



My child will be moving to school – what do I need to know and do?



How do I choose a School?



It is important to start thinking ahead, about where your child might go to school. You can find lots of information about schools through their websites, OFSTED reports and by talking to other parents.

You can also look out for school open days or make an appointment to go and visit schools to look round and get a 'feel' for the school. Remember that your child is unique and a school that is a good fit for one child is not necessarily the right school for another child.

Use the '[Find My Child a school place](#)' section on the Buckinghamshire Council website to find available options.

Things to consider:

- Location of the school/ journey to school
- The school's catchment area (if you are out of catchment area for a popular school, then you need to be realistic of the chances that you will be offered a place)
- Type of school i.e. faith/non-faith school
- Size of the school
- Does the school provide lots of opportunity for outside learning
- How is the school day structured
- What is their provision for children with SEND
- Do they offer breakfast and after school provision that meets your needs

It is important that you visit schools and that you trust your judgement about what school you think will be right for your child.

If your child has SEND you may wish to visit a variety of different types of provision (mainstream, Additionally Resourced Provisions and special schools) so that you can make an informed choice about what provision would best suit your child's needs. It is also good to discuss with the professionals who know your child best, what they feel about the type of provision that would suit your child.

How do I apply for a school place?

In Buckinghamshire you can make an online application for a school place between November and the middle of January. You can find out more and the application form on the [Buckinghamshire Council website](#). You can put up to 6 different schools on the application and can put them in order of your preference. If you need help applying, you can talk to your child's preschool setting, and they will be able to advise you or talk to your health visitor.

It is possible to do a paper application but online is the preferred method.



What do I do if I would like my child to go to a special school or an additionally resourced provision (ARP)?

For a child to attend a special school or an ARP they need to have an [Education, Health and Care Plan \(EHCP\)](#). Admissions for these provisions are organised by a child's Education Health and Care Coordinator (EHCCO), when a child has a draft EHCP their parents will be asked which school they would like their child to attend. If parents wish to request an ARP or special school the EHCCO will take the case to the Placement Panel to decide whether this would be appropriate provision for the child. Even if you are planning for your child to go to a special school it is usually advisable to follow the usual admissions process, (unless a special school has already been allocated/named on the EHCP) selecting preferred mainstream schools, this ensures that your child has a space at a mainstream school if they are not able to be allocated a specialist placement.

If you have queries about specialist placements, then it is advisable to talk to your Education Health and Care Coordinator (EHCCO).

When will I know which school my child has been allocated?

The national offer day is usually in mid-April. If you applied online, then you will be emailed an offer of a place on that day after 11am. You can find the exact date on this [website](#). You will also be emailed if you provided an email address on a paper copy of an application, otherwise a letter will be sent to you, leaving the council on the national offer day.

How do I accept the school place I have been offered?

If you applied online, you can view or confirm your offer online.

If you are happy with the school your child has been offered, you must accept the place online by the deadline (you usually have up to 2 weeks to accept).

What if I don't get my preferred choice?

All children will automatically be added to the waiting list for most of the schools in your application that could not be offered, as long as they are higher preferences than the school that was offered.

If you and your child live in Buckinghamshire and their application included a school in another area, the Local Authority will be asked to add your child's name to that school's waiting list.

If you do not want your child's name included on a school waiting list, [contact the admissions team](#).

If a place becomes available at a school, it will be filled by offering it to the child at the top of the waiting list in a [later allocation round](#). The local authority will contact you by email if they can offer a place to your child.

It does not matter when a child's name was added to the waiting list or when their application was received, waiting lists are always ordered according to the school's admission rules.

If your child is on a Buckinghamshire school's waiting list, you will be periodically informed of their waiting list position by email.

It is also possible to [appeal](#) a decision for a place.

What will my child's setting do to prepare my child for transition?

Preschool settings work hard to try to ensure that the transition to reception class will go as smoothly as possible. Below are some of the things that they may do to support this.

- Modelling positivity and excitement, whilst acknowledging any worries.
- School visits (at a range of different times and if possible, with their key person)
- New teacher visits to the setting
- Transition visits/consultations
- One-page profiles
- Social Stories
- Photo books
- Visual resources (shared between home/setting and new school)
- Countdowns
- Stories about starting school

- School uniforms/book bags/PE kits/water bottles... in the role play area

Talk to your setting about what they are doing and if you have suggestions that might help your child, let them know.

What will the school do to get to know my child and our family?

It is in the best interests of your child and the school that they know all relevant information about your child and your family and begin to form relationships with you and your child. Below are some of the things that schools may do to support this process.

- Visit your home
- Visit the child's setting
- Talk to setting practitioners (this could be a formal meeting or informally on a visit or over the phone)
- Invite you and your child to Play and stay sessions at the school
- Invite your child to come for other sessions at school (this may be a story session)
- School practitioners visit the setting to read stories or play with the children
- Gather information from settings, parents and any other people working with your child.
- Gather information by asking parents and practitioners to complete paperwork
- Meet with parents at home visits/setting visits or at the school to give them an opportunity to share information, ask questions and discuss concerns.
- Provide a parents information meeting.

What information can I expect to get from the school?

Most schools will provide a welcome pack, below is a list of the likely contents of the pack:

- Welcome Letter for parents
- Welcome letter or postcard for the child
- Details of the school day
- Information about school meals
- Details of the school transition process
- One page profile/All About me
- Key information form for parents to complete
- A photo book/card (key people/areas of the school)
- Links to the school website.
- Leaflet about school uniform and where to purchase it.
- Link to school handbook/policies

If my child has SEND what will be done differently?

For children with Special Educational Needs / Disability (SEND) schools will want to enhance the support that is provided for transitions. This could include:

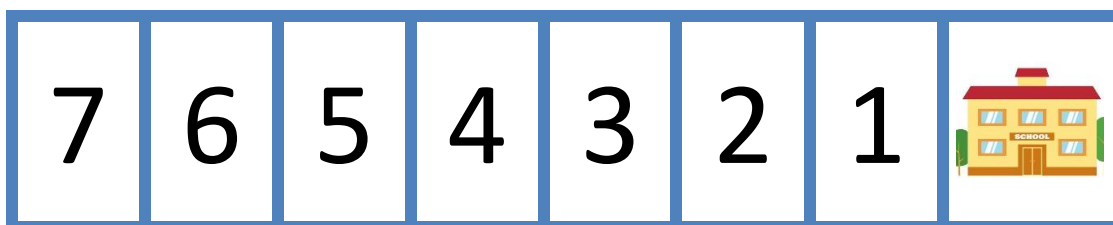
- Additional meetings with you and your child's setting
- Liaison with any professionals supporting your child
- Additional visits to the school at different times of the day
- Additional visits by school practitioners to the setting
- Meetings with key practitioners who will work with your child, including specialist support assistants
- Providing personalised photobooks that relate to your child and their interests
- Providing a social story
- Tweaking routines for when the child starts to meet their needs
- Being flexible with the transition process

- Being flexible about starting school, this may include your child entering school a bit earlier or later to avoid the crowd or it may be proposed that a more staggered start may meet your child's needs.
- Providing a transition object/toy that goes from home to school
- Discussing communication between home and school and what would suit your needs.
- Creating an All About Me book or box (with pictures of favourite people and to be used to support and regulate your child once in the school)

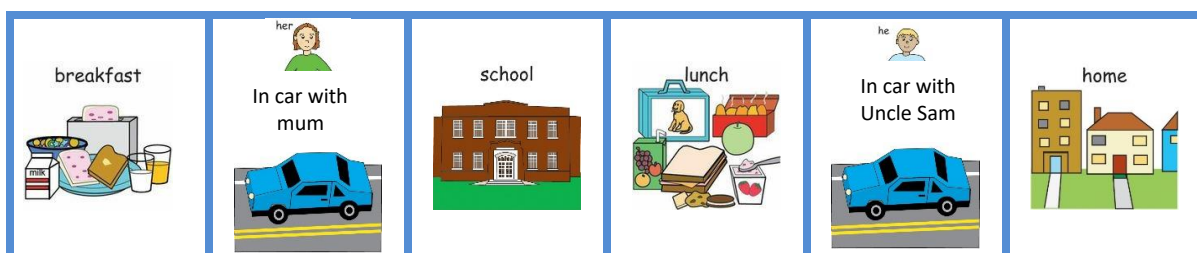
What can I do to prepare my child for school

Going to school is a big life event for you and your child and can be daunting for both of you. It is key that you are enthusiastic and emphasise the excitement of this next big step, whilst also being supportive and acknowledging and addressing their concerns. Below are some things that families can do.

- Engage with the school and setting in the transition process and wherever possible attend as many of the visits/meetings and events that you can.
- Share all relevant information with the new school, so that they know your child and are best able to support them. This can include information about their likes and dislikes, their learning styles, their development, any medical needs, your family situation, and any concerns you or your child have about starting school.
- *Share books and stories about going to school with your child but be careful not to start too early and not to overload them with information.
- Walk/drive past the school – practice the commute!
- Share information books/videos/social stories that the school has provided with your child.
- Involve them in purchasing the uniform and PE kit and have it around, practice getting dressed in it. If your child needs support getting dressed think about whether there are any adapted uniforms or adaptations, you can make to make it easier for them (i.e. Velcro not buttons). For some children washing the uniform before they wear it makes it feel less new and scratchy and makes it smell familiar.
- Support your child to develop independence skills, (dressing, handwashing, toileting, eating...) but remember that all children develop at different rates and there will be practitioners around to help if they haven't mastered all skills.
- Think about what will help your child whilst at school. For example, would having a small teddy in their pocket, or your hankie with your perfume on it, or drawing a heart on their hand to remind them that you love them be helpful.
- A count down to starting school can be useful for some children as they don't have a concept of time and it may cause anxiety not knowing when they will start. For some children it may only need to be done a few days before they start, but for others a longer countdown may be needed.

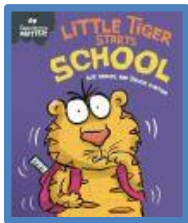


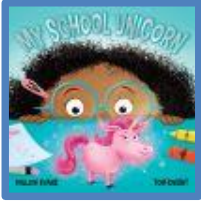
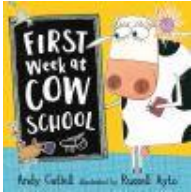
- Some children will benefit from a visual to show what happens on a school day and reassures them at the end of the day they come home.



- If your child knows some of the children who will be going to school with them, it is a good idea to meet up with them. This could be at each other's houses, at the park, going for a walk or by doing an activity together (soft play, swimming, gym...)
- Having good routines for bedtime and sleep can help children to have the energy, concentration skills and stamina for a day at school. For some children these routines are harder to establish. It will help to keep their teacher informed if they have not had much sleep on a particular night or if this is a regular occurrence.
- Remember that the first weeks at school are likely to be exhausting for children. For some children you will need to ensure that you plan in times when they can relax, unwind and process what has been happening at school. For others they may find the structure of school means that after school they need physical activities to help them to regulate.
- Remember that often children do not want to talk about their school day immediately afterwards. To find out what they have been doing it can be better not to ask lots of questions. You may find it more effective to share stories about school with them or look at photos that the school may have put on the class records. Chatting about your day can also encourage them to share information about their day.

***Books about starting school available from Buckinghamshire libraries.**

<u>Little Tiger starts school</u>	Graves, Sue	
<u>The battle : starting school can be scary sometimes!</u>	Kwok, Ashling	
<u>Starting school</u>	Ahlberg, Janet	
<u>I have to start at school today</u>	Philip, Simon,	
<u>Let's get ready for school</u>	Porter, Jane	

<u>Going to school</u>	Civardi, Anne	 The book cover for 'Going to School' by Anne Civardi shows two children, a girl in a red dress and a boy in a blue shirt, walking towards a school building. A small white dog is also visible.
<u>My school unicorn</u>	Evans, Willow	 The book cover for 'My School Unicorn' by Willow Evans features a child with dark skin and curly hair, with a pink unicorn head superimposed over their face.
<u>Prince George goes to school</u>	Hart, Caryl	 The book cover for 'Prince George goes to school' by Caryl Hart shows a young boy in a blue school uniform and a red tie, holding a book.
<u>Come to school too, Blue Kangaroo!</u>	Chichester Clark, Emma	 The book cover for 'Come to school too, Blue Kangaroo!' by Emma Chichester Clark features a blue kangaroo character and a child.
<u>First week at cow school</u>	Cutbill, Andy	 The book cover for 'First week at cow school' by Andy Cutbill shows a cow character in a school uniform.