher and early years setting should arrange a Transition Meeting in June/July. This is an opportunity for everyone to talk and find out about your child so that support and adjustments can be put in place to ensure a smooth, happy transition. It is also a good time to plan the handover of any paperwork (SEND Support Plan), resources and equipment that would be helpful to the child at school.

Talk to your child about school and what will happen there. The school may have a short video tour of the school on their website for you to look through together during the summer term and school holidays. Or you could create a book of photos or a Transition Passport, which your Early Years Setting, School or Inclusion Practitioner may help you to make. Alternatively, you might like to load photos onto a tablet to swipe through. You could wander past school as you are out and about.

If your child will be wearing a new uniform in September, allow your child to try it on and allow them to become familiar with it. The same applies to new school shoes, bag and equipment such as, a lunch box, drink bottle and pencil case.

Visuals: Calendars are useful visuals; you can cross off the days until school starts (an example calendar can be found in the resources link for you to print and use if you wish). This can help children with anxiety and provide a count down and timeline.

Help your child with their independence skills such as dressing, undressing, eating, drinking and toileting where possible. Your Health Visitor, Early Years Practitioner or Inclusion Practitioner could help you with this. Remember that all children develop at different rates, so just work on the next step that is appropriate for your child.

Communication skills: if your child has received support from a Speech and Language Therapist then they will have recommended relevant support strategies for you child, and this practice should continue and be shared with school. You should also show the new school any communication aids your child is using (eg: PECS).

If you would like to talk to someone who can give advice and guidance about transition support please call the Milton Keynes Council, SEND Support Line on 01908 657825 between 9.30am and 3.30pm weekdays or email on SENDSupport@milton-keynes.gov.uk