



Preparing For School



HEARTS ACADEMY TRUST

HEARTS Mission Statement

We promote **HAPPINESS** through a creative, exciting and practical curriculum, which generates a love of, and interest in, learning.

Great value is placed on pupils' self **ESTEEM** which is developed through a well-motivated attitude to learning, a healthy lifestyle, good social skills, self-discipline and a positive self-image.

We promote the highest standards of **ACHIEVEMENT** in all areas of the curriculum and help all pupils to fulfil their potential regardless of gender, race or ability.

We foster **RESPECT** and **RESPONSIBILITY** for all by establishing good relations between the school and home, church and community. Pupils are taught respect for themselves, others and the environment. They are also taught to take full responsibility for their own choices and responsibility for themselves and their community.

We encourage **TRUTH** and honesty in all aspects of school life – relationships, work and the curriculum.

We develop **SPIRITUALITY** and **SERVICE** so that calm, quiet, reflective times, including prayer, are part of school life and beauty is appreciated. We promote a service culture that reflects our duty to support the needs of all members of the community.



Starting School



Being able to interact appropriately with other children and share resources is a key skill that will help your child when they start school. Play dates with other children will help to promote these skills and you could arrange these with future classmates if possible. During the play date you can model useful social phrases such as 'my turn please' or 'let's share' and join in with pretend play to start the game off and then fade out as children get into character.

To a 4 year old, the idea of starting 'big school' can be both exciting and daunting. With a little preparation at home and at Pre-school/Nursery, you and your child will be well prepared for when September arrives.

How does the HEARTS Academy Trust prepare children for school?

The HEARTS Academy Trust has a wealth of experience in supporting both children and parents with the school transition process. In addition we teach some academic skills along the way as well, to give your child a head start in their education.

Whatever your child's stage of development, be rest assured that Reception teachers are used to children starting school in September with a wide range of abilities.



How you can help

You play an important role in supporting your child with their start to school.

Having already spent time in the Pre-school/Nursery, your child is probably already well on the way to having the skills they need to success at school. They are used to spending time apart from you, mixing with other children and communicating with other adults.

Here are some suggested activities that you can do at home a few months prior to your child starting school:

- Once you know which school your child will be attending, start chatting about school. Whilst it is important to talk positively about how exciting school will be, at the same time let your child know that it is okay to feel a little worried too.
- When out and about, walk or drive past the school to help your child get used to the idea of where they will be going.
- Sharing topical books such as 'Starting School' by Janet & Allen Ahlberg, or 'Charlie and Lola: I Am Too Absolutely Small For School' by Lauren Child, provide a great way to open up conversation about school life.
- Arrange play dates with fellow classmates. Not only will a familiar face help your child feel at ease in their first few weeks, play dates also give your child time to interact with other children and develop social skills.
- Get into a routine which is compatible with school hours. Practise the morning routine, including eating breakfast and getting dressed in time for school.
- Buy school uniform together. When choosing uniform consider elasticated waistbands on trouser/skirts. Velcro or buckles may be more manageable for your child than laces.



Ask your child to help name their uniform/clothes and school equipment like drinks bottle and lunch box. This will aid name recognition and help them to identify which things are theirs.



Self Care Skills



Flip trick: Have you heard of the ‘flip trick’ for putting a coat on? Put your child’s coat upside down on a table in front of them. They can then put their hands in the armholes and flip the coat over their head – a handy way for your child to put their coat on by themselves!

There are a number of self-care skills that are helpful for children to have grasped before they embark on school which you can help with at home:

Toileting: Encourage your child to go to the toilet by themselves. Try to encourage your child to get used to asking to use the toilet as they will be expected to ask if they need a toilet break during class time.

Hand washing: Practise washing hands thoroughly using soap and water after using the toilet and before mealtimes.

Dressing and undressing: Practice putting on and taking off the school uniform. This will be helpful for PE lessons and in making your mornings more manageable.

Mealtimes: Every child from Reception to Year 2 in a state school, receives a free school meal. To help prepare your child for school meals, practise using a full-sized knife and fork and carrying a plate/tray.





Can do attitude: Help to develop your child's independence and a 'can do' attitude by giving them a few everyday responsibilities as they get closer to school age. Perhaps they could lay the table, feed a pet or put their own laundry away.

Listening games Play some fun listening and doing games to help with following instructions. 'Simon says' or 'Can you find?' games are great for this

Following instructions: Practise following instructions at home by settling simple tasks throughout the day such as putting away toys. This will help your child to be fully involved in classroom activities when they start school.

Listening and attention: Offer activities at home such as drawing or completing puzzles which involve your child sitting for short periods of time to help build their concentration and attention span.

Developing independence: Help to develop your child's independence and a 'can do' attitude by giving them a few everyday responsibilities as they get closer to school age.

Recognising their name: Name recognition is useful for your child to be able to identify their personal belongings, their coat peg and their drawer for school work. Provide ample opportunities for your child to see their name at home.



Reading and Writing



Useful books to read with your child:

- **I am too Absolutely Small for School (Charlie and Lola) by Lauren Child**
- **Starting School by Janet and Allen Ahlberg**
- **Topsy and Tim Start School by Jean and Gareth Adamson**
- **Harry and the Dinosaurs Go to School by Ian Whybrow and Adrian Reynolds**
- **Come to School too, Blue Kangaroo! by Emma Chichester Clark**

Sharing books together is a wonderful way for your child to learn new words, discover information about the world around them, and to stimulate their imagination.

Showing an interest in mark making and having ideas and imagination behind the marks your child makes is a good indicator of pre-writing readiness as this means your child has a purpose for writing.

Teaching reading

To read children need to know which graphemes (letters) correspond to which phonemes (sounds). Although this is not the scheme we use, helpful information can be found if you search for 'Jolly Phonics Letter Sounds' on YouTube.





If your child is ready and interested in writing, encourage them to write simple words or sentences. Initially, begin by focussing on your child's name as this will also help with reading and name recognition. Encourage them to write their name into greetings cards, onto artwork they have done or onto letters and postcards for friends and family.

Teaching Writing

As sounds are introduced so is lower case letter formation.

Home learning

Keep phonic and writing sessions short at home, interesting and offer active ways to engage your child's attention.

Here are some activities you might like to explore at home:

- When out and about point out letter sounds on road signs or on food labels at the local supermarket.
- Look for letters and sounds when sharing a bedtime story together.
- Explore foam letters in the bath.
- Be sound detectives and go on a sound hunt together looking for objects beginning with the focus sound.
- Stick a post-it note with a sound written on your child's bedroom door or on the fridge for them to discover.
- Create different purposes at home for your child to make marks such as helping to write a shopping list, forming letters with their finger in a glitter tray or making birthday cards for friends.



Maths

Mathematics involves providing children with opportunities to develop and improve their skills in counting, understanding and using numbers, calculating simple addition and subtraction problems and to describe shapes, spaces and measure.

Young children are learning maths all the time through a wide variety of play experiences. Maths is everywhere in the home. With the support of parents, children can grasp many mathematical concepts through their play.

Here are some suggested activities you might like to try at home to promote your child's mathematical skills:

Sand and water

Using sand can develop mathematical concepts and language, e.g. heavy, light, empty, full, big, little and so on. Conversation and questioning – how much will it hold? Make shapes and patterns.

Language

You can help to promote mathematical language such as – heavy, light, empty, full, long, short, big, small, add, plus, take away and minus in relevant contexts.

Playdough

The use of playdough can help to develop a mathematical understanding and it is very simple to make. Develop mathematical language – short, long, fat, thin. Make shapes of different dimensions – flat shapes, 3D shapes. Create opportunities to compare things that float and things that do not.

Imaginative Play

Simple activities like letting your child set the table for dinner can help develop counting skills, e.g. getting out three pieces of cutlery. Involve your child with household activities.

Books and Rhymes

Enjoy stories and rhymes with your child that have a mathematical element – e.g. 'The Very Hungry Caterpillar'



Being able to count verbally to at least 20 will be of great benefit to a child starting school. Practise counting up to twenty, and backwards too.

**Top
Tip!**

Being Prepared

Organising childcare

If working arrangements mean you work beyond school hours, start preparing before and after school childcare. If you make arrangements talk this through with your child so they know what to expect and arrange a setting in visit before they start. Equally, make sure you have suitable arrangements in place for the school holidays.

Routine

As the start of the term approaches try to get into the school routine; getting up and going to bed at a reasonable time and practise getting dressed and eating breakfast in time to leave for school.

School run

Do a practise school run before the first day so the journey is straightforward and you can consider practicalities such as timings and parking.

Uniform

Obtain a copy of the school's uniform requirements. Around a month before school starts is an ideal time to purchase uniform.

Drop of and collection expectations

Find out details of what you need to do and where to go to drop your child off at school. Do you wait in the playground or enter the classroom? Where do you need to leave your child's PE kit? Where do you need to be at the end of the school day?

It's quite common for children's behaviour at home to change when they first start school. Don't be surprised if your little one becomes more clingy, argumentative, lethargic, excitable or prone to tantrums for a while.

For more information on preparing your child for school speak to a member of our staff who will be happy to answer any questions you may have.

Another important part of being independent at school is being able to use the toilet independently, including washing and drying their hands. It will also be helpful if they are able to blow their nose on a tissue and put it in the bin.





Getting ready for school checklist:

Over the summer:

- ☐ Find a bedtime book about starting school to read to your child
- ☐ Go on a shape hunt to start developing early maths skills
- ☐ Check that your child can recognise their name when it's written down
- ☐ Make sure your child can go to the toilet and wash their hands independently
- ☐ Establish a school-friendly bedtime routine
- ☐ Encourage socialising with other children at the park or with friends

The week before school starts

- ☐ Label uniform and any other items that can be taken and lost!
- ☐ Practise the whole school run – from getting dressed and having breakfast to making the journey to school
- ☐ Give your child confidence to ask their teacher or TA for help if they need it

The day before, get everything ready:

- ☐ School clothes laid out
- ☐ Shoes and coat ready by the door
- ☐ School bag packed
- ☐ Talk about the exciting day ahead

The BIG day:

- ☐ Take a photo – it is their first day, after all
- ☐ Check what time your child needs to be collected
- ☐ Compare notes with other parents – you've made it!

