

# Little Chick starts school



Little Chick Starts School is a story all about what to expect when a child starts Reception. It's designed to be read by parent and child together. Inside, there are also lots of tips about how parents can support their child emotionally and practically as they begin this exciting new chapter.

# Guidance for parents

## What is “being school ready”?

Being “school ready” means that a child is emotionally, socially and physically ready to cope with learning in a classroom. Within their early years, they have developed;

- Emotional and social independence that allows them to leave their parent for the school day, socialise with other children and communicate their feelings and needs, asking others for help when they need to.
- Language and communication skills that allow them to communicate with others, listen to and understand others and follow instructions.
- Physical independence which means they can go to the toilet by themselves, use tools like pencils or paint brushes, dress themselves and feed themselves.

To help them learn and develop at school, we want our children to be “school ready” by the time they leave their Reception Year and go in to Year 1.

However, the journey to school readiness really starts long before this point, when our children are babies and continues all the way through to age 5. There is lots of preparation that must happen from birth so that a child is ready to begin school.



# How do I use this book?

This story is about Little Chick who is about to start Reception – and the journey she goes through on her first day. It includes her feelings and ideas about school and is designed to help both parents and children feel emotionally and practically prepared for the start of school.

Reception Year is a time to practise all of the different skills your child has developed so far to begin to get them ready for Year 1. You can use this book in the run-up to Reception and whilst your child is there to talk about the things your child will experience at school.

## **You can use it from birth to;**

- Find practical tips about what you can do with your child during their early years to help them develop.
- Find out more about children's milestones from birth, especially in communication and language, physical development and personal, social and emotional development.

## **You can use it closer to the time your child begins school to;**

- Read the story together with your child to talk about school and what will happen there.
- Give you an idea of the feelings and emotions your child may have and how best to support them.

Please don't worry if your child isn't doing all of the things described in this book by the time they start Reception – every child is different and develops at their own pace and Reception is a time to practise and learn about school life.

**One day, Mummy Chicken tells Little Chick some news.**

**"You are almost a big chick and in September you're going to go to school!"**

**Little Chick isn't sure. "My tummy feels a bit funny about starting school...." she says.**

**Mummy Chicken gives Little Chick a cuddle. "You might feel excited or a bit worried and that's okay. Starting school can sometimes feel scary because everything is new – and that's why it's exciting too! You'll have lots of fun once you get used to it."**



It's normal for your child to have a whole range of emotions about such a big transition. Use this page to start the discussion, then talk to them regularly and positively about school, encouraging them to talk about their feelings. Validate their feelings by repeating them back to your child; "It sounds like you are feeling worried about starting school." Then, reassure them; "It's okay to feel worried about school and your teacher will be there to help you!"





Help your child to recognise their feelings and talk about them as early as possible;

- Read stories and sing songs about feelings
- Look at feelings faces to recognise emotions
- Support them to label their emotions as they are feeling them. "You look so happy today!" "Oh dear, you feel sad."

**Mummy Chicken and Little Chick go and visit her new classroom.**

**Little Chick feels excited. "Look, there are so many toys!"**

**When she meets her new teacher, Little Chick feels a bit shy, then she smiles. Mrs Owl looks kind and has a big smile.**



If possible, try to visit your child's classroom with them before they start school so they have a picture of where they will be going. If your child is already at the school or setting, they will normally organise a visit to their new classroom. You can use this page to talk about the classroom and what children will see in it.





Help your child become more independent and get ready to use their new classroom by:

- Encouraging your child to have a go, asking for help when they need it.
- Showing how to ask for help, using a sentence: "Please can you help me?" or using a gesture like the Makaton sign for 'help'.
- Giving your child choices: "Would you like apple or pear?"
- Letting your child ask for things in shops, and be involved in choosing and paying.
- Telling your child that it is ok to ask for help.
- Playing alongside your child, talking about what you are doing.
- Encouraging your child to tidy their toys and put their coat away.

**It's Little Chick's first day at school.**

**"Here we are!" smiles Mummy Chicken.**

***I'm not sure any more...* thinks Little Chick.**

**Mummy Chicken smiles at Little Chick, "It's okay to miss your Mummy and Daddy. Remember at the end of your school day, we'll always come back! And whilst you're at school, your teacher will be kind to you and look after you!"**

**"That's right!" says Mrs Owl, "Wave bye bye to Mummy and in you come, big brave chick!"**



It's normal for both you and your child to feel nervous on the day they start school. Prepare them by reading this book and other books about starting school and give lots of praise and encouragement.





If your baby or toddler isn't going to a childminder or nursery before school, help them feel confident and happy when separated from you by supporting them to form relationships outside of the family home and try new environments. Try;

- Play dates with other children
- Going on day trips with grandparents or other family members
- Going to playgroup sessions
- Story sessions or rhyme time sessions at your local library

**Mrs Owl shows the children their pegs!**  
**"This is where you put your coats and bags" she says.**

**Little Chick likes her peg. It has a picture of a chick on it!**



Use this page to talk to your child about their new school bag, uniform and where their things are kept when they are at school. Help them to find their things easier at school by writing or sewing a name label in to clothes and coats. Letting them practise putting on and taking off their school uniform will help them get used to it and can be turned into a fun game!



When they are ready, show your child how to dress themselves. Encourage them to keep practising and give lots of positive praise. Why not:

- Practise buttons and zips
- Play a sorting game with clothes for hot weather and clothes for cold weather
- Think about clothes and shoes that will be easier to get on and off
- Allow extra time in the mornings or when going out
- Practise making sure clothes and shoes are the right way around

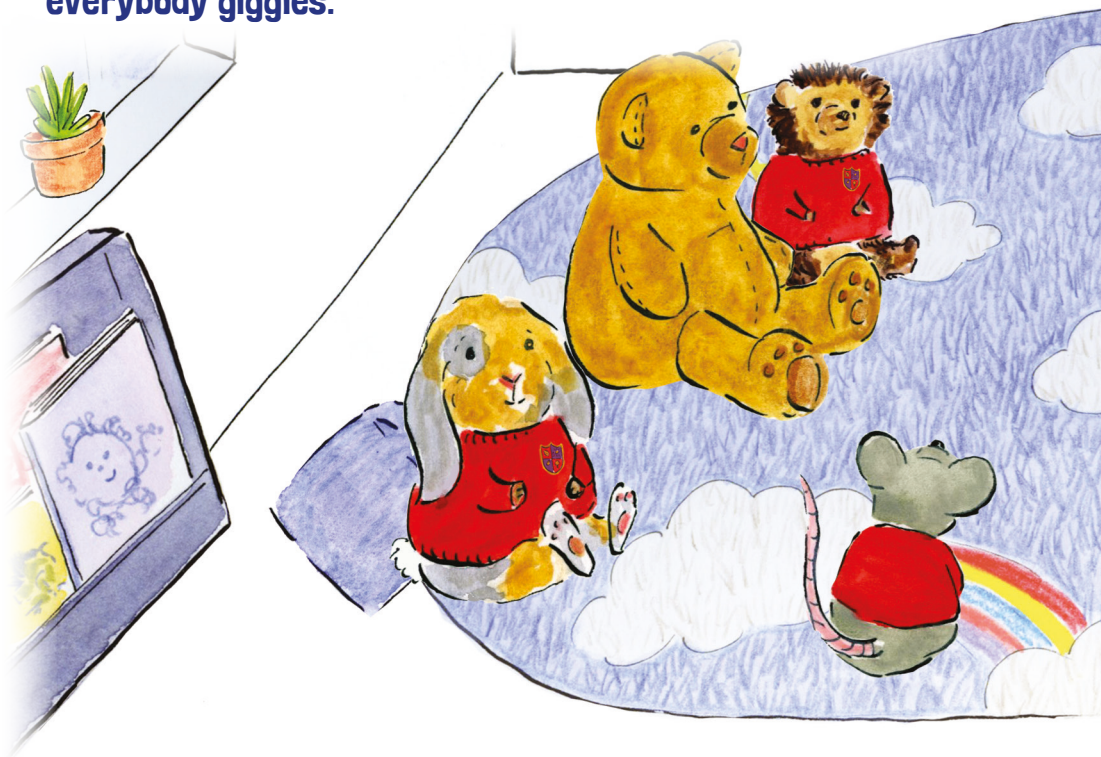


**Mrs Owl does the register and talks about the weather.  
It's sunny today! Then, Mrs Owl's helper shows  
everybody pictures of the things they will do today.**

**Little Chick likes sitting on the carpet and listening.**

**Mrs Owl, Mrs Owl's helper and the children play with  
sounds. "This is called Phonics. Everybody say ssssss.  
Can you think of a sssss word?"**

**Little Dog says, "Sssss is for sssssschool!" and  
everybody giggles.**



Use this page to talk to your child about how there will be a time to listen to the teacher, a time to talk about what they are learning and a time to play at school.





Help your baby and your toddlers listening skills, attention and communication and language by;

- Singing songs and nursery rhymes
- Commenting on what you are doing and what they are doing
- Following their interests
- Introducing new vocabulary
- Reading
- Playing musical instruments
- Listening for sounds outside
- Using simple language
- Talk about your day together
- Minimising questions and labelling objects instead
- Making eye contact and getting down to their level

**Mrs Owl shows all the children where the toilet is, "This is where you go to the toilet at school. We always remember to flush the toilet and wash our hands afterwards."**

**Little Chick looks at the toilets. They look different to her toilet at home...**



Use this page to explain that the school toilets may look and sound different to the toilets your child is used to. Even if your child is confident in using the toilet, talk to them about how they will have big girl and big boy toilets to use at school so they know what to expect. Tell your child it is okay to ask to use the toilet at school.





Begin to toilet train your child when they take an interest in the toilet and tell you when they need to go or have gone to the toilet.

- Talk to your child about using the toilet and washing their hands
- Show your child how to wash and dry their hands
- Remind your child to wash their hands after the toilet and before eating
- Make sure your child wears clothes they can take down themselves
- Give positive praise for trying to do this independently
- Ask for support from your health visiting team (aged 0-5 years) or school nurse (school age child)

When they get back to the classroom, Mrs Owl's helper is cutting up some yummy pears and apples. "It's snack time!" he says.

Mrs Owl's helper and the children eat, drink and talk together. Then they sing a song about a frog and read a story about a beanstalk. Little Chick feels happy.



Your child will be offered fruit, milk and water in their classroom every day. Whilst they eat they can sit calmly and have a rest either reading a story, or talking together.





Have snack times together at home so your child can see what you do when you eat your snack. Often children learn from watching others.

If possible, try to offer a choice: “Apple or biscuit?” – so your child has a reason to think and to tell you what they want. Try leaving the top on the bottle or leave the crisp packet unopened – this will give your child a reason to ask you for help.

**Mrs Owl says that it is time for everyone to decide what to do next. Dolly Dog has chosen to play in the home corner, Milly Mouse has chosen to play with building blocks. There's so many things to do at school – outside play, drawing, painting, water, sharing books, sand!**



To help prepare your child for Reception, talk with your child about what kind of activities they might like to do at school and who they will play with (especially if they know children moving into the same class as them from nursery).

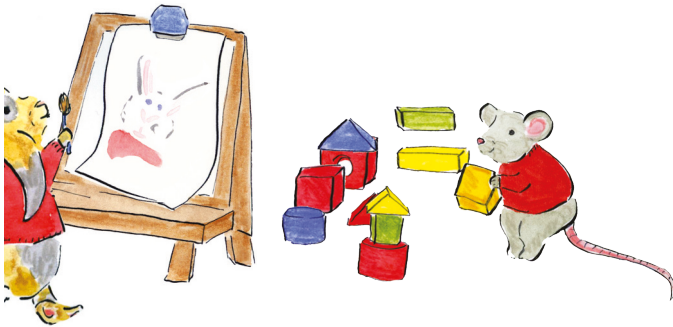
At the end of the Reception Year, when your child moves to Year 1, their teacher will understand how they learnt through play, activities and carpet time sessions in Reception. Their Year 1 classrooms will be similar to a Reception classroom at first and their teacher will introduce the next stage of their learning gradually to help them transition happily.





**"What would you like to do Little Chick?" asks Mrs Owl.**

**Little Chick thinks for a minute. Then she says, "I want to do some drawing!" She draws a picture of her house and Mrs Owl tells her that it is wonderful!**



**Mrs Owl's helper asks Little Chick to show her drawing to the class. She feels very proud.**

Try to give your baby and toddler a wide range of activities at home to help them begin to use the tools and develop the skills they need to be ready to start school;

- Sing songs and nursery rhymes
- Play with water, sand, mud, leaves, ice and other interesting natural objects
- Make marks, using chalk, crayons, paint and brushes
- Use playdough, scissors and lego to get their finger muscles moving
- Attend a nursery, preschool or childminding setting
- Read to them every day
- Visit the library
- Join in pretend play with your child, as their imagination develops

**Mrs Owl shows Little Chick and the other children where they sit to have their dinner.**

**It is quite loud and Little Chick feels scared at first. Then she smells something yummy.**

**"It's pasta!" she says. Little Chick and Dolly Dog both choose pasta for their dinner and sit together to eat it all up. She doesn't notice the noise anymore!**



Use this page to talk positively to your child about the dinner hall and what they will see, hear and taste in there – new children and lunchtime organisers, new foods, lots of other children talking, knives and forks and food smells. Reassure them that they will sit with some of their friends from their class.





Remember that toddlers can be fussy eaters, but you can help your child develop the skills to eat independently by:

- Buying and exploring new foods together
- Talking about healthy fruits and vegetables
- Gently showing your child how to hold and use a knife, fork and spoon
- Giving your child a child-sized portion
- Eating family meals together
- Praising your child for trying new foods



**After lunch, the children go outside to play!**

**Little Chick feels happy! "Look at this huge playground! I can run, skip, play, hooray!"**

**Dolly Dog feels worried. The playground feels a bit big...**

**Mrs Owl holds Dolly Dog's hand. "Remember the lunchtime organiser is here to help you in the playground!"**

Your child will be supported by the adults around them during lunchtime – they will help the children to find friends and play games. Use this page to talk to your child about the playground and about sharing it with their school friends. Talk about the games they might want to play!





Try to ensure your baby and toddler has lots of time with other children either through a nursery or through attending a playgroup. Gradually and when they are ready to, encourage them to:

- Play alongside other children
- Sit next to other children
- Say hello and goodbye to other children
- Take turns and share toys
- Use kind hands and kind feet
- Be kind to others when they feel sad



**After dinner, Little Chick and the children do lots of different activities with Mrs Owl and Mrs Owl's helper.**

**And at the end of the day, they read a story with Mrs Owl. Little Chick feels tired. Lots of the other children are yawning too!**

**"You'll sleep well tonight" laughs Mrs Owl.**



Your child will be using lots of energy at school and may be very tired at the end of a school day. You can help support your child by making sure they go to bed early, switching off technology before bed and following a regular bedtime routine. Your child may find a bath and a story comforting before bed.



Although by school age children usually sleep through the night, babies and toddlers can wake up during the night. If you need help and support with sleeping, ask for support from your health visiting team (aged 0-5years) or school nurse (school age child).



**The bell rings and Little Chick sees Mummy Chicken waving.**

**Outside, she gives her Mummy a big cuddle! "Did you have a nice day?" asks Mummy Chicken. Little Chick smiles and nods her head. "Let's go home and you can tell me all about it."**



Talk to your child about their day after school as much or as little as they would like to. Check in regularly about how they are finding school and their thoughts and feelings about their learning.



**That night, Little Chick dreams of going to school again and seeing Mrs Owl and Dolly Dog again.**



Start talking to your child about their experiences early on – these can be ones that you share together or ones that they have with another special grown up.



## Other stories about school to read with your child:

*What is a Child?* by Beatrice Alemagna

*All My Friends* by Gill Label

*See You Later Mum!* by Jennifer Northway

*Starting School* by Janet and Allan Ahlberg

## Further information and contacts:

**Professional Association for Childcare and Early Years -**  
**[pacey.org.uk](http://pacey.org.uk)**

Help and support for parents and lots of information about school readiness.

**National Literacy Trust - [literacytrust.org.uk](http://literacytrust.org.uk)**

Lots of information on reading with your child, building language and communication skills and school readiness.

**ican - [ican.org.uk](http://ican.org.uk)**

A charity dedicated to communication with lots of information on building communication and language.

**NHS Choices Information - [nhs.co.uk](http://nhs.co.uk)**

Health advice and support on topics such as: toilet training, healthy eating, common childhood illnesses, common sleep problems in children, childhood allergies.

**Eric - [eric.org.uk](http://eric.org.uk)**

For additional support with toilet training.

