

**GETTING YOUR CHILD READY TO START SCHOOL AT ST THOMAS’ CE**

Did you know that too much structured activity and formal teaching before a child starts school is likely to do more harm than good?

So, what can parents and carers do to help their pre-schooler develop the abilities, attitudes and knowledge to be successful in adjusting to school life and doing well during the first 12 months?

The secret to later educational success is to give your child a rich variety of experiences, along with language and play opportunities in the years before starting school.

Here is a short guide to giving a child the best possible start to education. It doesn’t include everything but we hope it helps!

* KNOWLEDGE OF THE ENVIRONMENT AND THE WORLD

Give your child lots of varied experiences. Get out and about, visit different places, travel on different vehicles (e.g. bike, bus, train), talk with different people, see and try different things.

* SELF-HELP SKILLS

Support children to learn to dress and undress themselves, go to the toilet and wash their hands unassisted and without being reminded, tidy-up after play, and hang up and fold their clothes. Being able to use a knife, fork and spoon confidently and eating a wide variety of foods will also support them in being independent.

* SELF REGULATION

When your child becomes upset over a particular situation, talk to your child about the different emotions that they are feeling. Give them time to regulate their behaviour accordingly depending on what has happened. Talk to them about what has happened, how they are feeling and what they could do next time to make the outcome of the situation a more positive one.

* SHARING AND TURN TAKING

Support children in sharing toys and taking turns with others. Children also need to be  
exposed to playing games and interacting with other children. When you are one of thirty children you will also need to be able to share the adults in the setting!

* SPEAKING AND LISTENING SKILLS

Talk with children about things and focus children's attention on what they are seeing and hearing. Don't forget to read to children on a regular basis. Encourage turn taking when conversing with others and good listening to the views and opinions of others. Talk to with your child about the importance of being able to talk about themselves, their needs and their feelings. Introduce new vocabulary to your child and model how to use it in the correct context.

* FINE MOTOR, GROSS MOTOR AND COORDINATION SKILLS

Give children lots of opportunity to build their hand and shoulder muscles by providing drawing and cutting activities, puzzles, water pouring, play-dough and clay, threading large beads and hammering activities, etc. The bigger movements in climbing, swinging, pedalling, scooting and steering help to develop the bigger muscles which, in turn, support handwriting and other fine motor skills.

* INDEPENDENCE AND RESPONSIBILITY

Foster independence by arranging for children to visit their friends and extended family members, and stay for a short time without you (their parent or caregiver).

Also notice and praise when children do something that shows independence (e.g. gets their own coat when it's time to go out). Let children hold and take care of their own bus ticket, decide what lunch they will have, or create other safe opportunities for children to practise being independent and exercising self-responsibility.

* ACADEMIC KNOWLEDGE

Bring in academic knowledge within everyday activities and also in the context of supporting children's own interests. For example an interest in the superhero Spiderman can lead to you looking together at learning about how spiders make their webs.

Interest your child in seeing the basic shapes in letters and numbers and noticing how shapes are different. Point out and discuss road, shop and other signs and letter box numbers while walking, driving and shopping together. Notice the different sizes of coins and that coins have different value amounts/numbers. Support them in recognising their own name.

Lots of early academic knowledge along with learning of different concepts can be developed simply through participation in everyday activities and discussions with peers, older children and adults - and exposure to information through books and other sources.

* GROWTH MINDSET

At St Thomas’ develop your child’s growth mindset is essential. When your child encounters something different, encourage them to ‘have a go’. If they approach a challenge, explain the importance of persistence even in the face of challenge of difficulties. Always encourage natural curiosity and exploration. Respond to your children's questions, invite children to ask questions, and share in your child's curiosity by discovering answers and new information together.

* **GENERALLY….**

We will teach your child to read, write and count. We will educate your child through challenge and exploration.

Your child will get off to a flying start if they are equipped with the skills listed above before they start school.

