



WOODLANDS
Infant School

Be the Best Me You Can Be

Getting Ready for Nursery

A guide for parents and carers

Welcome

Starting Nursery is a big step for children and families. At Woodlands, we know that every child develops at their own pace. They all have different starting points. Children do not need to be able to do everything before they start – Nursery is where they will learn, practise and grow in confidence. Our guide shares some simple things you can practise at home and answers some common questions to help you and your child to feel confident, settled and ready to start at Woodlands.



Please remember

This is not a test or checklist your child must pass. It is a guide to help you support your child with confidence.

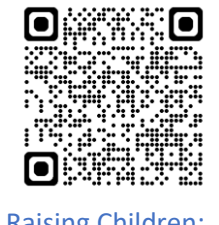


The skills below are things to begin practising at home. Your child does not need to be able to do them all before starting Nursery. They are simply small steps that can help your child feel more confident, settle more easily and enjoy Nursery life.

1 Personal independence

Skill to begin practising	Why it helps	Where to get support	
Begin to use the toilet or show signs of toilet-training readiness	Helps children feel more confident and comfortable at Nursery	ERIC: Toilets and school readiness	Leicestershire NHS Dressing Skills Guide
Begin to tell an adult when they need the toilet or need changing	Helps staff support your child quickly and sensitively		
Wash and dry their hands with help	Supports hygiene and independence		
Begin to put on and take off their coat and shoes with adult help	Helps at outdoor playtime and home time	BBC The Getting Ready Badge	Conquering Kindergarten
Begin to pull up trousers, manage elasticated clothing and try simple fastenings	Makes toileting and changing easier		
Begin to recognise their own belongings	Helps your child find their coat, bag and water bottle		

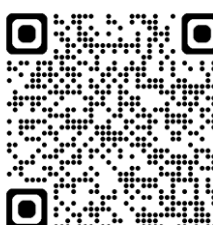
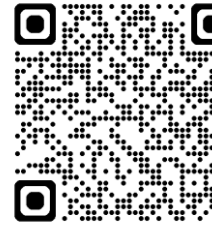
2 Eating and drinking

Skill to begin practising	Why it helps	Where to get support	
Drink from a cup or water bottle	Helps children stay hydrated during the Nursery session	NHS Wales: Drinking from a cup	NHS Healthier Families: Food facts
Sit for a short snack or meal	Helps children manage snack time and lunchtime routines		
Try a range of foods	Helps children feel more confident with Nursery snack or lunch	NHS Recipe and Meal ideas	Raising Children: Nutrition and Fitness
Begin to feed themselves using fingers, a spoon or fork	Supports independence at snack and lunch		
Begin to open simple snack pots, lunchboxes or packets with help	Helps children take part in snack and lunch routines		

3

Communication and language



Skill to begin practising	Why it helps	Where to get support	
Say, point or show when they need help	Helps staff understand and support your child	BBC Tiny Happy People: Talking tips	BookTrust: Getting ready to start school
Respond to their name	Helps children feel secure and follow Nursery routines		
Begin to follow a simple instruction	Helps children join in with routines such as tidy up, snack time and outdoor play	NHS Start for Life: Activities for toddlers	BBC Tiny Happy People
Listen to a short story, song or rhyme	Builds attention, vocabulary and confidence		
Begin to take turns in a short conversation or simple game	Helps children play and communicate with others		
Use words, gestures or signs to express simple needs	Helps children feel understood		

4

Emotional wellbeing and resilience



Skill to begin practising	Why it helps	Where to get support	
Spend short periods away from their main adult	Supports settling into Nursery	NHS Top Tips for Building Resilience in Young people	BBC Tiny Happy People
Begin to play alongside other children	Helps children become familiar with social play		
Begin to share toys or take turns with adult support	Supports friendships and group play		Action for Children: Feelings and behaviour
Begin to name or show feelings such as happy, sad, worried or cross	Helps children communicate emotions	BBC Talking to your child about emotions	
Ask for help, comfort or reassurance from a familiar adult	Helps children feel safe and secure in Nursery		
Begin to understand simple routines	Helps children feel confident because they know what is coming next		

5 Physical development

Skill to begin practising	Why it helps	Where to get support	
Run, climb, balance, jump and move safely	Supports outdoor play, confidence and physical development	Tiny Happy People 	Active together: Active tots 
Use hands for building, playdough, threading, puzzles or drawing	Builds hand strength for self-care and early writing	Leicestershire healthy tots 	
Carry a small bag or hold their own water bottle	Builds independence and confidence		
Walk safely with an adult nearby	Supports movement around Nursery and outdoor learning		
Begin to manage stairs, steps or changes in level with support	Helps children move safely around different spaces		

6 Early learning behaviours

Skill to begin practising	Why it helps	Where to get support	
Enjoy looking at books and talking about pictures	Builds vocabulary, attention and early reading confidence	BookTrust: Getting ready to start school 	NHS Start for Life: Activities for toddlers 
Join in with songs, rhymes and repeated phrases	Supports speech, listening and memory		
Explore mark-making using crayons, chalk, paint or chunky pencils	Builds early writing skills and confidence	BBC Tiny Happy People: Songs and rhymes 	PACEY: School readiness information for parents 
Notice numbers, colours, shapes or patterns in everyday life	Builds curiosity and early mathematical thinking		
Begin to stay with a simple activity for a short time	Helps children build concentration and confidence		
Begin to help tidy up with adult support	Supports responsibility and Nursery routines		

Starting Nursery: parent FAQ

What is Nursery like?

At Nursery, your child will...



What will my child's first day be like? What will they do?

Your child's first day will be calm, welcoming and focused on helping them feel safe and settled. They will be greeted by the Nursery adults, shown where to put their coat, bag and water bottle and helped to find something to play with.

During the session, children will have time to explore the classroom, meet the adults, play indoors and outdoors, listen to a story, sing songs and begin to learn simple routines such as snack time, tidy-up time and sitting together for a short carpet session.

We do not expect children to know what to do straight away. The first few days are all about helping children feel secure, building relationships and learning Nursery routines one step at a time.

For the first couple of sessions, parents are welcome to stay and play, or they can leave the site or attend a welcome coffee morning in the school hall.

What does a typical day look like? What will my child be doing?

A typical Nursery session includes a balance of adult-led routines, child-led play and opportunities to learn indoors and outdoors. During the day, your child will:

- be welcomed by a familiar adult
- choose activities in the classroom
- play and learn outdoors
- share stories, songs and rhymes
- take part in a short carpet session
- have snack or lunch, depending on their session
- explore creative, physical, construction, role-play and sensory activities
- learn how to tidy up and look after the Nursery environment
- be supported to make friends, take turns and ask for help

Much of children's learning in Nursery happens through play. Adults join children in their play, introduce new vocabulary, model language, support social skills and help children develop confidence and independence.

What are the key learning areas covered during the week?

Nursery learning follows the Early Years Foundation Stage. This means children learn through seven areas of learning and development.

The three prime areas are especially important in Nursery:

Area of learning	What this may look like in Nursery
Communication and Language	Listening to stories, learning new words, singing songs, talking with adults, following simple instructions and joining in with conversations.
Personal, Social and Emotional Development	Settling in, building relationships, sharing, taking turns, naming feelings, becoming more independent and learning Nursery routines.
Physical Development	Running, climbing, balancing, using tools, mark-making, building hand strength, managing coats and shoes and developing independence with toileting and handwashing.

Children also learn through the four specific areas:

Area of learning	What this may look like in Nursery
Literacy	Sharing books, joining in with rhymes, talking about pictures, noticing print and beginning to make marks.
Mathematics	Counting during play, noticing numbers, comparing size, sorting objects, exploring shapes, patterns and amounts.
Understanding the World	Exploring nature, talking about families and celebrations, noticing changes, learning about the local area and asking questions about the world.
Expressive Arts and Design	Painting, drawing, singing, dancing, role play, music, construction, imaginative play and exploring different materials.

Children do not experience these as separate “lessons” in the way older children might. In Nursery, these areas are woven through play, routines, stories, songs, outdoor learning and adult interactions.

Will my child need to be able to do everything before they start Nursery?

No. Children do not need to be able to do everything before they start. Nursery is where children learn, practise and grow in confidence. It helps if children have begun to practise some simple routines at home, but we know every child develops at their own pace.

What are the most important things to practise before Nursery?

The most helpful things to practise are:

- saying, pointing or showing when they need help
- beginning to use the toilet or letting an adult know they need changing
- washing hands with help
- putting on and taking off a coat with support
- drinking from a cup or water bottle
- sitting for a short snack or meal
- sharing books, songs and rhymes
- spending short periods away from their main adult

Does my child need to be toilet trained?

Not all children will be fully toilet trained when they start Nursery. However, we encourage families to begin supporting toilet training when their child is ready. Please speak to us before your child starts if they are not toilet trained, need changing or have any medical, developmental or toileting needs. We will work with you to support your child sensitively.

For advice, parents may find these links useful:

[ERIC: Toilets and school readiness](#)

[Starting Reception: Potty-training](#)

What if my child has accidents?

Please do not worry. Accidents can happen, especially when children are settling into a new environment. We will support your child calmly and kindly. Please make sure your child has spare clothes in school, including underwear, socks and trousers or leggings. They will keep these on their peg.

What should my child wear to Nursery?

Our Nursery children should wear school uniform. The uniform is listed in the Parents and Carers section on the school website. Please choose clothing that is comfortable, practical and easy for your child to manage. Elasticated waistbands, Velcro shoes and simple fastenings are helpful. Nursery children are busy and may be painting, digging, climbing, exploring outside and playing with water, so clothes need to be suitable for active learning.

Does everything need to be named?

Yes, please. It is very helpful if all clothing and belongings are clearly named, including coats, jumpers, cardigans, shoes, bags, lunchboxes and water bottles. This helps children recognise their own things and supports independence.

What should my child bring to Nursery?

Your child will need:

- a named water bottle
- a named book bag
- a named coat suitable for the weather
- spare clothes in a named bag (this will be kept in school in case your child needs changing).
- optional piece of fruit for a snack
- lunch if your child is staying for the afternoon and not having a school dinner

Please avoid sending in toys from home unless this has been agreed with the Nursery team.

Can my child bring a comfort toy or special item?

We understand that starting Nursery can feel emotional. If your child has a comfort item that helps them settle, please speak to us. We will work with you to help your child feel secure while gradually building confidence and independence.

What if my child cries when I leave?

This is very common. A calm, positive and brief goodbye usually helps children settle more quickly. Staff are experienced in supporting children who feel upset at drop-off. We will comfort your child, help them find something to do and let you know by phone if we have any concerns about how they are settling. Staff are always available to speak with at pick up.

How can I help my child with separation?

Practise short separations before they start, such as staying with a trusted adult for a short time. Talk positively about Nursery and reassure your child that you will come back. A simple goodbye routine can help, for example:

“Have a lovely time. I will come back after Nursery. The grown-ups will look after you.”

Try not to sneak away, as this can make children feel more anxious.

What if my child is very shy or quiet?

That is okay. Some children need time to watch, listen and feel safe before joining in. We will not force children to speak or join in before they are ready. We will build warm relationships, offer gentle encouragement and help them find activities they enjoy.

What if my child does not speak clearly yet?

Children develop speech and language at different rates. Please let us know if you have any concerns. You can support your child by talking together, sharing books, singing rhymes and giving them time to respond.

Useful support can be found here: [BBC Tiny Happy People](#)

What if my child uses gestures, signs or another language?

That is absolutely fine. Children communicate in different ways. Please share any words, signs, gestures or phrases your child uses at home so we can understand and support them. It is also helpful to tell us key words your child may use in another language, especially for toileting, food, comfort and family members.

Does my child need to know letters and numbers before Nursery?

No. Children do not need to know letters and numbers before they start Nursery. The best preparation is talking, playing, singing, sharing stories, noticing the world around them, counting everyday objects and enjoying mark-making with crayons, chalk, paint or chunky pencils.

How can I help my child love books?

Share books little and often. Your child does not need to sit for a long story. Looking at pictures, talking about what you can see, joining in with repeated phrases and choosing favourite books are all valuable.

Useful support can be found here: [BookTrust: Getting ready to start school](#)

Will my child have snack or lunch?

Children have a piece of fruit provided for them every day. Your child is welcome to bring in their own fruit for snack if they wish. Children who stay for the afternoon will also be supervised having lunch in the dinner hall with known adults. It helps if your child can begin to sit for a short snack or meal, drink from a cup or water bottle and try feeding themselves with fingers, a spoon or fork.

What if my child is a fussy eater?

Please let us know if your child has particular food preferences, allergies or anxieties around food. We will encourage children gently and positively. We will never force children to eat. Likewise, we will never let a child go hungry. If we have concerns about the amount your child wishes to eat at lunchtimes, we will speak with you.

For healthy eating advice, parents may find this useful: [NHS Healthier Families: Food facts](#)

How much sleep does my child need?

Young children need good sleep routines to help them manage busy Nursery sessions. A consistent bedtime, calm evening routine and regular morning routine can make a big difference to how settled and ready children feel. For a 3-4 year old, the usual guidance is around 10-13 hours of sleep in a 24 hour period.

Further information around sleep for little ones [can be found here](#).

What if my child still naps?

That's okay. We often have children who feel tired especially when they first start in Nursery and where we can, we will facilitate some rest or quiet time. This tends to lessen as children become familiar with the Nursery routines. We will talk with you about your child's usual routines and what they may need during the Nursery day.

What if my child has allergies, medical needs or additional needs?

Please tell us as soon as possible. We will work with you to understand your child's needs and make sure the right support is in place. This may include medical information, care plans, allergy plans, individual support or additional transition arrangements.

How will you help my child settle?

We will build warm relationships, help children learn routines, support them with play, encourage independence and give them time to feel safe. Some children settle quickly and others need longer. Both are completely normal.

How can I prepare my child over the summer?

You can help by:

- talking positively about Nursery and Woodlands
- practising the journey to school
- walk past school and point out their new classroom to get them excited
- sharing stories and songs

- practising putting on coats and shoes
- using a water bottle
- trying short separations with trusted adults
- encouraging your child to carry a small bag
- giving them small jobs at home
- visiting parks, libraries or playgroups to build confidence around other children

What if I am worried about my child starting Nursery?

Please speak to us. No worry is too small. We would much rather know if you are concerned so that we can work together and support your child from the very beginning.

What is the most important thing for parents to remember?

Your child does not need to be “ready” in every way. The most important things are that they feel safe, loved, encouraged and positive about starting Nursery. We will work with you to help them settle, grow in confidence and enjoy learning through play.