

10 practical tips for school staff to help children settle when starting primary school – or to support those who change school regularly



1 Help children be ready for school

Talk to parents and carers about what school readiness means and how their child can be helped to develop important transitional skills. Encourage parents and carers to read books and complete activities with their child about starting primary school. Talk the child through what will happen when they start school, and discuss the things they may be looking forward to or worrying about.

2 Identify children who need extra support

Identify children early on who might need additional help (e.g. pupils eligible for Pupil Premium support) to settle in. For children with other complex needs or special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), it may be useful for staff to participate in exchange visits to see how children may be best supported, as well as home visits. Home visits would need to take into account risk assessments and safeguarding issues but they can be a useful way for staff to understand a child's home environment and for children to meet staff in a setting that is familiar and safe for them.

3 Address each child by name

When children start primary school, welcome and address them by name each day. Encourage pupils to have confidence to ask questions – in a new environment for some children this will be a challenge. For children who are changing schools, use [circle time](#) to help pupils get to know each other.

4 Help children learn through new experiences

Make sure that the environment is safe and secure but at the same time allows children to take small risks in a safe way to extend their development. The aim is for children to develop confidence and explore new experiences.

5

Use creative tools to support children who may struggle

Provide a visual timetable for children. This will help young children to see what comes next in their day. It will also support those children with communication difficulties, other needs or with English as an additional language. [Social stories](#) – short stories that describe what to expect from a situation or event – can also help young children settle and understand the daily routines that happen in a new environment.

6

Build trust and make children feel safe

Develop positive relationships in the classroom that are built on trust, safety and security. These help to develop resilience, promote pupil wellbeing and help children talk about worries that might be affecting them. Make sure there are opportunities for children to develop strong relationships with school staff who support and believe in them, have high expectations and who provide a secure base for the development of trust, autonomy and initiative.

7

Look out for struggling children

Notice when a child is struggling and communicate support with small gestures (acknowledging a child with a nod, warmth in your voice, a note on their work etc.).

8

Set clear boundaries

Provide clear and consistent boundaries and ground rules so that children know what behaviour is expected of them.

9

Give children classroom responsibilities

Give children responsibilities for the classroom to boost their self-esteem by providing them with some control over their environment.

10

Establish a formal settling-in review

Establish a formal settling-in review to help staff and parents or carers stop and reflect about their child's progress and whether they might need any extra help (e.g. through counselling or other support).