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Get ready for

A practical guide for parents, carers and grandparents of children starting school in September

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Starting primary school can be an exciting and nerve racking time for you and your child.
To help you feel more prepared for the big day, we have put together some helpful tips which we hope you will find useful.

1. Help to develop your child's confidence and self-belief

Remind your child of all the things they have already achieved and always talk positively about going to school.

- Create an: 'All about me' book with your child with all of their favourite people and things.
- Use published books to help you talk about school.
- Look at the school website to see all of the fun things your child will do and speak to staff to find out about school routines and any current adaptations. Can you bring in any of these routines at home?

2. Support your child in being independent

One of the most useful things you can do to get your child ready for school is to make sure they can carry out a number of practical tasks on their own.

- Washing their hands.
- Going to the toilet, wiping bottoms and pulling up underwear.
- Putting on coats and shoes and taking them off. (Try Velcro!)
- Getting changed into their PE kits. Why not have a few practice runs?
- Using a knife and fork and opening a lunchbox and its contents.

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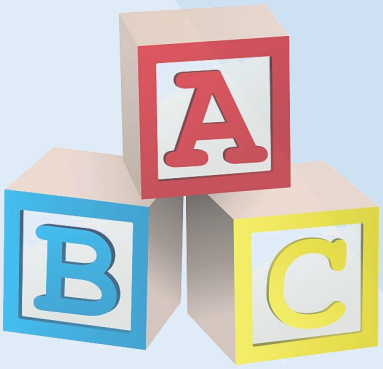
3. Develop your child's interpersonal and cognitive skills

Children learn and develop by playing alongside their classmates and so it is important that they are happy mixing with other children and adults. Being able to concentrate for small bursts, follow instructions and 'have a go' are also all important skills.

- Encourage sharing and taking turns through games and conversations.
- Practise talking and listening. Give your child your full attention when they speak and maintain eye contact - and hopefully they will listen to you too!
- Try to solve problems with words; talk about it instead of getting upset.
- Children are natural copy cats. Let them see you reading or tidying up and they'll soon want to join in, or try a role-play.
- Arrange play-dates and picnics to improve your child's social skills.
- Build up your child's concentration levels, a minute at a time, to focus on one activity. See if you can build up to 10 minutes. Maybe they could set a timer?
- Practise following simple instructions.
- Spend time with them on one activity, with no distractions, talking about what you are doing as you go along.
- Develop a 'have a go' attitude and an understanding that it is ok to make mistakes, as we can learn from them.



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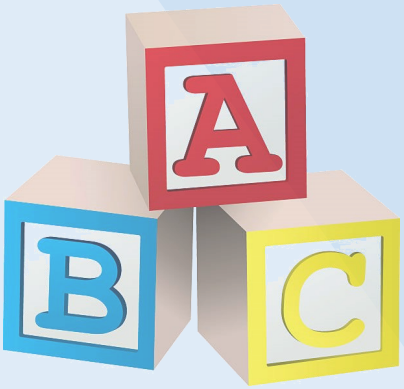
4. Introduce them to literacy and numeracy skills

Your child's teachers will work with them to build these skills. However, there are many easy things you can do at home to support your child's learning:

- Help them to recognise their name so that they can find their space in the cloakroom. Do lots of drawing and colouring to practise holding a pencil.
- Talk with your child throughout the day and explain new words.
- Share a book together every day, even if it's just for a few minutes. Mix it up. Talk about pictures, characters and stories; find rhyming words or repeated phrases; guess what's going to happen on the next page or make up new endings. Take turns in choosing a book …. so you don't end up reading the same one every night (!) but also watch to see what they choose. Sometimes they will surprise you.
- Develop a shared love of books. If your child sees you reading and enjoying books, they will too.
- Introduce number through rhymes and songs like 5 little ducks.
- Make and play number games like beetle, dominoes and hopscotch.
- Count — everything — stairs at home, numbers on doors (great for counting in 2s), cars going past, birds in the park, and, if you're lucky, toys as you put them away! Do countdowns, to count backwards too.



5. Helping their first day to be successful

There are lots of things you can do to help make your child's first day run smoothly but remember you are learning too, so don't be too hard on yourself.

- Try and get everything ready the night before. Talk about how the day will go and all the exciting things your child will do.
- Leave plenty of time so you're not rushing and you can both enjoy the first day.
- Say hello to other children and parents in the playground. Your child will copy your behaviour.
- Say a quick goodbye and remind your child that you will pick them up later.
- Try and stay calm if your child gets upset and remember the reception teacher and staff are very experienced in dealing with this.
- Plan something for you to do to take your mind off any worries you may have.
- Make sure you're there to pick up on time!

6. Settling in to school life

Remember all children are different and some will take longer to settle than others and that's fine; just carry on being kind and supportive. Also there are things you can do to help your child settle into their new routine.

- Don't plan too many things for after school as your child will be tired.
- Bring a healthy snack for the end of the school day. This will help boost their energy and mood.
- Your child may be over excited or over tired. Be prepared for anything!
- Remember to check their book bag every day for letters, pieces of work, reading books- and banana skins!
- Stay in touch with your class teacher and get involved with your school.

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7. Home learning

Education is a three way process between your child, their teacher and you. Even in normal times, children spend much more time at home than they do at school, so you can have a big impact on your child's education.

Be prepared!

Think about routines, times and spaces to learn

Can you create a cosy book corner to encourage your child to read?

Lots of things you do together at home already is "learning".

Don't underestimate yourself!

Don't take on too much!

10 minutes' of quality time is better than half an hour trying to multi task.

Sometimes the simplest things are the best - and the cheapest - a walk through the woods, a game of I-spy or snuggling up with a good book.

Ask for help!

If you want advice or support, speak to your child's teacher or other parents.

The Family Information Service has links to information and support agencies: ww.yor-ok.org/families

Learning on TV and using the Internet

We all know that screen time is a mixed blessing and it does us all good to switch off sometimes. However, while children will learn best from their own experiences, television and the internet can be useful sources of inspiration and give you ideas to talk about and try.

Check out CBeebies, Numberblocks and Alphablocks.

Hungry Little Minds www.hungrylittleminds.gov.uk

Teach your Monster to Read www.teachyourmonstertoread.com

Phonics Play www.phonicsplay.co.uk

and our local Family Learning Facebook page: Family Learning in York

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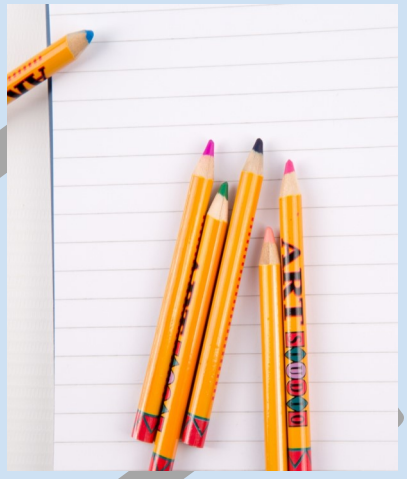
8. Family Learning

Recent times have shown us more than ever just how important (and challenging!) home learning can be and the idea of phonics and other school topics can be daunting. But learning takes place in lots of different ways, so it's great to share ideas with other parents, carers and grandparents and find out new ways to support your child at home.

The Family Learning team, with their experienced tutors, have put together a number of workshops and **courses to help you understand what your child is learning at school and how you can support them.



We run courses like:

Fun with phonics / Fun with numbers
Learning together (to explore the world and develop speech, language and communication skills)

Other courses go on to look at how children are taught in school and allow you to develop your own skills working towards an up to date qualification:
How children learn English at school / Keep up with the children in English
How children learn maths at school / Keep up with the children in maths

And we also run sessions for you to help manage stress, cook on a budget or get skills and qualifications for a job.

** In September, we will be offering online versions of all of these. We will resume class teaching when it is advised safe to do so.

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Get ready for

On-line workshops

We are currently going through unprecedented and challenging times in education and appreciate that you may be feeling anxious about your child starting school. Under normal circumstances you would be able to pop into your local school and chat with your class teacher and other parents but this is tricky at the moment.

To support you, we have worked with school teams to put together online 'Getting Ready for School' workshops to give you the opportunity to talk in more detail about the topics raised in our booklet, ask questions and talk about things that are important to you. Julie and Angie, our tutors, are fully qualified primary school teacher with knowledge of our local schools. They will be liaising with them throughout the course and we may invite specific school staff in from time to time to chat to you and answer your questions.

All sessions will be conducted via Zoom* and will last for no more than one hour. Each session will start at 10am every Wednesday and will be repeated on Thursday, so you have two chances to attend.

Workshop 1:	**5 or 6 August:**	Building confidence and supporting independence
Workshop 2:	**12 or 13 August:**	Developing interpersonal and cognitive skills
Workshop 3:	**19 or 20 August:**	Introducing early literacy and numeracy skills
Workshop 4:	**26 or 27 August:**	First day at school and settling in
Workshop 5:	**2 or 3 September:**	Home learning and Family Learning.

Enrol at any time using the link on our webpage. We will repeat the workshops in November.

New to Zoom and online learning? No internet? Speak to us and we will try to help.

To book or for further information about this or other courses:
email **family.learning@york.gov.uk,** phone **01904 554277**
or visit **www.yorklearning.org.uk/family-learning**

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