

New practical advice for families to get children school ready

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New government guidance and practical advice launched on primary school offer day to help families get children ready for school, backed by language support.

Families will receive new support from today to help children prepare for school, as the government rolls out a package of measures from primary school offer day through to the first day in September.

The move comes as over a third (37%) of children are starting school without the basic skills they need for the classroom, with teachers and charities finding many children arriving in Reception unable to use the toilet independently, communicate clearly or follow simple instructions.

As part of the government's mission to get a record number of children school ready, the guidance published today – on primary school offer day – will provide parents with a clear idea of what good support looks like from schools and early years settings to help their child transition into Reception.

For the first time, new guidance sets out how schools, nurseries, and childminders should work together as one system around families to get children ready for Reception – making clear that Offer Day is the starting gun for children beginning their school education.

It sets three key building blocks for a smooth start: strong relationships with families, close partnership working between schools, nurseries and childminders, and early identification of children's needs, including SEND. It includes practical examples to follow, like home visits and stay and play sessions, giving families the opportunity to visit their new school, or for teachers to visit children in their early years setting.

The package is backed by continued investment in the Nuffield Early Language Intervention (NELI) programme until 2029, and comes as a new national campaign, fronted by award-winning teacher and rapper MC Grammar, gives parents simple ways to practise key skills at home.

Minister for Early Education Olivia Bailey MP said:

Starting school is a huge milestone – for children and parents. I remember getting my own children ready for their first day, excited and hoping they'd walk through the door feeling confident.

From the moment families receive their school place, they should feel supported with simple, practical ways to help their child build confidence, independence and the skills they need for the classroom.

By bringing schools, nurseries, childminders, and families closer together, we can make sure every child gets off to a strong start – arriving at school feeling settled and ready to learn.

The NELI programme helps children who need extra support with speech and language to catch up during Reception. It has already been shown to deliver strong results, with an evaluation finding that

it boosts language skills by an additional four months for children on the programme compared to those that aren't, or up to seven months for children from more deprived backgrounds.

The new campaign shows that school readiness is about everyday skills like communication, independence and confidence – not just uniforms or academic ability. It features a new 'Steps for School' song by MC Grammar highlighting key skills from getting dressed and using the toilet to listening, speaking and following instructions.

Jacob Mitchell, known as MC Grammar, said:

As a former teacher and a dad with children already at school – and one starting next year – I know how much practicing simple skills early can boost confidence when it's time to start Reception.

With our new 'Steps for School' song, we're giving families a fun, memorable way to build those everyday skills that will help set children up for a smooth start in September.

Lee Parkinson, primary school teacher and education content creator Mr P, said:

Preparation for school is about those small, meaningful interactions that begin at home.

I've seen first-hand the difference these everyday routines can make alongside the care and learning children get in childcare and early years settings, giving them the reassurance they need to thrive.

I always remind parents it's never too early to start. Even families with 2-3-year-olds can build confidence and independence through everyday chatting, playing and reading.

With family life getting more challenging for many, this work forms part of a wider push to make life easier for parents and give children the best start.

This government is bringing together support from pregnancy through to starting school, including through the rollout of Best Start Family Hubs in every local authority, offering parenting advice, health services and help with children's development, alongside the first ever guidance to help families manage screen time at home.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-practical-advice-for-families-to-get-children-school-ready>