

PREPARING FOR SCHOOL



It is really important when preparing children for school entry to keep in mind that **children develop at different rates**, and we cannot assume that all children of a similar age will be at the same developmental level. Even as babies, children are constantly compared in their abilities (to sit up, to crawl, to walk, etc) and great pride is shown in children who reach these milestones early. In the long run it makes no difference at all.

Many parents ask about the need for their child to be able to read and write before they start school. The important thing to remember is that there are many prerequisite skills that a child must achieve before they will be able to read (for example, visual discrimination/ sequencing/memory skills such as noticing small differences between similar pictures, finding the odd one out, continuing or repeating a pattern, sequencing a set of pictures to retell a story, finding what comes next etc), and it is more important for a preschool child to spend time developing, extending and refining these skills than being taught specifically to read. Children who are rushed into reading or writing too soon (*i.e.* **before they are ready**) miss important steps in learning and may suffer later on because they lack the foundation they need for using language. Children who are taught to read too early may be able to sound out and recognise words, but they may also have very little understanding of what they are reading. Parents are often deceived into thinking that their child can already read because proper responses to flash cards have been memorised or the words of a story retold. Although such "reading" may be attained, comprehension may be totally absent. It all comes down to each *individual* child's readiness: children who teach themselves to read at an early age (usually by continual exposure to literature at home) will be early readers, whereas children who are forced to read at an early age by constant teaching **before they are ready** may fail. **Your child's interest will let you know when they are ready.** Of course, the same thing applies to writing and to mathematics. Children need many opportunities to string beads, button, dress up, cut, paste, pour and draw before they will develop the fine motor control to write. Without the concrete experiences of sorting and counting objects, and matching one to one, children won't acquire the foundations for logical thinking that is required for mathematics.

If your child is showing interest in learning to read, write and count, encourage them with preschool activity books that focus on finding the odd one out, finding subtle differences between two similar pictures, grouping objects that are the same, tracing over dotted lines, following a maze etc. Remember to keep a balance between this type of structured activity and other less structured activities, such as drawing with sticks in wet sand, or counting strawberries in a punnet, or recognising common signs in the street (stop, parking, beach, etc). throughout the year, we will also be encouraging these skills.

What we aim to do at kindy is to provide plenty of opportunities for children to learn (through play with stimulating and challenging materials and activities that encourage them to think and experiment, and through participation in carefully planned teaching/learning experiences) so that they are able to progress at their own rate and reach each new level of development **when they are ready**. "Readiness" skill development is only one aspect of our programme, and shares equal importance with other activities (such as creative expression through art/music/drama/language, gross motor skills, social and emotional development, self-help and personal skills, etc) that together develop "the whole child".



SCHOOL READINESS

In general, when assessing a child's readiness for school, it is just as important to consider their social and emotional development as their cognitive and physical abilities. How children cope is just as important as what they know. So consider:

- ✓ Are they emotionally and physically independent?
- ✓ Do they trust adults outside the family sufficiently to be able to transfer their necessary dependence to a teacher?
- ✓ Can they accept a teacher's authority, and share a teacher's attention with others?

Are they:

- ✓ Self confident?
- ✓ Secure in their love?
- ✓ Able to get along with peers?
- ✓ Able to get along with older children?
- ✓ Able to get along with adults?
- ✓ Able to share?
- ✓ Able to take turns?
- ✓ Able to cooperate?
- ✓ Curious about what is happening around them?
- ✓ Interested in learning new things?
- ✓ Willing to participate in group experiences?
- ✓ Able to communicate verbally with others?



The most valued and important thing we can give our children is a love of learning and an enthusiasm for new and interesting things. This isn't just to achieve academically in life but to have a well rounded and balanced outlook to embrace life. You are your child's first teacher and remain their teacher for life. Some of the things you can teach them at this age are:

- 1 Teach them how to use the toilet independently
- 2 Teach them their full name, address and phone number
- 3 Get them to help you pack away their toys when they have finished playing - make a game of it
- 4 Encourage questions about everything around them - nature and events
- 5 Play 'make believe' with them to cultivate imagination
- 6 Books, books, books and more books
- 7 Singing and music activities
- 8 Practice with scissors to cut straight lines
- 9 Have both indoor and outdoor activities for them to do
- 10 Expose them to a variety of objects for writing and scribbling eg crayons, textas, pencils
- 11 Use all your "junk" items for them to make things out of eg egg carton, wrapping paper, scrap material
- 12 Encourage your children to read common signs eg Stop, Bus Stop, hot, cold,
- 13 Ask them to count out the number of apples you want when you go shopping
- 14 Ask them to count the bottles in the trolley or how many different colours are in the trolley
- 15 Let them become familiar with using the computer
- 16 Play card games and board games that are age suitable eg snakes and ladders, snap
- 17 Ask questions of them that require more than a yes or no
- 18 Do experiments with them that they want to do - it is a great learning opportunity

Remember to spend plenty of time playing together and on hugs and kisses - you can't learn to give love if you don't receive it.

