

Ready for School - 2018

Your child is now attending Pre-School – the last year before starting Primary school next September. Our goal is to ensure they are prepared for their transition to school and the next step in their educational journey.

This process is not to ensure that they can read and write prior to starting school, or recite and recognise letters of the alphabet, or count to 50 (Ofsted make this clear within the Early Years Foundation Stage).

It's about ensuring children are ready - socially and emotionally, and that their understanding and knowledge is secure enough to allow them to continue on their next steps of learning. Our aim, as Early Years Educators is to give the children the tools, opportunities and experiences to go on to achieve the Early Learning Goals within the Reception years at school.

(children learn at different rates, and some children do achieve some the goals while at Pre-School)

However, our first focus is to ensure they have settled into the Pre-School room - which we will do during the next few weeks. The first half of the Autumn Term is all about being happy, secure and settled within the environment, while understanding and following new routines, boundaries and expectations.

Supporting Parents and Carers.

We are here to support all Parents/Carers too - understanding that it's just as a scary time for you as it is for the children - especially if it's your first child and not really sure how things work! No-one really tells you and you can feel isolated, not really knowing what to do. Hopefully our 'Ready for School' programme will give you some idea of what we will be doing in Pre-School at Dolphins.

There are some things we have no control over, with regards to children's schools (which is most of it). We do not decide which children go into which classrooms nor do we have any input into each schools visits or settling-in sessions. If you are feeling confused at any time, please, please come and speak to us and we will try to answer any queries or concerns you may have.

The areas below form the building blocks of the Early Years Foundation Stage -

- * Listening & attention skills (having the ability to sit/concentrate for periods of time)
- * Ability to communicate (speech) and use expression
- * Awareness of acceptable and unacceptable behaviour
- * Form positive, trusting and respected relationships
- * Play co-operatively, sharing and turn taking
- * Move confidently in a range of ways with control.
- * Develop independence, self-esteem and self-worth
- * Manage own basic hygiene and personal needs independently
- * Independence in dressing/undressing/putting shoes on
- * Understand and express emotions & feelings (and ability to ask for help)
- * Similarities & differences, themselves, others, families, communities, cultural & religious
- * Safety, risks and hazards (including personal safety)
- * Imagination and role play (initiate storylines & re-create scenarios)
- * Awareness of good physical health, exercise and healthy diets.
- * Recognise, describe and create patterns
- * Understand size, weight capacity, shape, space & measure
- * Count, numbers, problem solve, add and subtraction
- * Enjoy songs, music, dance, stories, rhymes, poems
- * Explore and experiment with colour, design, texture, form and function
- * Recognise and use a range of technology
- * Recognise some letters and numbers (eg. their name)
- * Write some recognisable letters and numbers (their name)

Reading -

As well as recognition, children need to know the 'sounds' of letters, and be able to segment and blend, in order to begin to learn to read.

Writing -

Children begin their writing journey from a very young age, by holding tools and making marks. Progression comes when learning to hold a pencil correctly, controlling it and eventually the ability to copy and form recognisable letters and numbers.

The Spring Term

By now children will have settled into Pre-school and be aware that changes will occur later on in the year - September, and their impending next steps and start to school life

Areas we will be concentrating on -

- * Develop overall independence.
- * Further develop listening skills through a range of activities.
- * Cement the process of getting dressed/undressed for P.E. Sessions
- * Talk about 'changes' and introduce and explain all about 'Going to School'
- * Further develop their listening and attention skills as well as 'following simple instructions'.

Summer Term

This is where we fully concentrate on each child's 'readiness for school'. As always, we need to take into account each individual child's feelings as we automatically think they are happy and confident to start school - when in fact with some children this simply is not the case. They are confused and scared, and can become extremely distressed (which is also very distressing for parents)

Being on the school grounds and having strong links with the school has allowed us to have the amazing opportunity for our Pre-School children (who will be going to North Petherton) to visit and join in with the Reception classes. We will begin taking them over in small groups for weekly visits - where they will join in with Reception classes, meet and play alongside the children, meet the teachers and classroom assistants and generally get to know the surroundings. We will let you know when and what days your child will be going over to the school for their visit nearer the time. We will be providing further activities for children who will not be attending North Petherton school, as we certainly do not want them to feel excluded or isolated.

Areas we will be concentrating on -

- * Shorter lunchtimes (as in line with schools)
- * Home Corner set out as a 'classroom' - along with books/prospectuses/logo's of all the schools, pictures of uniforms, and hopefully some uniforms for dressing-up.
- * Ensure children are as confident and knowledgeable with letters and sounds
- * Ensure children are able to recognise their name (and hopefully write their name)
- * Further enhance storytime with our new selection of books dedicated to children leaving Nursery to start school.
- * More playtime over and around the school environment.

During this time School Entry Plan meetings will be held with schools for children who have individual specific needs.

Reception Teacher Visits

During the last part of the Summer term some Teachers will visit Dolphins in order to meet and see children at play in Pre-school. Unfortunately, only a handful of schools will visit.

Transfer Forms

Your child's Key Worker will complete a Transfer Form - this shows the stage your child has reached with regards to the Early Years Foundation Stage. You are given a copy to read and sign (adding any information of your own). A copy then goes to the Reception Teachers of your child's school (this gives them some idea of the steps they have already achieved and enables them to have a clearer focus on the child's next steps)

Outcomes -

Feedback received from North Petherton Reception Teachers have been extremely positive -

Strengths:

- due to the visits, children have settled into their classes with ease and confidence.
- Reception teachers revealed that it was easy to spot the children who attended Dolphins, as they had good listening skills, were used to following instruction and lining-up & tidying up. They also reported that children were knowledgeable and confident when it came to getting dressed/un-dressed into their P.E. Kits.

Benefits for the children themselves were highlighted in how quickly and confidently they settled into their new environment - making the whole experience a happy one!

Weaknesses:

- Our observations led us to see that lunchtimes at school could become stressful for the children, as they don't have as long as they do here at Pre-School. In light of this, and to prepare the children, we will be shortening our lunchtimes here in an effort to get them used to the change
- Difficult to get feedback when children are feeding into other schools but we are hoping to develop a communication system where we are able to receive information from all schools.

All About Me

During this Pre-School year Key Workers will be compiling children's All About Me books (which is for Parents to keep when leaving). It gives a brief overview of their child's accomplishments and abilities during their time in Pre-School - it's a lovely keepsake!

Leavers Party

Finally - to celebrate children leaving Pre-School we hold a big party. We close Dolphins completely for the afternoon so all the staff can say good-bye to the children.