**Getting your child ready for school**

Skills to practice at home

* When sharing a book or playing with toys, ask your child questions starting with what, where and who. Play with them and share games. Use imagination to tell stories and sit and read a book together, looking at the pictures and talking about the story.
* Encourage your child to join in with singing songs and rhymes. Take them to Story Time sessions at the local library where they’ll be taught a few simple songs to practise at home.
* Help your child to make friends with other children and be able to take turns, by taking them to places where they can play with other children, such as playgroups and playgrounds; there are probably some play sessions near home. It’s good to meet other children and share toys with them.
* Talk to your child about how they are feeling and show them what their needs are. Talk about your own feelings and ask about theirs – ask what they’re looking forward to and what they’re unsure of. Help them to understand how their feelings and actions are connected.
* Encourage your child to talk using three and four-word sentences. Talk to them about what we they’re playing with and what they are doing. Talk to them when you are outside about what your plans are and what is happening next.
* Help your child to understand simple ideas, such as ‘big’ and ‘little’ and ‘hot’ and ‘cold’. Tell them about things you see together and help them to describe things and feelings you can’t see.
* Follow routines so your child will be able to do things on their own. Talk to them about the order they do things in and the reasons why.
* Teach your child to use the toilet on their own and wash their own hands. Give them chances to use a potty or toilet and wipe clean. Show them how to wash their hands and explain why this is important.
* Watch them pour their own drink from a small jug and use cutlery to feed themselves. Give your child a small jug and a cup with no lid that they can play with and feed their toys.
* Teach your child to react to their name and recognise it in print. Show them their name and point out the letters. Talk about all the letters of the alphabet, and things at home and outside that begin with those letters.
* Help your child to make lines on a picture that go across, up and down, and round and round. Give them chances to hold pens and pencils, and try drawing and painting on paper. Put some up on the wall to decorate.
* Help your child to put a coat and shoes on themselves. Show them how you put your coat on, and give them a coat with simple fastenings so they’ll be able to manage it themselves.
* Show your child how to climb stairs safely and be able to understand how to keep safe. Talk to them about staying safe and offer chances to do things safely, such as climbing. A visit to an outdoor playground is perfect to practise running, jumping and climbing.
* Check with your GP that all of your child’s immunisations (often called pre-school boosters) are up to date.

Children who have started to practise these simple skills at home have a better chance of focusing on learning when they start school