**Winnington Park CP & Nursery School**

**School Readiness (FS2) – information for parents**

**Practical advice to give your child the best start**

**There’s plenty you can do to help your child get ready for moving to the Reception Year (FS2). Here are some top tips for things you can do in the run-up to their transition to Reception, so all they’ll have to concentrate on is learning something new and enjoying themselves with their new friends.**

**What we will do in school**

**Children who attend our Nursery will already know the staff working with them and will be familiar with the routines and environment. During the summer term children due to move to the Reception year will begin to take part in some focused activities in the “Reception” room. Children joining from other settings will have the opportunity to visit for a morning each week so that we can get to know each other, become familiar with staff, peers and routines as well as the environment. A new starters meeting for parents will be held during the second half of the summer term.**

**Thinking about school**

**It can help if your child knows what to expect and is thinking about school in a positive way.**

* **. It is a good idea to walk or drive the route to school before they start, look at the school from the outside, or drive past at the end of the school day and watch children coming out —it can be very exciting seeing all the other children in their uniform! This will help familiarise your child with the school environment and make it less daunting. It will also give time to talk and for them to raise concerns or ask questions.**
* **Talking about school – especially about the fun things that will happen at school. If they have attended the settling-in visits, then there might be something they particularly enjoyed playing with (the dinosaurs, the paints, the climbing frame). Older siblings or cousins could be enlisted to share all the things they enjoy about school.**
* **Starting primary school is an exciting new chapter in your child's life. Early Years staff are well aware of the importance of this big step and are dedicated to helping children settle in quickly to start enjoying school life.**
* **We understand that it can feel daunting when your child starts 'big school'. But by the time your child reaches the end of Reception, many parents are astonished at how much they have learned and developed. So here are some helpful tips about the learning behaviours we try to foster in Reception and some ideas to get your child off to a great start in developing these skills.**
* **Developing speaking and listening skills – engage your child in conversation, comment on what they are doing, what you see when out and about and ensure they respond to your comments and questions (and appropriately). Practise taking turns to speak and listen.**

**Support them to get rid of dummies as these can have a negative impact on speech development.**

**Enlist support from relatives/friends.**

**.Social skills**

* **These are important in helping your child settle in to primary school and make friends.**
* **We are very aware of this important aspect of starting school and will set up the learning areas to provide the best opportunities for children to practise their developing skills, as well as planning specific activities which use play as a way of modelling good social skills to the children. The social skills children develop in these early years of school become a model for friendships in the future and will also play a vital role in future learning and development. With that in mind, here are a few ideas to support your children in developing these skills before they start their Reception year.**
* **A large proportion of learning happens through listening in the classroom. To help them with their listening skills, you might like to try playing games and singing action songs such as Simon Says or Heads, Shoulders, Knees and Toes where your child has to listen and communicate to be able to join in successfully. Or, build funny and unusual instructions into routine events, such as: put your coat away and then come and sit at the table with your hands on your head — these all help to sharpen their listening skills and raise a smile. We use lots of these in the school day! Finally, reading a story and stopping at different points to ask them what has just happened is a good way to hone listening and communication skills: Can they recall what has happened? What do they think might happen next? And of course – acting out the story together is a brilliant way to practice communication skills – especially if you then perform it to an audience.**
* **Practising greetings may sound obvious, but you would be surprised how many children have started school not knowing how to initiate a conversation with someone else or respond appropriately. You can use dolls and soft toys to practise greetings, asking to join other’s games or inviting others to join a game they are playing. Practise greeting relatives and friends when visiting. Giving your child this language will support them when they are faced with lots of new friendly faces to play with.**
* **Choosing toys which invite cooperative and social play with your children rather than toys which invite solitary play (such as relying on iPads and other electronic devices) can be a great way give your child opportunities to practise negotiation and turn-taking.**
* **When sharing stories we often talk about whether the characters are kind, helpful and friendly, or the opposite. Talking about negative social situations in stories is a particularly helpful way encourage your child to think about what they could do if someone isn't being kind. (For example, they might decide to use their words to try to sort out any problems or seek help from a teacher.)**
* **Turn taking games such as Snakes and Ladders or Snap provide plenty of opportunities for children to practise social skills and turn-taking. especially when the adults don't always let the children win! Be sure to use the language of turn-taking to reinforce this too, for example: 'First it is your turn, and now I will have a turn', or 'Whose turn is it next?' and 'Thank you for waiting for your turn'.**
* **You can support your child by making them aware of the language of feelings, describing how you are feeling, as well as giving commentary on the emotions that your child may be experiencing (for example: I can see that you are cross that we have to leave the playground because you are having fun), can help increase your child's emotional literacy, which can in turn help them understand their own and other’s feelings in social situations.**
* **Giving your child opportunities where they have a turn to talk and then have to listen is a valuable way to teach them vital speaking and listening skills. One example of this is taking turns to talk about the best part of your day over the dinner table. Focus in on their listening skills: can they ask a question to find out more? Can they remember what their sibling's favourite part of the day was?**

**Comment on their positive social skills: "I like the way you have chosen to take turns with the lorry, what a great way to play together". You can also support your child if they are struggling in this situation by playing alongside them and offering suggestions for solutions.**

* **After school, give them time to reflect on their day and share any highlights or concerns they are having about friendships (or in fact any element of school). These concerns can then be monitored by you and the staff, who will want to work with you to ensure your child thrives in the friendships they are making.**
* **Maintaining concentration throughout the school day can be challenging and is often the reason children are so tired in their first weeks of school. Construction kits like 'Lego' are excellent for encouraging your child's resilience – especially if they can finish the whole activity in one sitting.**
* **Independence**

**Independence is one of the most important skills initially as children get used to doing things for themselves without you as the parent there to help them all the time. It is a big transition but increasing your child's confidence to have a try and getting them used to doing things for themselves will set them up to succeed. Ask your child to help you by giving them routine tasks which are achievable on their own. For example, whilst cooking dinner, ask them to wash vegetables or set the table.. Make sure that you praise them for doing it all on their own.**

* **When your child asks for help, it’s worth giving them another opportunity to have a try themselves —perhaps breaking down the task for them (for example, "Why don't you put on one shoe and I'll help with the other?"). We are often amazed in school at how many children who are encouraged to have a try themselves simply don't come back to ask again as they have been able to achieve what they wanted without help; they just needed encouragement from the adults around them to have another go.**

**Support independence in dressing**

* **Try putting their clothes into a long line in the order which they need to put on, encourage your children to be as independent as possible when getting dressed before they start school and, most importantly, try on their uniform plenty of times before they start school so that they are familiar with what they will wear at school.**
* **Putting their coat and shoes on – the ‘changeable’ British weather means that children will take their coat on and off endlessly in the first term of school. Children will spend a lot of time outside whatever the weather. The quicker they are, the more time they’ll have for learning and play. Distinguishing between left and right shoes can be tricky, so try drawing two halves of a smiley face in their shoes to make a complete smiley face when the shoes are placed together correctly.**
* **Being able to dress and undress independently will help your child to be more independent. When choosing shoes and clothes, try to make sure that they are easy to take off and put back on. School staff will help with fiddly zips or buttons but the more your child can do on their own, the more independent they’ll be. Be assured we will never leave a child to struggle.**
* **Going to the toilet on their own – being able to use the toilet and wash their hands afterwards will help your child to feel independent. If they are having fun at school, children may leave going to the last possible moment, so reminding them to pay attention to when they need to go can reduce the chances of an accident.**
* **On a very practical note, spending time helping your child recognise their written name is extremely helpful! Labelling their school items with them, showing them how you write their name and seeing if they can find their name in a list of words will really help them recognise their cloakroom peg, drawer or belongings independently.**
* **Throughout the process of your child starting school please remember that your child's teacher will have the same aim in mind —to help your child develop the all-important lifelong learning behaviours that are so helpful for a happy, successful Reception year —and beyond!**
* **Encourage early literacy skills**

**Sharing stories and books with your child is a valuable way to help them develop important early literacy skills and a love of books. As you read to your child, talk with them about the characters and ask them to try to guess what might happen next — this can help develop their vocabulary, imagination and understanding of different texts, visiting your local library or even create your own story book together.**

* **Establish early number skills**

**There are so many opportunities in the day to develop early number skills and help your child's understanding of numbers. Go on a number hunt around your local area and take pictures of any numbers you find, share counting songs together (e.g. *5 Current Buns*, or *1,2,3,4,5 Once I Caught a Fish Alive*) or count objects 1:1 as you set the table for dinner. Can your child get 5 forks or 3 cups out? Can they share them out between the members of the family? Counting stairs/steps as they walk up and down them. Simple activities like these will lay the foundations for number learning.**

**Fine motor skills and pencil control**

* **Developing hand strength, fine motor skills and hand eye co-ordination are all part of preparation for writing, and something that we have to spend a long time focusing on with the children before we can start forming letters. Completing Lego models, using scissors, threading beads or pasta onto string, or using old recycled water bottles with sports tops as water pistols to aim at a target, are all great fun and effective ways to develop hand strength for writing. Drawing and colouring activities (ensure correct pencil grip) are also useful for developing early mark making. Other ideas which we use in the classroom are: drawing outside on the floor, walls or fences with large chalk, using sticks to mark make in mud and painting with large brushes and buckets of water on outdoor surfaces.**
* **Practising the routine – it can be helpful to do a practice journey before the big day, looking for interesting things on the way. It might also be a good idea to make sure your child has school-friendly bedtimes and getting-up times a few days before their first day.**
* **Reading books – there are lots of wonderful children’s books about starting school that can help to answer children’s questions and explain how the school day works. (Google, visit Library)**
* **Recognising their name – it’s handy if your child can find their name on their peg in the cloakroom and on their clothes and belongings. Labelling their clothes will help both your child and school staff to keep track of their belongings: iron on labels or a name written on the label in permanent marker work perfectly well. Don’t forget to label book bags, hats, scarfs, gloves and shoes. If it can be taken off and lost, please label it.**
* **Eating – whether having a school or a packed lunch, helping your child prepare for lunchtime is very beneficial. Useful lunchtime skills include: being able to use a knife, fork and spoon, (not their hands for hot dinners) opening their own lunchbox and being able to open everything in their lunchbox – some yoghurt tubes and drink cartons can be quite tricky so do check at home beforehand.**

**Not all children develop at the same pace. If your child can’t do all of these things perfectly by the time they make the transition to Reception, don’t panic. They will get there in the end with help and encouragement. Let school staff know about any concerns and that way we can be ready to support your child.**