

School Families Reference Guide

Contacts and useful links



Updated September 9, 2024

For parents and carers with preschool and primary age children. Information links to education resources and tips for supporting children's learning at home and school.

| Topic/org. | Description |
|---|--|
| ACT Education Directorate | Public School Life Enrolling in and attending a public school. Preschool Pathways the Directorate's step-by-step guide to preschool. |
| Early Childhood Services | ACECQAs Starting Blocks website for families to find and compare early childhood services by quality ratings, fees, vacancies and inclusions. The Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority (ACECQA) provides guidance, resources and services to support the early childhood sector to improve outcomes for children. |
| Early Childhood Australia ECA | Early Childhood Australia , the peak early childhood advocacy organisation, acting in the interests of young children, their families, and the early childhood sector. |

CURRICULUM & LEARNING FRAMEWORKS

| | |
|---|--|
| The early years Birth to 5 years | National Approved Learning Frameworks: The Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) titled 'Belonging, Being and Becoming' supports children's learning from birth to five years of age, as well as their transition to school. Watch this 5 min video about the Framework. |
| Out of school hours care (OSHC) & school holiday programs | The Framework for School Age (out of school hours) Care , called ' My Time, Our Place ' provides children with leisure and play-based activities that respond to their needs and interests, and maximise their potential for recreation, socialisation, and learning. |
| Preschool OSHC | Information on OSHC for preschool , check individual primary school websites for more information. |
| Curriculum: five years + Kindy to college (K-12) | The Australian Curriculum sets the goal for what all students should learn as they progress through their school life – wherever they live in Australia and whichever school they attend. |
| Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander | Relations, Healing and Reconciliation . Information about the ACT Government's commitment to voice, treaty, and truth. First Languages Australia is working toward a future where Aboriginal language communities and Torres Strait Islander language communities have full command of their languages. |

Reference Guide



| Topic/org. | Description |
|--|---|
| Life Ed National Resources | Primary Years Health & Wellbeing Education programs |
| Languages and bilingual families | <p>The ACT Education Directorate has resources for parents and carers with culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds.</p> <p>Bilingual Education Alliance (ACTBEA) is a local, non-profit community group that celebrates and promotes multilingualism in the Canberra region.</p> |
| Parent Associations | <p>School P&C Associations are voluntary organisations of parents, carers, and members of school staff. They enhance the experience of students and foster collaboration between parents, staff, and the wider community. P&Cs are a great way to meet other parents and staff. Check your school's website (see 'community') for details about your P&C.</p> |
| ACT Parents | <p>ACT Council of Parents and Citizens Associations Council is the peak body for public school parent associations in the ACT. Subscribe to the eNewsletter and receive resources and support for getting involved at your school's parent association.</p> <p>Association of Parents and Friends of ACT Schools (APFACTS), the peak body representing parents and carers of students at ACT non-government schools.</p> |
| Parenting & learning support | <p>ParentLink information based on the latest research - supports effective parenting practices.</p> <p>Raising Children information, parenting videos, articles and apps backed by Australian experts.</p> <p>Children's earliest and most powerful learning comes from their family. This program called HIPPI support's school readiness by building parents' skills and confidence in their role as their child's first teacher.</p> <p>The Circle of Security Parenting program based on decades of research about how secure parent-child relationships can be supported and strengthened. Available as a book, audiobook, and a course.</p> <p>Saver Plus Co-contribution funding assistance for families to build budgeting skills and save for educational expenses.</p> |

Reference Guide



| Topic/org. | Description |
|---|--|
| Parenting & learning support | <p>Parents Australia is designed to assist families in the wellbeing, learning and education of their children. From <i>Relationships Australia</i>, Family Connect guides parents to help children build skills and confidence through meaningful conversations.</p> <p>Triple P free, flexible, practical ways to develop skills, strategies and confidence to handle any parenting situation. Available as an online course.</p> <p>Let's Count an early mathematics program for children aged three to five, developed by The Smith Family and early childhood researchers.</p> <p>NAPCAN National Association for Prevention of Child abuse and Neglect: provides alternatives to smacking, how to listen to children and babies, challenges of being a dad, keeping kids safe, family and domestic violence.</p> |
| Helplines & counselling services | <p>AIFS: The Australian Institute of Family Studies helplines page: telephone and online counselling services for children, young people and adults, related to topics such as family and domestic violence, gambling, mental health, wellbeing, and more.</p> |
| Education Research | <p>ARACY: The Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth</p> <p>ACER: The Australian Council for Educational Research</p> <p>Murdoch Children's Research Institute</p> <p>Gonski Institute for Education</p> <p>Harvard Education + Family & Community Engagement</p> |
| Diverse supports | <p>ACT Child Development Service assessment, referral, and information for parents of children 0 to 6 years with development concerns. Children requiring early intervention supports are referred to the NDIA Early Intervention service.</p> <p>ACT Education Directorate All students in the ACT can attend their local public school. If you need support with enrolment, please contact your local school for assistance.</p> <p>MyTime for parents and carers of children with a disability, developmental delay or chronic medical condition</p> <p>Down Syndrome Australia Providing support and information to families with a member who has Down syndrome</p> |

Reference Guide



[People with Disabilities ACT](#) Inc (PWDACT), the peak advocacy organisation in the ACT for people with disabilities.

[ACT Gifted Families Support Group](#) Assoc. Inc. provides support for gifted children, their families, teachers, psychologists and other professionals

[Carers ACT](#) the peak body for ACT carers (partners, spouses, children, family, or friends assisting someone who lives with disability, is frail with age, or has an ongoing illness).

Health & Community

Online safety

[eSafety Commissioner](#) Resources for enjoying safe and positive online experiences

Nutrition and lunchboxes

Information about what to pack in the [lunchbox](#)

[Fresh Tastes](#) guides to teach children about healthy food and drink choices.

Physical activity

[Active Play](#) Resources for physical activity and screen time to help make healthy choices. [Fact sheet](#)

[Physical Activity Foundation](#) cycling or walking are simple ways for children to incorporate physical activity into their everyday lives and adults can model this behaviour for children - at least 60 minutes of moderate physical activity each day to maintain a healthy lifestyle

Wellbeing, anxiety, and mental Health

[BRAVE](#) This Program is an interactive, online program for the prevention and treatment of childhood anxiety. The programs are free and provide ways for children to better cope with their worries. There are also [programs for parents](#).

[Beyond Blue's Healthy Families](#) is all about giving you the information, knowledge and confidence to support the young people in your life – whether you're a parent, guardian, grandparent, a favourite uncle or an awesome auntie.

[BeYou](#) promotes mental health and wellbeing, from the early years to 18, and offers educators and learning communities evidence-based online professional learning.

[Perinatal anxiety & depression Australia](#) **PANDA** supports the mental health and wellbeing of expecting, new and growing families with information and services.

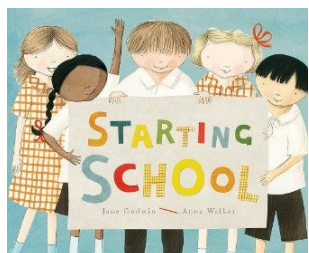
Reference Guide to Books about starting school for preschool/kinder parents and carers



Read together

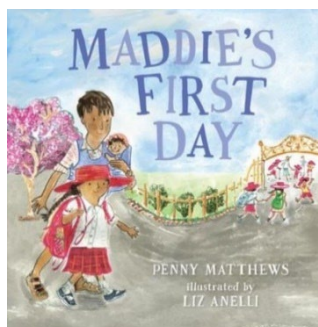
Reading books together helps children work through their anxieties about starting school – even the ones they haven't had yet! A bit like a rehearsal for starting school but with a parent by their side. It's practice for skills like opening a lunchbox, asking questions, making new friends, and talking to a teacher.

See [Libraries ACT](#) catalogue for many more titles to borrow.



Starting School by Jane Godwin and Anna Walker

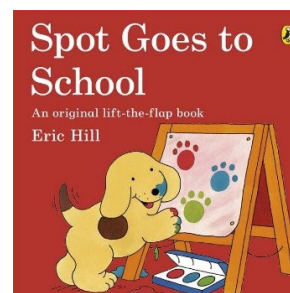
Five children are off to school for the very first time. They enjoy making friends, learning new things and discovering all that school involves. This book touches on how the children feel about starting school.



Maddie's first day

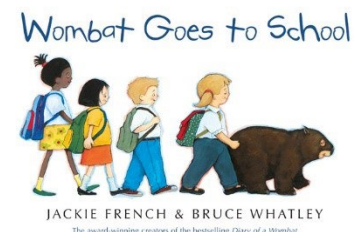
By Penny Matthews, illustrated by Liz Anelli

A picture book about the excitement of going to 'big' school for the first time. This book is great for encouraging discussion with children about their first experiences, making friends, and growing up.



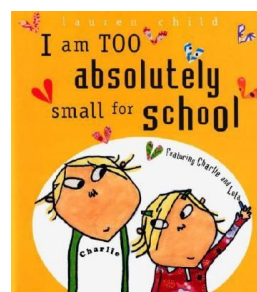
Spot Goes to School by Eric Hill

Spot starts school and finds singing, playgrounds, painting and story time. This is a great introduction for little kids as to the adventure school might be. With plenty of interactive lift the flaps it makes school sound like lots of fun.



Wombat Goes To School by Jackie French

In between sleeping, scratching and chasing carrots, Mothball the wombat manages to go to school. This is a funny sequel to the Wombat series by Jackie French and is a perfect book for preschoolers.

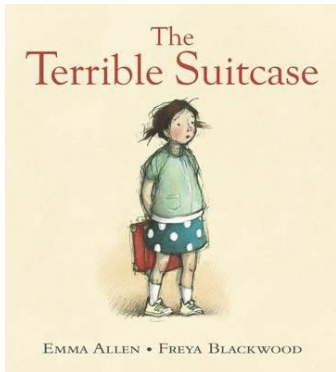


I am Too Absolutely Small for School

Lola is a bit anxious about school, she thinks maybe she is still too small and doesn't really have time to go. She wonders whether she will have people to talk to at lunchtime and whether learning to read might be too hard. Her wise older brother Charlie assures her it will be fun.

Lola is both outspoken and brave. We love her imaginary friend Soren Lorensen who is also nervous about starting school.

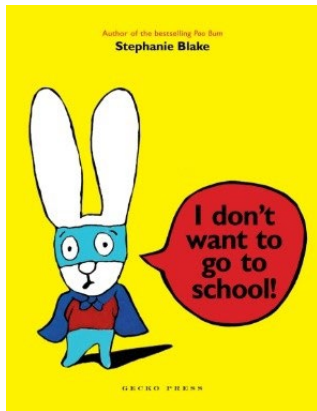
Reference Guide to Books about starting school for preschool/kinder parents and carers



The Terrible Suitcase by Emma Allen and Freya Blackwood

It's the first day of school and all the children have a special backpack, except one – she has a terrible suitcase. A story about how imagination can make magic out of anything.

This CBCA award winner is a magical tale celebrating imagination and making the best of things. Beautifully illustrated.

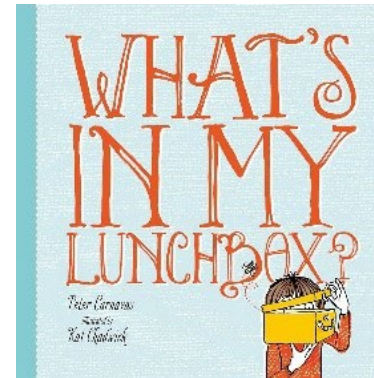


I Don't Want to Go To School by Stephanie Blake

Simon the Bunny is about to face his first day of school and he is scared. He says he is not going, no matter what his parents say. When Simon eventually faces school he has such a good time that he does not want to come home at the end of the day.

This is a great read aloud for families who are dealing with school refusal or problems adjusting to school. It has a good lesson in it, that if you give it a

go, things just might surprise you.

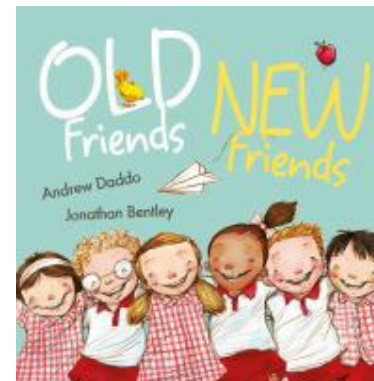


What's In My Lunchbox by Peter Carnavas

Today in my lunchbox, I happened to find an apple, a sister, a fish, an egg, a bear and a dinosaur.

Full of lunchbox silliness this is a funny look at school lunches. The little boy in the story does not want to eat the apple until he realizes it is his best option after all. With simple and humorous illustrations by Kat Chadwick this

would be a great read aloud at preschool for all those kids getting used to lunchboxes. For children age 3-6.



Old Friends New Friends by Andrew Daddo

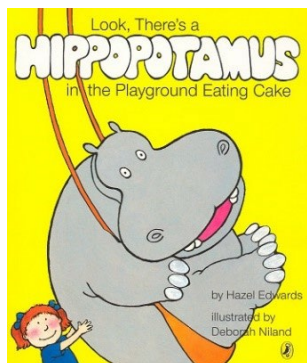
A brand-new school year! I can't wait!

Hang on... None of my old friends are in my new class. This empowering and relatable picture book is about making friends and being yourself.

First Day by Andrew Daddo

This children's picture book captures a modern first day of school – iPhone pictures and all. Covering the anticipation and nerves of a first day and that both mother and child may have to be a bit brave. This school starter assures her mum that tomorrow will be easier.

Reference Guide to Books about starting school for preschool/kinder parents and carers



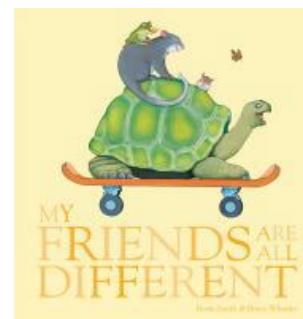
Look, There's a Hippopotamus in the Playground Eating Cake by Hazel Edwards

I've got a new school bag. I put my red drink bottle and my red lunch box in my school bag. My hippopotamus is packing his school bag too. Together with her hippopotamus, the little girl is starting school. They meet her teacher, eat lunch in the playground and make new friends. This is a reassuring story for new school starters. The little girl's imaginary hippopotamus goes to school with her so that he will not be lonely at home. This is a good read aloud to have up your sleeve prior to starting school.



Twig by Aura Parker

Why won't someone play with me? Heidi is a stick insect. She is tall and long like the twig of a tree. It is her first day at a busy bug school, where she hopes to learn and make new friends. Sadly, making friends is that much more difficult when no-one can find you! Can you spot Heidi? This is a gorgeous story about a little girl, who happens to look like a twig, who just wants to make friends. This is a joyful book about being different and accepted.



My friends are all different by Rosie Smith & Bruce Whatley.

Whether big or small, slow or fast, my friends are the best. My friends are the best because they are all different, what about yours?



Meesha Makes Friends by Tom Percival

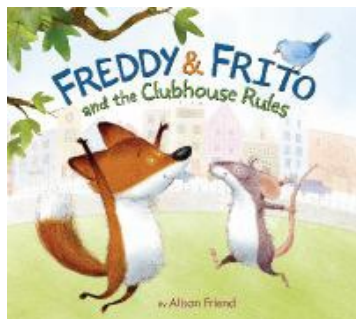
Meesha loves making things ... But there's one thing she finds difficult to make - friends. She doesn't know quite what to do, what to say or when to say it, and she struggles reading and responding to social cues. A warm and affectionate look at the joys and difficulties of making and keeping friends, relating to others, and finding your place in the world.



Big Friends Linda Sarah & Benji Davies

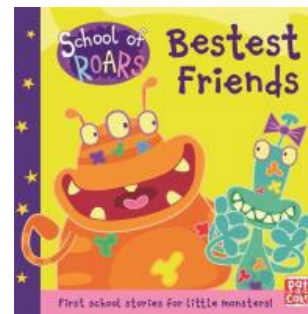
Best friends Etho and Birt love going up Sudden Hill and sitting in simple cardboard boxes imagining they are kings, soldiers, astronauts, or pirates until Shu asks to join them, and their "two-by-two rhythm" is disturbed.

Reference Guide to Books about starting school for preschool/kinder parents and carers



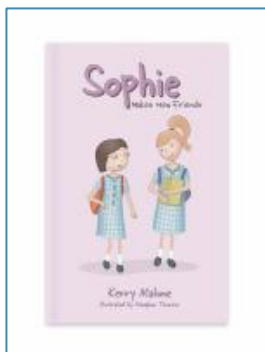
Freddy & Frito and the Clubhouse Rules by Alison Friend

Best friends Frito and Freddy want a place where they can play together that has plenty of space and not too many rules, so they build a clubhouse that is perfect--until their families and friends come to visit.



Bestest Friends

It's time to go to the School of Roars! Join the monsters for a roarsome day at school. It's art class at the School of Roars, and the monsters have a fun project to do. But Wufflebump feels left out when his best friend Meepa is partners with Yummbble. Miss Grizzlesniff teaches the class about being kind to one another and everyone joining in together. Featuring themes of sharing, friendship and problem-solving, this School of Roars story is perfect for little monsters everywhere!



Sophie makes new friends by Kerry Malone, illustrated by Meaghan Thomson

It's Sophie's first day at her new big city school. Without her old friends, who will sit with her at recess? Will she make new friends? She eventually finds the courage to say hello to Phoebe. Will Phoebe convince Sophie to join the skipping team?



Hello Friend! By Rebecca Cobb

The story of one relentlessly big-hearted and enthusiastic little girl who is insistent on befriending a certain little boy. And why wouldn't he want to be friends with her? She's very good at sharing? in fact, she insists on it, even if it's a sandwich that he doesn't like. though there is one thing he's very keen on after all. . . being friends.

Reference Guide to Books about starting school for preschool/kinder parents and carers



Children's books about **Feelings**

Introduction

Children have many of the same feelings that adults have. They can be frustrated, nervous, excited, frightened, and embarrassed. But children are still learning to talk about how they feel, or they use other ways to communicate feelings such as facial expressions, body language, behaviour, and play.

The skills to express and manage feelings are learned through relationships and interactions with others. Learning to identify emotions in childhood helps children to:

- Be empathic and supportive of others,
- Have positive mental health and wellbeing,
- Develop resilience and coping skills,
- Feel more competent, capable and confident and have a positive sense of self.

Helping children learn about and express their feelings

Name the feeling - Naming feelings is the first step in learning to identify them. Develop an emotional vocabulary.

Behind every behaviour is a feeling - understand the meaning and feeling behind behaviour. Find positive ways to express feelings once you know what is driving the behaviour.

Identify feelings in others – Reflect on how someone else may be feeling. Discuss feelings and learn how to recognise other people's feelings through facial expressions.

Be a role model - Kids learn about feelings and how to express them appropriately by watching others. Show how you're feeling about different situations and how you deal with those feelings.

Encourage with praise - Praise your child when they talk about their feelings or express them in an appropriate way. Feelings are normal and it's ok to talk about them.

Listen to your child's feelings - Stay present and resist the urge to make your child's bad feelings go away. Support your child to identify and express their feelings so they are heard. When feelings are minimised or dismissed, they will often be expressed in unhealthy ways.

Reference Guide to Books about starting school for preschool/kinder parents and carers



Readings on feelings:

- **ABC 'Moodies'** 1.10 min episodes x 10. Led by Play School's Rachael Coopes, Moodies identifies big emotions in little people. Inspired by the powerful research around mindfulness for kids, it guides the audiences to name and understand emotions in different ways.
- 2.25 mins eSafeKids Book demo for parents: [Find Out About Feelings](#)
- 2.40 mins eSafeKids Book demo: [Inside My Heart and In My Head Feelings](#)
Explore the world of emotions to help children understand the universal and unique nature of feelings.
- 5.31 mins: [I've Got a Feeling](#) - by Stephanie Owen Reeder (© National Library of Australia)
- 4.49 mins: [Australian Kids book read aloud](#) - Feeling All My Feelings Book by Kim T.S
- 7.31 mins [Get to know SPECIAL ME](#) by Jennifer Nwokeji
- 4.46 mins [In my heart](#): a book about feelings (Growing Hearts) by author Jo Witek and illustrator Christine Roussey
- 4.06 mins [The Feelings Book](#) By Todd Parr
- 8.17 mins [A Little Spot of Feelings](#) - Emotion Detective By Diane Alber
- 4.12 mins [The Colour Monster](#), A Story About Emotions by Anna Llenas
- 5.20 mins [When I Feel Angry](#) by Cornelia Maude Spelman
- 8.07 mins [Me and My Fear](#): A Story about Independence by Francesca Janna
- 5.35 mins [All about feelings](#)- Felicity Brooks and Frankie Allen

Books on Making Friends

- Friendships in Primary Article ['The Conversation'](#)
- The [Very Hungry Caterpillar's Australian Friends](#) by Eric Carle
- Have you filled a bucket today? By [Carol McCloud](#)
- [I walk with Vanessa](#)
- [Friendship is like a seesaw](#)
- [The Playground is like the jungle](#)

Reference Guide to Books about starting school for preschool/kinder parents and carers



Books for parents



Transitions in children's everyday lives

This *Everyday Learning Series* title explains what transitions are and how children might experience these events; the importance of familiar relationships; and how we as parents/carers and educators can support children as they negotiate the transitions of daily life.



Transition to school: Communication and relationships

This *Research in Practice Series* title describes a communication- and relationship-based approach to transition to school—an approach that focuses on the development of secure, respectful and reciprocal relationships between everyone involved in the transition process.

Libraries ACT has many programs, resources and books to support you and your child through the transition to preschool and kindy.

Library membership is completely free for you and your child and enables you to borrow up to 50 books at a time, and to access a range of online and digital resources. Non-members are welcome to attend any of our programs.

Programs and events

Story Time - Sharing stories, books and songs to support literacy development and social connections.

Sensory Story Time - A neuro-diversity affirming session to support children with sensory needs, or who just benefit from a quieter approach.

Bilingual Story Time - Stories and songs shared in a variety of community languages.

Speechie Library Talks - Held in November each year, these talks are presented by a local Speech Pathologist to help families support language development.

National Simultaneous Storytime - Held in May each year, we celebrate reading and Australian stories with guest readers and fun activities.



Online & Digital Resources for Library Members



Story Box Hub

Quality picture books read by celebrities and authors.



Borrow Box

E-books and audio books.



Libby for Kids

E-Audiobooks, E-books and E-magazines.



Comics Plus for Kids

E-comics and graphic novels.



Busy Things

Educational games and activities.



National Geographic for kids

Explore science and nature.



The Canberra Times

Local news.



The Saturday Paper

National and international news.

Children's books from the collection



The Wild Guide to Starting School
Phillip and Laura Bunting



The Colour Monster goes to School
Anna Llenas



Going to Big School
Laura Sieveking



Hello Crayons and other School Friends
Hannah Eliot



Let's Get Ready for School
Jane Porter



Old Friends, New Friends
Andrew Daddo



The Runaway Hug
Nick Bland



Brain is not always right
Stuart Scott



Nice and slow
Sarah Ayoub

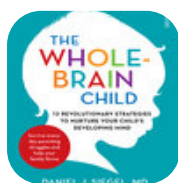


I love me
Sally Morgan

For parents and carers



The Power of Showing Up
Dan Siegel



The Whole Brain Child
Dan Siegel



Girlhood
Maggie Dent



Parental as Anything
Maggie Dent



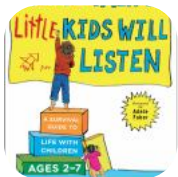
9 Things
Maggie Dent



10 Things Every Parent Needs to Know
Justin Coulson



Wild Things - How We Learn to Read...
Sally Rippin



How to talk so little kids will listen
Joanna Faber



ACT Council of Parents & Citizens Associations

The parent voice on public education

PLAY

Resources

for parents and Carers



Play-based learning



ACT Education Directorate
Kids at Play
Active Play

Find a Playgroup in the ACT
Membership is free



Some primary school communities have a local playgroup, check with your school to join



Preschool Pathways

 **Early Childhood Australia**
A voice for young children

 **Building a healthy Australia through play**

 **raisingchildren.net.au**
the australian parenting website

Fathers & Play



Nature & Play

Risk & Play

Emerging Minds.

Self-care for families
HEADSPACE

Play Spaces
PARKS ACT
ACT PLAY SPACES

 **international play association**
promoting the child's right to play

Christina Keeble
Neurodiversity



PLAY

the marvellous
brain building benefits



Speaker links

Sally Johnson and Belinda Lum, Assistant Directors, Early Childhood Pedagogy Team, ACT Education Directorate,

Gabby Millgate, Woden Valley ELC Nature Pedagogy Leader

Ali Sewter, Director, Forrest Out of School Hours Care



ACT Council of Parents & Citizens Associations

The parent voice on public education

6 TIPS TO SUPPORT YOUR CHILD

WITH THE TRANSITION TO SCHOOL

Visit the school

Take advantage of open nights, school events, and playground visits during Term 4 or the holidays. Familiarising your child with their school, its people, and its environment can help them feel more comfortable. You might even make the school playground your regular stop during the summer break (some schools now open their playground to local community during holidays).

Talk about their school

Use language that fosters a sense of belonging. Instead of saying, “This is the school you’ll go to,” try “This is your school.” Highlight familiar aspects, like how their new school also has a playground or a teacher, just like preschool or daycare, to make the transition feel less daunting.

Arrange playdates

If you know which of their friends will be attending the same school, organise playdates over the summer. Mention their peers by name when talking about school to help build a sense of familiarity and reduce anxiety.

Involve them in buying supplies

Encourage your child to help pick out their school items like a pencil case, uniform, or lunchbox. Let them try on their new uniform or use their school hat and lunchbox in day-to-day activities to create excitement and help them feel prepared.

Use everyday conversations to address anxiety

Rather than focusing on anxiety directly, bring it up naturally through incidental situations. You could say, “I felt nervous finding a car park at the shops today, but I stayed calm and figured it out.” You can also remind your child of a time they overcame nerves, like their first day at preschool/daycare.

Reassure with familiarity

Emphasise the similarities between preschool/daycare and school. You might say, “At school, you’ll have a lunchbox just like at preschool” or “You’ll have a teacher and playtime, just like before.” This helps reduce the fear of the unknown by reinforcing that school is just another learning setting they’ll grow familiar with.

