



ST THOMAS' SCHOOL TERANG

PREPARING FOR SCHOOL



PO Box 123, Terang, VIC 3264 ☎ (03) 5592 1925 ✉ admin@stterang.catholic.edu.au

www.stterang.catholic.edu.au



BEGINNING SCHOOL

As the time gets closer for the child to start school there are a number of things which parents can do to help the child settle in easily. Here are some ideas:

- Walk with the child to school, or the bus stop, so he or she knows the way.
- Once school starts, make sure your child knows where to meet you. If children are to feel secure it is important that they are met on time.
- Practise with the child what he or she should say if asked for his or her name and address.
- Label any clothes the child may take off, and things like lunchboxes and schoolbags.
- Talk about how long the school day will be in terms the child can understand.
- Talk about the difference between 'playtime' and 'lunchtime'. Show the child what food you have packed each morning and say when you expect it to be eaten. Make sure your child can easily open the lunch box and drink container.
- Sandwiches that are individually wrapped are easier to handle.
- Choose a schoolbag or case that is suitable size for your child. Bags that are too big are awkward and tiring.

PARENTS FEELINGS

Parents have to be prepared for the beginning of school too; prepared for the fact that they may miss the child greatly. No longer will they be the only major source of wisdom in the child's life; the teacher will have some influence too.

Most parents accept this as part of a long-term process in helping the child move from total dependence to independence. They accept any mixed feelings about their child's independence.

TRANSITION PROGRAM

A 2 day transition program takes place in term 4 to enable students to aide their transition into primary school.

SCHOOL READINESS

Each child should be considered in the areas of:

1. Physical development
2. Social/emotional development
3. Intellectual development

Another year at Home allows:

- Additional maturation period – especially if your child is still very dependent or slow in language development. Children need this oral language ability for reading, which is essentially a language skill.
- Additional physical development if your child is very small and has had a lot of illness.

Another year at Home can:

- Break friendship ties, which are very important in social development.
- If the child is ready for school, another year at home may create boredom as children develop rapidly at this stage and need lots of interesting activities. Can you cater for these needs your child may have in that year?



PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

The physical skills that children need are of two kinds:

- those that enable them to look after themselves when an adult is not able to help.
- those skills that enable them to join in learning at school.

1. Eating

At school, children may need to –

- Feed themselves
- Unwrap a food packet
- Undo a lunchbox
- Unscrew a drink container
- Drink with a straw
- Peel a piece of fruit
- Get a drink from a tap.

2. Toileting

Children will also need to –

- Go to the toilet by themselves
- Undo and do up buttons and zips
- Flush the toilet
- Wash their hands
- Manage the taps

Accidents can happen at this stage. Prep teachers try to prevent these by allowing regular visits to the toilet during the first weeks. In the early weeks of school, parents should consider sending spare

underclothes if any problems are expected.

3. Dressing

The choice of clothing should be of benefit to the child in early weeks eg. if the child cannot tie shoelaces, consider buying shoes with buckles or velcro tabs, or boots for the boys.

4. Nose Blowing

It is important for health that a child is aware when his or her nose needs wiping and that the child is able to do it.

5. Basic Movements

At school, children will use the skills of walking, running, jumping, hopping and skipping in the new games they will learn. Most children develop and refine these skills simply by having the opportunity to free play.

6. Clear Speech

Parents encourage and extend their children's speech and language by talking with them and gently providing acceptable model. Parents who are worried about their child's speech or language may seek advice from:

- Hospitals with speech therapy clinics
- Catholic Education Office speech therapists

SOCIAL & EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

When small children have opportunities to mix with other children and adults apart from their parents, they learn skills, which will help them to cope with the social aspects of school.

1. Learning how to relate to adults

Children should be able to;

- listen to the teacher and others
- do what is asked
- make known his or her needs

2. Learning how to relate to children

Children learn to relate to other children when they have opportunity to play and share experiences.

3. Sharing, taking turns and co-operating

Children often work in groups in school and this means they will need to take turns, share material, and co-operate.

They need the same skills in the playground where adult supervision is less intense.

Playing games with adults helps teach children how to take turns and how to cope with success and failure.

4. Self Awareness

Can your child control their behaviour and emotions?

Can your child adapt to change of personal or routine without becoming anxious?



EXPERIENCES AND SOME THINGS YOU CAN DO TO HELP

Self Control

Not always letting the child get their own way and teaching them to accept that sometimes they have to wait for something they want.

Confidence

Seeing themselves as being successful by being encouraged to tackle tasks of gradually increasing difficulty and given praise for their attempts.

Responsibility

In school each activities' materials have to be tidied away before a new one can be started. A sense of responsibility is developed when parents encourage children to put toys away and to keep their room tidy (with the parents' help first).

Independence

Each time parents allow children to tackle something for themselves they are encouraging the growth of independence. Children who do not need direction in occupying themselves can attempt more and will probably learn more.

Persistence

Small children often give up easily when they find things difficult. If parents help them with the difficult parts and let them finish the task, children come to see the value of persistence at a task.

Separation

It helps if the child is able to separate easily from parents. When parents tell a child that they are going to leave but will be back, and then keep their promise, the child learns to accept separation.

It helps the child if parents point out the enjoyable things the child will be able to do at school.

Checklist

1. Is the child secure with the Prep-school teacher and other children?
2. Is the child willing to participate and co-operate in the class and group activities?
3. Is he/she purposeful in art/craft activities and dramatic play?
4. Does the child use initiative?
5. Can the child plan, concentrate and work on an activity at the same time?
6. Is the child responsible in taking out, using and putting away materials?
7. Can they ask for help when needed?

It is essential to regularly communicate with the Prep teacher on these issues.

INTELLECTUAL DEVELOPMENT

Children come to know and understand things, by seeing, hearing, touching, tasting, smelling and participating in activities.

Knowledge and language are obtained when children are building, playing, visiting, observing, listening to stories.

In fact whenever children are actively doing something they are learning. When parents say 'that's a big green apple', 'yours is in the red cup', 'your Aunt is my sister', they are giving children knowledge and words to express that knowledge. The experiences and the words go hand in hand and are usually developed together.

PRE-READING SKILLS

Learning to speak is a difficult and complex task, which usually takes years to master. As parents you have been the main teachers for your child in their learning to communicate through speech. Now that they are about to go to school your role as a teacher and supporter does not end but should continue in co-operation with the school.

If children have some success when they start learning reading skills at school, they will enjoy them and practise more often. To be an effective reader the child must be able to manipulate the language orally. Reading is not the task of saying the words correctly, it is the process of getting the message from print.

Some ideas to help prepare a child for reading:

- Parents and others talk with the child so that he/she learns new words.
- Parents draw the child's attention to signs, advertisements, and writing on packets and tell the child what is written as well as point out the differences in symbols which lead to differences in meaning.
- Expose children to the letters of the alphabet and their sounds.
- When children are ready: They become aware that-
 - meaning can be obtained from print
 - reading can be a useful and pleasurable activity
 - there are rules about print such as – you read the print, not the pictures; that you start reading at the top of the page; etc.
 - Use your finger to show we read from left to right.

PRE-WRITING SKILLS

Encourage fine motor skills such as cutting, colouring and bead threading. Model correct pencil grip when using writing implements.

PRE-MATHEMATICS SKILLS

Mathematics in the primary school includes-

- counting
- learning to add, subtract, multiply, divide
- measuring
- working with money
- telling the time
- shapes

Before children can work with symbols such as 10, -, +, x, =, etc, they need to understand the concepts behind them. Children who come to school understanding terms such as: more, less the same as, bigger, smaller, how many, are prepared for early mathematics and should move easily into formal work.

Early preparation for mathematics occurs when parents or others-

- expose children to the numbers 0-10.
- help the child to count a few objects such as the number of plates to put out on the table, or the number of buttons on a cardigan.
- talk to the children about time: (for example – How many sleeps until your birthday? Daddy will be home in half an hour – when that T.V. show is finished.)
- let the children find out what coins and notes are used for.
- talk to the child as he or she uses building toys (for example – Can you make it bigger? Find some more blue blocks)
- let the child play with water, sand, dough etc., so that he or she learns how much will fit into different sized containers.
- play board games with dice.





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