



School Transition Program Parent Handbook

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Purpose

Going to 'Big School' is an important milestone for our children and families, and as the year progresses we will begin to focus more on ensuring every child is well prepared for the transitions that lie ahead.

Transitions, including from home to early childhood settings, between settings, and from early childhood settings to school, offer opportunities and challenges. Different places and spaces have their own purposes, expectations and ways of doing things. (*The Belonging, Being & Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia (EYLF, p.16)*)

School transition is an important process for children to ensure that they start their Schooling journey with a positive attitude. The purpose of this handbook, is to ensure all families are provided with additional support and information about making this important decision. In addition, it will provide you with details of our school transition program so that educators and families can work together to ensure our children have a positive experience as they head off to school.

What Is Transition to School?

Children make many transition throughout childhood, and as these transitions occur they need support in the separating and settling processes to enable them to build trust in their new environments. (*EYLF, p.34*)

At Step By Step Early Learning Centre, we see transitioning to school as a journey that starts in infancy and continues through the toddlers and preschool years, therefore we prepare our children for their lifelong learning journey from their first day.

Starting at school is not the beginning of learning for a child. Research has shown brain development and learning commences from before birth. Transition to school is about developing processes which recognise prior knowledge and experience and continue to build upon these within the learning environment of school. This big step is an exciting time, but can also be a challenging experience for our children and families when children move from a home-like early childhood educational environment, with established relationships and routines, to a larger, more structured school setting. It can be overwhelming even for very confident children. Therefore, our school transition program aims to build on children's prior and current experiences and knowledge to help them to feel secure, confident and connected to familiar people, places, events and understandings. (*EYLF, p.16*)

Being ready for school requires a range of skills and knowledge, however, it is very important for educators and parents to understand that these skills are **not essential** for school readiness.

It is more important for our children to have developed social skills and to be confident learners, to set the foundations for their learning. Many studies have also shown using children's current skills and interests as the basis for promoting their development will prepare children better than requiring them to complete structured academic tasks.

Therefore, we focus on assisting our children to become confident learners rather than on developing specific literacy and numeracy skills.

Is Your Child Ready for School?

Every child is different and all have their own strengths when it comes to their developmental learning. When preparing your children for school, it's important to ensure that we don't place too much pressure on them, and ensure we are providing children with developmentally appropriate expectations, whilst instilling in the children a love of learning.

To be ready for school, children need to gain and master a range of age appropriate skills, including:

- **Language skills:** a child needs to be able to follow instructions and understand what teachers are saying, as well as being able to communicate well with teachers and other children.
- **Physical well-being:** a child needs to be mobile and have the ability to use all facilities at school.
- **Motor co-ordination and skills:** a child needs co-ordination skills to allow them to dress and undress, unwrap lunch, use a pencil and scissors, and participate in other activities that require eye hand and motor co-ordination skills.
- **Concentration and emotional adjustment:** a child needs to be able to socialise and play with other children. They also need to be able to deal with the structured nature of a more formal learning environment.
- **Independence:** a child needs to be able to cope with minimum adult supervision.

When considering if your child is ready for school, as a parent, you might need to ask yourself the following questions:

Can my child...

- go to the toilet, eat and dress with minimal assistance?
- recognise their own belongings?
- stay with a familiar person happily?
- concentrate for short periods?
- understand and obey simple instructions?
- co-operate without frequent emotional outbursts?
- make needs known?
- follow simple instructions?
- use a variety of instruments (pens, pencils, markers, paint brushes, sticks in the dirt etc) to draw, to scribble or to write?
- identify items in a group that are different, and differentiate between opposites such as day and night, light and dark etc?
- play co-operatively with other children - share and take turns?
- use scissors to cut along a straight line?
- enjoy a variety of indoor and outdoor play? (*reference: kidspot*)

It's important to seek support when making this important decision, especially if you're concerned that your child is not ready. Feel free to talk to your child's educators, talk to the teachers at the school you may be enrolling your child in, as well as health professionals. We



would like to remind our families: **every child develops differently, by giving them an extra year to be ready, you don't disadvantage your child, you give them a better chance to get off to a good start.**

Children with Additional Needs

It is essential that families of children with additional needs talk to the school they intend to enrol their child as early as possible to discuss the individual needs of their child and how these needs may be accommodated at the school. This will give the school time to prepare for children with additional needs.

Our Transition to School Program

In our preschool rooms, the school transition program is embedded in our daily educational program. We closely observe and respond to every child's needs and interests to ensure we provide meaningful and age-appropriate learning opportunities for encouraging our children's skills and confidence.

Meanwhile, our families' contribution and input is highly valued and appreciated, as no one knows your children better than you. We do our best to meet your needs and expectations so that we can work together to strengthen your children's confidence in their abilities. We encourage you to fill out our Parent survey, which will further assist us in strengthening our school transition program.

How are we currently supporting your child's needs?

Literacy

Literacy is most commonly understood as reading and writing. Before children can read and write, they need to grasp other forms of language such as speech and the use of print and pictures. (*Raising Children Network*)

In our preschool rooms we provide many opportunities for the children to strengthen their language and literacy skills. Our book corner provides an environment where the children can have access to a variety of resources, where they can develop an appreciation for reading. Our classroom is full of picture resources, and signs, especially in our home corner, which allows children to develop an understanding of print, and how symbol systems work. Reading aloud to children is the most important activity for literacy knowledge and skills, including book handling. We also provide children with opportunities to read independently or pretend to read, as it not only shows that children understand that words have a meaning, they are also building on their confidence and imagination.

In our classrooms a variety of writing materials are available for the children at all times. We have been implementing writing experiences into many areas of our room, including the block mat, and dramatic play areas. The children are not forced to write or read, but when an interest is shown, they are encouraged to extend on it by 'writing' their names, and even some key words from their interests.

What you can do at home:

- Involve your child in every day conversations.
- Read aloud to your child.
- Give books as treats and presents.
- Listen to your child and show you're interested in what he/she is saying.
- Read and write in front of your child and talk about what you are doing - by doing so, your child learns that reading and writing are essential skills in everyday life.
- If you speak a language other than English, use that language with your child.
- Provide writing materials and give positive feedback when your child 'writes'.

Numeracy

Numeracy is not only about numbers but about being confident when you use mathematical thoughts, ideas and skills in everyday situations. Children use a range of mathematical concepts and ideas to understand the environment that is surrounding them and also apply them to problem solving in their day to day life.

Based on our children's interests and their current knowledge and skills, we provide them with opportunities to take challenges and expand their knowledge and skills. Numeracy knowledge and skills are embedded in all of our learning experiences. The children are consistently being asked questions in everyday situations to promote mathematical thinking such as: how many? does it fit? how big is it? how much is there? will there be enough?

Further mathematical examples are children being encouraged to count how many characters are in a story book or how many trains they have connected while playing. We also provide the children with a range of resources and materials at the cognitive table, to experiment their ideas and develop their problem solving skills.

What you can do at home:

- ✓ Ask your child to count at any appropriate time, for example, count the numbers of steps when walking on stairs or count the number of guests at the dining table.
- ✓ Play dominoes, card games and board games involving one or two dice and counters.
- ✓ Record your child's height.
- ✓ Let your child help with cooking.
- ✓ Talk about the position of objects, for example, in front, next to or behind.
- ✓ Talk about the shapes and sizes of everyday items.

Confidence

Building a child's confidence is of significant importance to their future success at school, as well as in their adulthood. We give children lots of opportunities to succeed in front of their

peers and the educators. 'Group Time', including show and tell, are great opportunities for children to get up in front of their peers and talk about something that is important and special to them and contribute their thoughts and ideas to other children's learning as well.

We love that so many of our families share their holidays and family adventures with us. Photos and souvenir's make great show and tell items, and help us strengthen ties between the centre and your home life. Parents can also contribute by filling out our family input sheet, or bring in an item to correspond with our letter of the week.

What you can do at home:

- ✓ Give your children lots of opportunities to succeed and to be proud of themselves.
- ✓ Be confident that your child will be confident with your support and ours.

Concentration

In our classrooms, the children are encouraged to engage in small, and whole group learning experiences based on their interest to promote their concentration skills. Other activities such as group projects, games with rules, puzzles and craft also enhance these skills.

What you can do at home:

- ✓ Provide play time with your child without disruptions.
- ✓ Occasionally hold back when your child face difficulties to allow them to attempt to solve the problem on their own.
- ✓ Provide positive feedback and acknowledge your child's efforts instead of focusing on the end result.

Independence

Being independent is very important for children, especially when they go to a school environment with lower teacher-to-child ratios. We also provide the children with lots of opportunities to develop self-help skills such as at meal times, looking after personal belongings, toileting and hygiene practices (i.e. hand washing). We also always encourage the children's self-help skills by ensuring they put shoes, and jackets on by themselves, and have also been encouraging them to put their bed sheets on and off their beds independently.

What you can do at home:

- ✓ Involve your child in your daily routine and give your child opportunities to assist you.
- ✓ Provide your child with plenty time to try and work on one task and focus on their efforts.

Finding A School for Your Child

For some families the decision can be a simple one as you may choose the local public school, while other families might consider other government schools (out-of-area) or independent/private schools. The decision about which school your child will go to is very personal and can be a difficult one. It is not uncommon for parents to feel anxious and confused, particularly when they have many options available to them.



If you are planning for your child to go to school next year, please let us know:

- Which school you have chosen for your child; and
- The reasons why you chose that school for your child.

This information is greatly appreciated, and will be display in our preschool rooms so that families and children can become more familiar with which schools each of their peers will be attending.

Parent/Teacher Meetings and The NSW Transition to School Statement

Parents planning on sending their children to school next year will have the opportunity to attend a parent-teacher meeting in June, and again in November. These meetings will provide you with an opportunity to discuss any concerns with your child's educator and track the progress of your child's learning and development journey.

The NSW Transition to School Statement is a document that records a child's interests, strengths and preferred ways of learning in their year prior to school. This statement will be completed by the child, the child's educators and the parents. It aims to provide the child's primary school educator with a complete picture to better understand the child and how best to support his/her school transition. This will be completed at the end of the year and, with your consent, sent off to your child's intended primary school.

Should you have any questions at all please do not hesitate to speak with any of your child's educators.



Additional Resources for Families

Below are websites containing useful information about starting primary school in NSW for children and their families.

KidsMatter

- A two-minute video clip on starting school narrated by Tracy Spicer provides an overview of what it means for young children starting school. There are a number of short clips providing practical ideas and strategies for parents/ carers on the website.
<http://www.kidsmatter.edu.au/families/starting-school>

School A to Z

- This website provides some insights about school routines, such as type of homework children may be required to do, how technology might be used in primary school information about children's overall wellbeing.
<http://www.schoolatoz.nsw.edu.au/>

NSW Public Schools

- Information about starting school and when to enrol:
<http://www.schools.nsw.edu.au/gotoschool/primary/startingschool.php>
- A Special Place – a 20 page book to read with your child:
<http://www.schools.nsw.edu.au/media/downloads/schoolsweb/gotoschool/primary/a-special-place.pdf>
- Preparing for Kindergarten (Primary School):
<http://www.schools.nsw.edu.au/gotoschool/primary/prepareforkindi.php>
- A ready for school checklist:
<http://www.schools.nsw.edu.au/media/downloads/schoolsweb/gotoschool/primary/rfs-checklist.pdf>
- A short video on a typical day in a NSW Kindergarten classroom:
<http://www.schools.nsw.edu.au/gotoschool/primary/primaryindex.php>

Catholic School NSW/ACT

- This website provides information about Catholic Schools in NSW.
<http://www.catholicschools.nsw.edu.au/home>

Association of Independent Schools of NSW

- Information about Independent Schools is provided on this website.
<http://www.aisnsw.edu.au>

My School website

- This website provides an opportunity for everyone to learn more about Australian schools. It has been developed by the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA).
<http://www.myschool.edu.au>

List of Local Schools

We have listed below all the local primary schools, many of which will be hosting open days during the year, please contact the school for individual details on these open days. If the school you are considering is not listed please advise your room educator.

Name	Address	Contact Details
Regina Coeli	2 Tarrilli Street, Beverly Hills	Phone: 9150 6966
Beverly Hills North Public School	1-3 Shorter Ave, Beverly Hills	Phone: 9759 3849 Email: beverlyhnp.school@det.nsw.edu.au
Beverly Hills Public School	Stoney Creek & King Georges Rds, Beverly Hills	Phone: 9580 5074 Email: beverlyhip.school@det.nsw.edu.au
Narwee Public School	61-65 Broad Arrow Road, Narwee	Phone: 9153 9756 or 9153 5578 Email: narweep.school@det.nsw.edu.au
Kingsgrove Public School	Years K-2 Caroline Street, Kingsgrove	Phone: 9150 9097
Danebank Anglican School for Girls	80-98 Park Road, Hurstville	Phone: 9580 1415
St Declan's Catholic Primary School	94 Penshurst Street, Penshurst	Phone: 9580 4831
St Mary's Star of The Sea Hurstville	24-26 Croydon Rd, Hurstville	Phone: 9587 2358
Hurstville Public School	Forest Rd, Hurstville	Phone: 9587 3963
Our Lady of Fatima	89 Shaw St, Kingsgrove	Phone: 9150 9665