

Importance of preparing children for OOSH and school

Preparing your child for the start of primary school will help them feel more confident about the big changes that are about to happen and what to expect at their new school. In preparation for this important chapter, you can help your child to develop a love for learning so the move is a happy and positive one.

The following points are some things to do to prepare children in starting their first year of school:

- Ask children what they think about school.
- Encourage children to ask questions about going to school.
- Encourage children to do things on their own, such as dressing, washing their hands, going to the toilet, unwrapping their food, and opening their drink bottle.
- Attend this transition-to-school program that 3 Bridges has created.
- Parents can talk to the school about how they can be involved in their child's life at school.
- Talk to staff at 3 Bridges who are holding the activity sessions, about other things you can do at home to help their child's learning and development.

Checklist for parents to prepare their children for OOSH and the first year of primary school:

- Show your child where the school is and talk about how they will get there.
- If possible, arrange playtimes with other families whose children will be going to the same school as your child – it helps if your child knows another child at their school before they start.
- Practice the things your child will need to do to get ready for school (such as putting things in their bag and remembering to take a hat).
- Confirm your child's before and after-school care arrangements, showing your child where the Outside School Hours Care facilities are and talking about how they will get there.
- Stay positive about starting school and OOSH and share the excitement with your child.
- Ask the school what time school starts on the first day and where to take your child.
- Help your child to pack their school bag with a snack, drink, lunch and a hat. Include a change of clothes and a spare pair of underpants in a plastic bag and let your child know these clothes are there in case of any accidents.
- When dressing for school look for easy fasteners and encourage your child to dress themselves, so they can manage things like taking jumpers on and off. Label all belongings and find out where lost property is held at school.
- Put sunscreen on your child in the morning if it is needed.
- Ensure you leave home on time allowing time to say goodbye. At first, you may stay a while to ensure your child feels secure, but once they have settled in, a short and reassuring goodbye encourages independence.
- Show your child where you will meet them at the end of the school day.
- Check what time school finishes and arrive in plenty of time to collect your child.
- After the school day is over, talk to your child about what happened at school.
- And most importantly, remember to praise your child for being very brave, and let them know how proud you are of them, and that you love them. Encouragement is the surest way to self confidence.