



# Preparing for Prep

Information Book for Parents

CHAPEL HILL STATE SCHOOL

*Dear Parents*

*We are delighted to welcome you and your Prep child to Chapel Hill Primary School. Beginning school is a very important step for all young children. It involves a number of significant changes in a young child's life. Being able to confidently and happily make the transition between home and school may lay the foundation for future success during the early years of formal education, or even longer.*

*This booklet suggests ways of helping your child develop appropriate physical, social, emotional and intellectual skills to cope with this new experience.*

*Children develop at different rates and so start school with very different skill levels. Teachers make allowances for these differences in the programs they offer and may ask for specific information from parents from time to time. It is important for teachers and parents to work together to make your child's educational experience as successful and enjoyable as possible.*

*We hope you find this booklet a helpful source of information as you and your child prepare for a 'happy transition to school'.*

*'A happy transition to school is important in setting the foundation for a child's future academic and social success.'*

Dockett & Perry (2004)

# PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

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## SKILLS

There are two main kinds of physical skill that children need:

- those that are necessary for looking after themselves when an adult is not able to help.
- those that enable them to join in with all learning activities at school.

These important skills include the following:

### 1. Eating

At school, children need to:

- feed themselves,
- unwrap food packaging,
- undo their lunchbox,
- unscrew their drink container,
- drink with a straw,
- peel a piece of fruit,
- get a drink from a tap,
- clean up any mess left after eating.

### 2. Toileting

Children need to:

- go to the toilet by themselves,
- be able to undo and do up any buttons and zips,
- flush the toilet,
- wash their hands,
- manage the taps.

'Accidents' can sometimes happen and Prep teachers try to prevent these by making regular visits to the toilet during the first weeks. Parents should consider sending spare underclothes if any problems are expected.

### 3. Dressing

Children must be able to take off and put on their jumpers, socks and shoes by themselves. Parents can help children to learn these skills by encouraging them to dress themselves and tie their own laces. The school recommends selecting shoes with Velcro closings.

### 4. Nose blowing

It is important for health and cleanliness that your child is aware when their nose needs wiping or blowing and that they are able to do this independently.

### 5. Eye-hand co-ordination

This is the ability to direct the hand with the eye. It is important for many things such as writing and catching balls. You can help your child develop these skills with activities such as using scissors, painting, drawing, colouring, water and sand play, building with blocks, throwing, catching and hitting balls.

### 6. Basic Movements

At school, children will participate in many new games and activities that include walking, running, jumping, hopping and skipping. Most children develop and refine these skills by having opportunities to play freely.

### 7. Clear Speech

Clear speech is developed over many years in a relaxed atmosphere. Parents are encouraged to extend their children's speech and language by talking with them and modelling good speech.

If you are worried about your child's speech or language development, you may seek advice from hospitals with speech therapy clinics or speak to your child's teacher.

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## **HEALTH**

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If your child has an illness or condition that affects their health the class teacher should be told. The teacher should also be told about the effects of any treatment or medication your child is having so that allowances can be made, both in and out of the classroom. The school must be informed of any diagnosed allergies or asthma that your child suffers from. Your child's action plan must be sent to school. If parents have any concerns about health issues it is worthwhile getting a medical opinion before your child starts school. Some areas for consideration are listed below.

### **1. Eyesight**

There are many different eye problems, some of which may not be noticeable until your child is asked to do various activities such as reading, writing or playing with a ball. If your child finds any of these activities difficult then eye problems may be a possibility.

### **2. Hearing**

Small children frequently suffer from ear, nose and throat infections, which may result in temporary hearing loss. If your child has many of these infections, or does not seem to be hearing well, parents should seek advice from the family doctor.

### **3. General Health**

Starting school can be a tiring experience, even for a healthy child. If your child has a minor illness that is stopping him or her from sleeping or eating well it would be wise to have the illness treated. It is important that your child sleeps for at least 10 hours every night. They need a healthy diet every day, which should include a healthy breakfast - giving them a good start to the day.

## **SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT**

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At school children will meet and be expected to interact with many new people, both adults and children. When children have opportunities to mix with other people they learn skills to help them to cope with the social aspects of school.

### **1. Learning how to relate to adults**

Children learn how to relate to adults when they:

- are minded by someone other than their parents.
- play at the homes of friends.
- go out with other people.
- learn to ask for things in shops.
- go to playgroups and kindergarten.

When your child is comfortable with adults, can listen to the teacher, follow directions and make their needs known to the adults at school, learning becomes more enjoyable and successful.

## **2. Learning how to relate to children**

Children learn how to relate to other children when they have the opportunity to play together.

## **3. Sharing, taking turns and co-operating**

Children often work in groups at school and this means taking turns, sharing materials and co-operating. They will also need these skills in the playground.

Children learn to share when they wait their turn or allow other children to play with their toys. They learn to co-operate when they help to prepare family meals, make beds or do other simple jobs around the home. Children feel rewarded when parents notice these things and praise them for their efforts. Playing games with adults also teaches children how to take turns and cope when they do not win.

# **EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

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## **1. Separation**

Coming to school each day is made easier if your child is able to separate happily from their parents or carers. When parents tell their child that they are going to leave but will be back, and then keep their promise, their child learns to accept separation. If your child is worried about being separated from you, they may not be able to concentrate and enjoy what is happening in school.

It also helps if parents point out the enjoyable things their child will do at school, highlighting the positives, in a cheerful and encouraging way. It does not help to say things such as “You will not be able to do that at school!” or “Did you miss me?”

## **2. Self-control**

At school children are expected to show some self-control when playing and working with others. Often, children who lose their temper when they must wait for something, or when they do not get their own way, find other children unwilling to play or work with them.

Self-control is developed at home:

- when parents do not give in to temper tantrums and do not let the child always have their own way.
- when the child is asked to wait while the parent finishes some activity before attending to the child.
- when the parent does not give the child everything they want.

## **3. Confidence**

A confident child generally sees themselves as being successful and will be better prepared to meet new challenges. Parents can build their child’s confidence by:

- praising their efforts.
- praising new achievements.
- encouraging the child to tackle tasks of gradually increasing difficulty.

## **4. Responsibility**

At school children will be responsible for their belongings and their work space. A sense of responsibility is developed when parents:

- encourage their child to keep their room tidy.
- expect their child to put away their own toys.
- encourage their child to do simple tasks around the home.

## **5. Independence**

School provides a wide range of new experiences and activities for children. Those children who do not always need direction can attempt more and will probably learn more. Parents who allow their children to try things for themselves encourage the growth of independence.

## **6. Persistence**

At school new tasks are based on the completion and understanding of earlier tasks. Small children often give up when a task becomes too difficult. Parents can help by assisting and encouraging them to finish a task, so they learn the value of persistence.

## Intellectual Development

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### 1. General

Children learn by seeing, hearing, touching, tasting, smelling and doing. Knowledge and language develop when children hear and speak the words to describe what they are doing. Children need to be given many and varied opportunities to build, play, make, travel, observe, hear stories, carry out simple tasks, help others, experiment, listen to and play music and visit friends and family. Whenever children are active and talking about what they are doing, they are learning.

It is therefore *essential for their intellectual development* that children are encouraged to ask questions and participate in conversations with parents and other family members. Whenever parents are answering questions, making observations or sharing information with children, they are teaching their child new words to express their knowledge. They are showing their child how to reason and think.

The effects that too much screen time seems to have on the developing body and brain is an area of increasing interest. Discourage long periods of screen time (smartphones, tablets, computers, and TV).

### 2. Pre-reading skills

Learning to read well is a very complex task and usually takes years to master.

Children develop a love of literature through:

- sharing books at home for enjoyment and bedtime stories. Children should be read to at least once a day.
- belonging to the local Municipal Library and being able to choose their own stories.
- being given books as gifts. seeing you reading for enjoyment and information.

If children experience success when first starting to read they will enjoy learning the skills and practise them more often. Being able to read well makes further learning easier and allows a person to find information they need in a variety of situations. To help your child prepare for reading:

- talk with your child so that they learn the meanings of words.
- draw your child's attention to signs, advertisements and writing on packets. tell your child what is written as well as point out differences in symbols which lead to differences in meaning, e.g. Men & Women on toilet doors.

When children are read to they learn many things such as:

- meaning is obtained from print.
- reading can be a useful and enjoyable activity.
- there are 'rules' about print.
- we read from the top of the page to the bottom, going across from left to right.
- we use pictures to add meaning to the words.

### 3. Pre-mathematics skills

Mathematics in Preps includes:

- counting and recognising the properties of numbers.
- learning to add, subtract and group.
- measuring with concrete materials.
- recognising money.
- sequencing for time.
- simple problem solving.

Before children can work with symbols they need to understand the ideas behind them. Children who come to school understanding words such as more, less, the same as, bigger, smaller, how many, etc. are more prepared for early mathematics.

Parents and others can help prepare children for mathematics by:

- helping the child to count a few objects, such as the plates on the table, or fruit in a bowl.
- talking to the child about time, such as when a TV program will finish, that it is half an hour until Dad/Mum comes home, how many sleeps until a birthday.
- letting the child find out what they can buy with a few coins.
- talking to the child as they build with blocks, e.g. “Can you make it bigger?”, “Can you find some more blue blocks?”, “Is that as tall as the last one you made?”
- letting the child play with water, sand, dough, etc. so that they learn how much will fit into different sized containers.

## Beginning School

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

- make the journey to school with your child so that they know the way. It is a good idea for them to become familiar with the route.
- bring your child to our school whenever possible so that they can become familiar with the school buildings and playground.
- practise with your child what they should say when asked their name.
- write your child’s name on all their clothes, and other belongings like lunchboxes and school bags. Show your child the labels so that they may recognise them when necessary.
- talk about how long the school day will be in a way that the child can understand. “It is a bit longer than kindergarten because you will have lunch and a play outside, then a story or game before I pick you up.”
- talk about the difference between ‘playtime’ and ‘lunchtime’. Show your child what you have packed for brain-snack and lunch and explain when they should be eaten. Make sure your child can easily open the lunchbox and drink container.
- a Chapel Hill Primary school bag is recommended as it will last throughout your child’s primary years. It is comfortable to carry and is the correct size for all the things your child will have to carry to and from school. The school bag can be purchased from our School Uniform Shop.

### Parent/School Relationships

The first day of school can mark the beginning of a clear division between home and school for a child. However, staff at the school look forward to working with parents in the interests of your children. You can help your child by:-

- finding out how to contact your child’s teacher if you want to tell them something about your child or discuss their progress.
- asking if there are things that can be done at home to help the child’s progress at school.
- asking how you can help at school with such things as hearing reading, helping in the tuckshop, becoming a member of P&C.
- reading the accompanying information and keeping it for future reference.
- reading the school newsletter to keep informed about events happening at school.
- looking in your child’s bag regularly for additional notices and returning them promptly when required.
- attending school special events such as Parent Information Evenings, Parent-Teacher Interviews, Excursions and School Concerts.

## **Parents' Feelings**

The emphasis in this booklet has been on preparing a child for school, but parents have to be prepared too - prepared for the fact that they may miss the child greatly. 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 and may even find that they have some time for new activities.

## **Age of Starting**

To begin school, children need to be at least **5 years of age by the 30th of June**.

Most children start school at age 5, however, parents may like to think about the age at which they would like their child to start school. It may be in your child's best interest to delay starting school for another year. Children are not legally required to attend school until they turn 6. It is important that they are ready. It is important that they have the pre-mentioned skills to ensure a positive start to their school life.

It is worth noting that early starting does not necessarily lead to greater academic achievement. It is the parent's right and responsibility to make – within the stated limits – the decision about the age for entry to school of their child.

# **TRANSITION – A POSITIVE START TO SCHOOL**

## **Summary - 10 Quick Tips for a Successful Transition**

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1. Encourage your child to ask questions about going to school.
2. Help your child stay healthy – have regular health and dental checks and keep immunisation up-to-date.
3. Encourage your child to try to do things on their own, such as dressing, washing their hands, going to the toilet, unwrapping their food and opening their drink bottle.
4. Talk to other parents about what school is like.
5. Attend the transition programs offered by our school.
6. Talk to the school about how you can be involved in your child's life at school.
7. Show your child where the school is and talk about how you will travel to and from school.
8. Arrange play-dates with other families whose children will be going to Chapel Hill State School.
9. Practise the things your child will need to do to get ready for school, for example dressing themselves, eating breakfast etc.
10. Be positive about starting school and enjoy your child's excitement about starting school.

## These are the things I can do to help me when I start school:

### Toileting

- ✓ I can ask the teacher when I need to go to the toilet.
- ✓ I can dress and undress myself when using the toilet
- ✓ I can flush the toilet when finished.
- ✓ I can use the taps and wash my hands when finished.

### Snacks and Lunch

- ✓ I know which food to eat at snack and which food to eat at lunch.
- ✓ I can open packets,
- ✓ I can unwrap my food.
- ✓ I can open my lunch box.
- ✓ I can open and close my drink bottle.

### Dressing

- ✓ I can take my own clothes on and off by myself.
- ✓ I can put on my socks and shoes.
- ✓ I can do up and undo buttons.
- ✓ I can use a zipper.
- ✓ I can tie by shoe laces.

### Language

- ✓ I can recognise my name.
- ✓ I can answer adults when they speak to me.
- ✓ I can tell an adult my name.