

School Readiness

Is my child ready to start school? This is a question I am often asked around this time of year.

Every parent wants their child to make a smooth transition to 'big school', but for many parents the decision is fraught with concern.

- Should I 'hold my child back?' because they are a few weeks, or months, younger than their classmates?
- Are they actually ready to embark on 13+ years of education?
- Will my child grow out of separation anxiety?
- Is it wrong to give my child a 'head start' by teaching early literacy and numeracy?

So, when is the right time for a child to start school and how does a parent know if their child is ready for school or not? Generally speaking, skills need to be developed in four areas: physical (skills relating to use and control of the body); social (the ability to get along with others); emotional (skill in dealing with feelings); and intellectual (the ability to know and learn).

Some of the questions to ask when determining school readiness include:

- Can they make an independent decision and follow through on this?
- Do they have ideas of their own?
- Can they follow two or three instructions at the same time?
- Can they move on to new activities easily?
- Do they separate well from their carer?
- Do they show interest in other kids?
- Do they interact with other children?
- Can they recognize and express their feelings and needs?
- Can they concentrate on a task?
- How do they deal with frustration?

We all want to see children 'thriving' at school, not just 'coping'! So, if you are unsure, have concerns or questions about your child's school readiness, seek advice from:

- The preschool / kindergarten teacher
- A pediatric speech pathologist
- A pediatric occupational therapist
- Your family GP
- Your pediatrician