

School Readiness

Starting school is a major milestone in the life of a child. Children are seen to be ready for school when they have reached the chronological age for entry as established by the state. To start primary school in Victoria, children need to turn five years of age by 30 April of the year that they start school. Children must be at school in the year that they turn six years of age - this is the compulsory school starting age. Exceptions to this can be made.

Research suggests that children who transition to school smoothly and experience early school success tend to maintain higher levels of long term social competence and academic achievements. It is therefore important to look at whether children possess skills that promote their ability to successfully commence school, rather than look at their age.

What is school readiness?

‘Readiness is what we call the things that assist children to be successful at school. Readiness is not an event that happens at a certain time, it is a process that every child moves through at their own pace’.

When considering a child’s readiness for school, families should be encouraged to make decisions based on their child’s needs, skills and interests. Developing knowledge and skills in the areas of numeracy (numbers and counting) and literacy (reading and writing) are helpful, however not essential. The development of these skills should be supported when a child is ready and at a pace the child can cope with. Social development is crucial for school readiness and it is highly important for children to have good social skills and be confident learners in order to set strong foundations for a lifetime of learning.

To assist in developing school readiness:

Educators and families may like to encourage the following in preschool children to assist in the development of school readiness:

- Encourage and role model the development of strong relationships with others
- Support children to cooperate with peers and make friendships in free play situations
- Encourage children to participate in group games and experiences

- Encourage independence in all areas of self-care (Eating, dressing, toileting, being responsible for and using own belongings)
- Read to children regularly
- Guide children to use pencils, crayons, scissors and glue unassisted
- Talk positively about starting school and discuss school orientation visits with children, before and after they occur

School readiness indicators

When determining school readiness, families and educators may like to use the following indicators as guidelines. It is optimal if a child is achieving some skills out of each category.

Independence / Life skills

- Copes with a small amount of supervision in a variety of situations
- Toilets and dresses themselves independently
- Unpacks their lunchbox and uses a drink bottle
- Copes with a structured environment

Physical skills

- Appropriately uses tools such as pencils, crayons, textas and scissors
- Balances, runs, jumps
- Uses equipment such as climbing apparatus

Social skills

- Positively approaches other children and will ask for help if required.
- Participates in play (individual and groups)
- Shows interest in others and forms friendships
- Expresses emotions and deals with conflict appropriately
- Expresses needs and wants appropriately
- Separates from carers / primary caregivers
- Takes turns in games / activities
- Shares toys and equipment
- Follows some directions and understands some rules
- Copes with transitions between routines and experiences

Cognitive / Thinking skills

Shows natural curiosity and interest in learning new things

- Has confidence in learning
- Is interested in solving problems

Language Development

- Uses language (verbal or non-verbal) to ask questions and communicate their thoughts and ideas
- Listens to others
- Enjoys books and being read to

If you have questions /concerns about your child's school readiness, speak to your child's kindergarten teacher.

References and more information:

http://www.rch.org.au/uploadedFiles/Main/Content/ccch/CPR_Vol14No3_PS_SchIRead.pdf

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/parents/primary/pages/enrol.aspx>

http://ncac.acecqa.gov.au/educator-resources/factsheets/qias_factsheet_13_school_transition.pdf