

WE WANT OUR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE TO

THRIVE

RATHCOOLE & MONKSTOWN

WE CAN

GET READY TO LEARN



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Developed in partnership with...



With thanks to...

Whitehouse Pre-School & Nursery Unit
Rathcools Pre-School & Nursery Unit
Methodist Mission Pre-School Playgroup
Hollybank Pre-School Playgroup
Monkstown Nursery School
St James' Pre-School & Nursery Unit





Parents,

The past few months have been a very turbulent time due to the Covid-19 pandemic, lockdown and school closures. Now things are slowly starting to return to normal, but there is still some uncertainty about how things will look when schools and early years settings re-open in September.

Very soon your child will be starting their new Early Years setting. This year things may be very different and this may be causing some anxiety for you and your child.

Regardless of all the uncertainty ahead, there are definitely things you can do to prepare your child for starting pre-school, nursery or school.

THRiVE Early Years settings have collaborated to bring you this guidance on how you can help your child to be emotionally resilient, get ready to learn and set them off to a really great start on their educational journey!

This guidance is to affirm your role as your child's first educator and give you advice on how to manage their transition to their new Early Years setting.

REMEMBER – PARENTS ARE CHILDREN'S FIRST AND MOST IMPORTANT EDUCATORS AND THE FOUNDATIONS THAT YOU PUT IN PLACE AT HOME CAN REALLY SET YOUR CHILD UP WELL.





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WHAT CAN I DO TO PREPARE MY CHILD FOR PRE-SCHOOL?



WE CAN...



PLAY WITH OUR CHILDREN –
"I'M LEARNING EVERY DAY, ESPECIALLY WHEN I PLAY".

Play is healthy. It helps children grow strong and healthy and can be an outlet for anxiety and stress. Children learn lots from play that cannot be achieved through screens or homework.

Top tips for play:

- **Play every day:** Playing with your child every day, even for ten minutes, can make a huge difference to their development and wellbeing.
- **Physical play is important for children's developing brains and bodies:** Practise throwing; catching and bouncing balls; jumping; hopping; climbing; balancing; and all those other basic, fundamental skills.
- **Creative play promotes all-round development:** Allow your child to experiment with crayons, glue, pencils, ribbon, old greetings cards and coloured paper. Playdough, jigsaws and construction toys are also great activities. For a mess-free activity, let your child "paint" outside with a basin of water and a large paintbrush. Remember it is the process, not the end product that is important.
- **Play imaginatively together:** Play house, school, hospital, hairdressers etc.



WE CAN...

SUPPORT OUR CHILDREN'S LANGUAGE
AND COMMUNICATION DEVELOPMENT —
"WAKEY WAKEY SLEEPY HEAD,
LEAVE YOUR DUMMY IN THE BED."

Top tips for promoting language and communication:

- Now that your child is starting pre-school, try to remove dummies or reduce them to bedtime only.
- Reading stories is a fantastic way to improve language development. Cuddle up and read stories together anywhere (bedtime, the garden, the bath, on car journeys etc.).
- Singing songs and rhymes help and also improves memory and recall.
- When out and about describe everything you see to your child, e.g. colours, shapes, the weather, other people, and try to answer their many, many, many questions as patiently as possible!

Abbey Sure Start has a Speech and Language Therapist for those under 4 if you have any concerns regarding your child's speech.



WE CAN...

HELP OUR CHILDREN TO BECOME INDEPENDANT –
"I MAY BE SMALL BUT I'M LEARNING IT ALL."

Try to encourage your child to be independent by letting them do things for themselves. This can be difficult sometimes as it takes longer and can be frustrating (and messy!) but it will really build your child's confidence.

Top tips for promoting independence:



Depending on your child's age and stage of development you may want to teach them to be independent when:

- Eating – e.g. using cutlery, pouring milk, putting dishes in the sink, helping to set the table.
- Dressing – e.g. putting on their own coat and shoes, hanging up their belongings, doing up buttons, zips, etc.
- Toileting – e.g. using and flushing the toilet, cleaning themselves, washing their hands.
- Tidying up – e.g. putting toys away, putting things in the bin.

Don't panic if there are skills they are not ready for yet. Don't give up, just keep giving opportunities and encouragement. Always remember: 'It's not a race, go at their pace'. Abbey Sure Start has a health visitor who can give information on how best to encourage your child's independence.

WE CAN...

PROMOTE SOCIAL SKILLS –
"PLAYTIME IS BETTER WHEN WE ALL SHARE AND SMILE."

Young children at this stage of development still need to learn to share and relate to other people. We need to teach them social skills to help them build friendships and cope with rules and boundaries when they go to preschool.

Top tips for promoting social skills:

- **Teach:** your child to wait patiently, share, take turns and co-operate by modelling and describing these skills during playtimes.
- **Notice:** when your child shows good social skills and praise them for it.



WE CAN...

SUPPORT OUR CHILDREN'S EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT – "IT'S GOOD TO FEEL AND GOOD TO TALK."

Young children are still learning to understand and manage emotions. Big feelings such as anger, frustration, jealousy, sadness, anxiety or even excitement can be very overwhelming for them. When they don't have the language to express these emotions they often act out instead. From a young age you can help your child to understand emotions and learn positive ways of expressing them.

Top tips for promoting emotional development:

- **Talk:** about feelings when playing with your child
eg "I feel really happy when I play with you"
- **Look:** at facial expressions of characters on TV or in books and wondering aloud how that person might be feeling e.g. "he seems very scared doesn't he?"
- **Be sensitive:** to your child's feelings and don't dismiss them, no matter how trivial they seem.
- **Listen:** to their fears and reassure them.



WE CAN...

BE PREPARED –
"EVERYTHING YOU SAY AND DO
HAS AN IMPACT ON ME TOO."

Consider the way you're talking to your child about change – whether that's starting Sure Start, nursery, or school. It's an exciting and positive step! If you can reflect this in your language, it will have a huge impact on how your child approaches it.

Top tips for being prepared:

- **Take a trip:** Show your child where they will be going.
Imagine: Get excited by talking about what they will learn and play and who they might meet.
- **Research:** Read through information booklets supplied by the school together.
- **Read:** Books are also a great way to introduce the topic of 'going to school'.
- **Practice:** Get your child used to morning and bedtime routines.
- **Listen:** Be open to hearing your child's anxieties, answer their questions and reassure them.





WE CAN...

WORK IN PARTNERSHIP –
"MOST JOURNEYS ARE BETTER WHEN
SOMEONE IS TRAVELING ALONGSIDE US."

Communication with your children's teachers and other childhood education staff is key. Let them know about your child's learning journey so far – their likes and dislikes, and challenges they face. This will help educators to meet your child's individual needs.

Top tips for working in partnership:

- **Communicate:** complete information sheets on your child so that new staff can get to know your child's personality, interests, and learning needs
- **Inform:** let the education team know about any other relevant professionals your child sees such as speech therapists, GPs, social services, dentists etc.
- **Be bold:** You are the expert! You know your child best, so be confident in communicating.
- **Listen:** Respect other professionals and listen to their views. Everyone is working together and is there to help your child.



WE CAN...

VALUE OURSELVES AND HAVE CONFIDENCE
IN WHAT WE'VE DONE SO FAR —
"SELF-CARE FOR YOUR FAMILY'S WELFARE!"

Don't forget yourself in this transition; it's a big step! Acknowledge how you're feeling. Remember that you are, and will always be, your child's first educator. Teachers and friends come and go. You as the parent are the one constant they will have!

Top tips for valuing your role as your child's first and most important educator:

- **Ask questions:** be the one that asks about their day, listen to every word - they say.
- **Get involved:** be the one that continues the learning by sitting down to play with them or reading a bedtime story.
- **Provide guidance:** be the one to reassure them any time they seem unsure.



FINALLY.....

WE CAN

WORK TOGETHER TO ENSURE
OUR CHILDREN THRIVE BY

WELCOMING the chance to grow

EMBRACING the opportunities

CELEBRATING our achievements

ASPIRING to be whatever we want to be

NURTURING ourselves every step of the way



Meet the WE CAN Bear



HELLO EVERYONE!
I'M THE
'WE CAN' BEAR.

LOOK OUT FOR ME
IN YOUR NEW CLASS
AND COME TO SAY HELLO.

I CAN'T WAIT TO
WELCOME YOU!
SEE YOU SOON!



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To keep up to date
with local family events and parenting tips
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 @ThriveGroupNewtownabbey



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