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Kindergarten
to Year 1

Hello school!



Department of
Education

What to expect when your children start school.
A guide for parents/carers of children in
Kindergarten to Year 1.

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TITLE: Hello school!: What to expect when your children start school.
A guide for parents/carers of children in Kindergarten to Year 1.

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From the Minister

It is an exciting and important moment when children start Kindergarten.

It's the beginning of their school journey but not the beginning of their learning journey. That journey begins at home from the time children are born. Now, as children step into school for the first time, they bring all this learning with them.

Over the last few years, the State Government has strengthened early childhood education and support – in school as well as for families before their children start school.

New Child and Parent Centres on public school sites are supporting parents and their children from birth; and many public schools run playgroups and provide services to parents in conjunction with community service agencies.

In school, Kindergarten hours have increased to 15 hours each week and Pre-primary is compulsory from 2013. In both years, there is a better balance between play-based and structured learning. For the first time, there are guaranteed places in Pre-primary and, where possible, Kindergarten.

Hello school! is written for parents of young children starting school. It outlines what happens in a typical day at Kindergarten, Pre-primary and Year 1, and gives ideas on how families can support their children's development and learning in these first years of school.

We hope you find this booklet helpful.

Hon Peter Collier MLC

Minister for Education



A booklet just for you...

...parents with young children starting school.

Hello school! takes you through what happens in a typical day in Kindergarten and includes ideas to help you settle your child into school life.

It also steps you through the first year of compulsory school, Pre-primary, and what your child will learn and how their days are shaped. Finally, it gives you a glimpse of what Year 1 is like. There are lots of ideas about what you can do at home to support your child's learning.

Most importantly, the role you play as your child's first teacher continues to be vital, as the early years of school builds on the experiences children have at home, setting the foundation for all future learning.

Your child's school journey

Children learn many important things before they start school.

They learn from you at home, from friends and family, in local playgroups and at child/family day care if they attend.

Now, as they start school for the first time, they bring all this learning with them to the classroom.

Children learn best when they are supported by their family. The more you become involved in your child's learning and the more you talk with their teacher, the better you can both support your child. A strong partnership with the school and regular contact with the teacher will make sure your child gets the best start to school.

Kindergarten is the beginning of this journey and the time when children build on the important skills they have developed with you at home. These skills may include being able to talk about things that interest them, drawing pictures and play writing, recognising colours, numbers, sizes and shapes and sharing with others.

Find out in this booklet what you can do at home to add to the exciting learning happening each day at school.

**Your enthusiasm
will help your child
settle in to school
and be proud of
the things they learn
each day.**

Early experiences and brain development

The human brain is literally a 'work in progress'!

In the first few years of life the brain grows rapidly.

By the time children are three years old, 90 per cent of the brain has developed – so experiences in these early years are very important.

Loving and caring relationships with you, your family, friends, the school and school community help children develop socially, emotionally and intellectually.

Play is particularly important in childhood learning. Play gives children opportunities to practise skills, communicate with others, take on challenges and solve problems in fun and enjoyable ways.

Singing, playing games, talking, climbing, dancing, reading, writing and drawing all help the brain develop ways of thinking and learning.



Find out more

Check out our booklets and factsheets online for more great activities you can do at home with your child.

W: det.wa.edu.au/schoolsandyou

Going to school every day really matters

At school, teachers plan programs in a sequence so children build on skills and activities from one day to the next.

Developing the habit of going to school regularly from Kindergarten is vitally important so children don't miss out on important ideas and skills they need for future learning.

Taking an interest in what your child does at school, helping in class and being part of the school community show your child how much you value school.

You can help make every day matter by:

- talking positively about school so your child is happy to go each day
- showing interest in what your child is doing at school and talking with the teacher about what you can do at home
- setting play dates to help your child make friends
- teaching your child how to share and take turns
- arriving at school and collecting your child from school on time
- making sure your child gets nutritious meals each day and enough sleep each night
- making appointments with doctors, dentists and specialists after school or during school holidays
- taking family holidays during school holidays and not during term time.

If your child is unwell and unable to go to school, telephone or text the school to let the teacher know. If your child misses a day, talk with the teacher to find out how you can help your child catch up. If you are having difficulty getting your child to school, talk with the teacher.

Kindergarten: Beginning the school journey

Magical is often how families describe Kindergarten classrooms.

Kindergarten classrooms are full of children's work. Walls are crammed with colourful posters, many with letters and numbers, and there are interesting displays in the rooms. The floors have mats for different activities, and children are actively engaged in learning.

Kindergarten is the first experience your child has of school – of the wonder and excitement of learning, exploring and imagining.

While Kindergarten is not compulsory in Western Australia, attendance is highly recommended as children learn important early maths, speaking, listening, reading and writing skills. They also learn social and emotional skills that will help them throughout school – and throughout life.

Many schools hold parent information sessions before the year starts or during the first weeks of term. This gives you the opportunity to meet the teacher and other parents/carers, and to find out about the kinds of learning your child can expect. If you are unable to attend, contact the school or talk with the teacher to make another time to meet.

Your child's teacher will often send home written information. It is important that you take the time to read these messages.

If you show you are confident and happy about your child's school, your child will pick up on this. This is so important in encouraging a love of learning and enthusiasm for going to school each day.



Kindergarten: Beginning the school journey

What happens during the day?

Kindergarten runs for 15 hours each week.

Some schools run a combination of full and half days each week, while other schools run only half days or only full days. Talk with your school to find out how the program is set up.

The teacher plans regular breaks each day so children can eat and play. Some schools may ask you to contribute fruit and healthy snacks which are shared with all children at snack time.

If your child is in a full day Kindergarten program, pack a healthy lunch in wrappers and containers so they can open them easily and eat lunch by themselves. Self management is a very important skill that children learn at this time.

Your Kindergarten may encourage you to join in at the start of each day. This is a great way to settle your child into the school routine as well as to see your child's work and to talk about what they do during the day.



If someone else is collecting your child after school – such as a grandparent or a carer – please let your child's teacher know. Teachers make sure each child is collected by someone they know each day so it is important to keep the school informed.

Kindergarten: Beginning the school journey

What does my child learn?

In a carefully planned learning environment, Kindergarten children experience many different learning activities.

These include cutting, painting, gluing, drawing, dressing up, sand play, climbing, story telling, singing and dancing, exploring and making new friends.

Most of the things children make and create are hung around the room for everyone to see – especially their parents and carers!

A major focus in Kindergarten is on language and literacy, such as an early understanding of letters, sounds and rhyming words. It also includes how pictures can tell stories, that written words can be read, and that spoken sounds can be written down.

Early maths and numeracy are also key parts of Kindergarten programs. Children learn about numbers and shapes, counting, measuring and the many different ways maths is used in our daily lives.

The social and emotional development of children is a very important part of planned learning. The teacher plans activities and encourages children to be involved so they become successful learners, team players, good problem solvers and creative thinkers who love challenges.

Teachers take into account the different experiences and backgrounds of each child to make sure learning programs are tailored to meet individual needs.

Children develop strong literacy skills by having books read to them, by sharing stories and by learning songs and rhymes. They learn to identify words and syllables, and describe objects, tell stories and recognise print like their written name. These skills help with reading and writing in the future.

Kindergarten: Beginning the school journey

In Kindergarten...

Writing

Your child is becoming aware that spoken words can be written down. Their writing may show randomly placed letters or scribbles that look similar in form to what they see as writing. Encourage all their efforts!

Sounds

Your child may focus on the first letter of a word as they learn about letter-sound connections. Later they may also recognise the last letter, for example they may recognise the word *mummy* by recognising the first letter, or by recognising the first and last letters.

Reading

Your child becomes interested in books and the pictures and words in them. Reading stories, saying or singing nursery rhymes, poems and songs, and making up actions are all part of Kindergarten.

Numbers


Your child begins to play games that help them to read, say numbers and join in with stories and songs that include counting.

Quantities

Your child begins to recognise how many objects are in small collections and to compare small collections of things to say which has *more* or *less*. They begin to link number names to their quantities. They may start to notice the difference between numbers and letters but may not be able to read them.

Shapes

Your child may also learn about *shapes*, *size*, *position* and *order*. Activities might include making models and patterns, sorting and rearranging small collections and comparing the size of things.



In Kindergarten
children learn social skills
by playing with other children
and sharing things.
Play allows them to share,
take turns and develop
their coordination
and confidence.

Kindergarten: Beginning the school journey

What you can do at home

- At home **read aloud**, point to pictures and **talk** with your child about the story.
- Draw and **write** with your child and **talk about** what you are doing.
- Your child hears and sees how **numbers** are used at home and begins to match number names to very small groups of objects just by looking. You can help by talking through what you are doing. For example: *We need four plates, so if I get two plates and then get two more, we'll have four plates.*
- A great way to help with **maths skills** is through everyday activities: at bath time, when playing outside and while cooking together. Counting with your child using items they can see and touch, and measuring and comparing items all help them hear and use maths ideas.
- At this age your child can also learn about **measurement** by using everyday words like *full* and *empty*, *big* and *small*, *tall* and *short* and *heavy* and *light*. Using words to describe position such as *in* and *on* and *under*; and talking about whether something is *near*, *far* or *upside down*, help children to learn about **location**.
- Number songs and rhymes help your child learn about **counting**. Spend time together singing songs like *One, two, three, four, five, once I caught a fish alive* and *One, two, buckle my shoe*. Number books that you read together and talk about are also great ways for children to learn early ideas.



Pre-primary: Beginning compulsory schooling

After a year of part-time Kindergarten, children go on to full-time Pre-primary.

This is the first compulsory year of schooling in Western Australia.

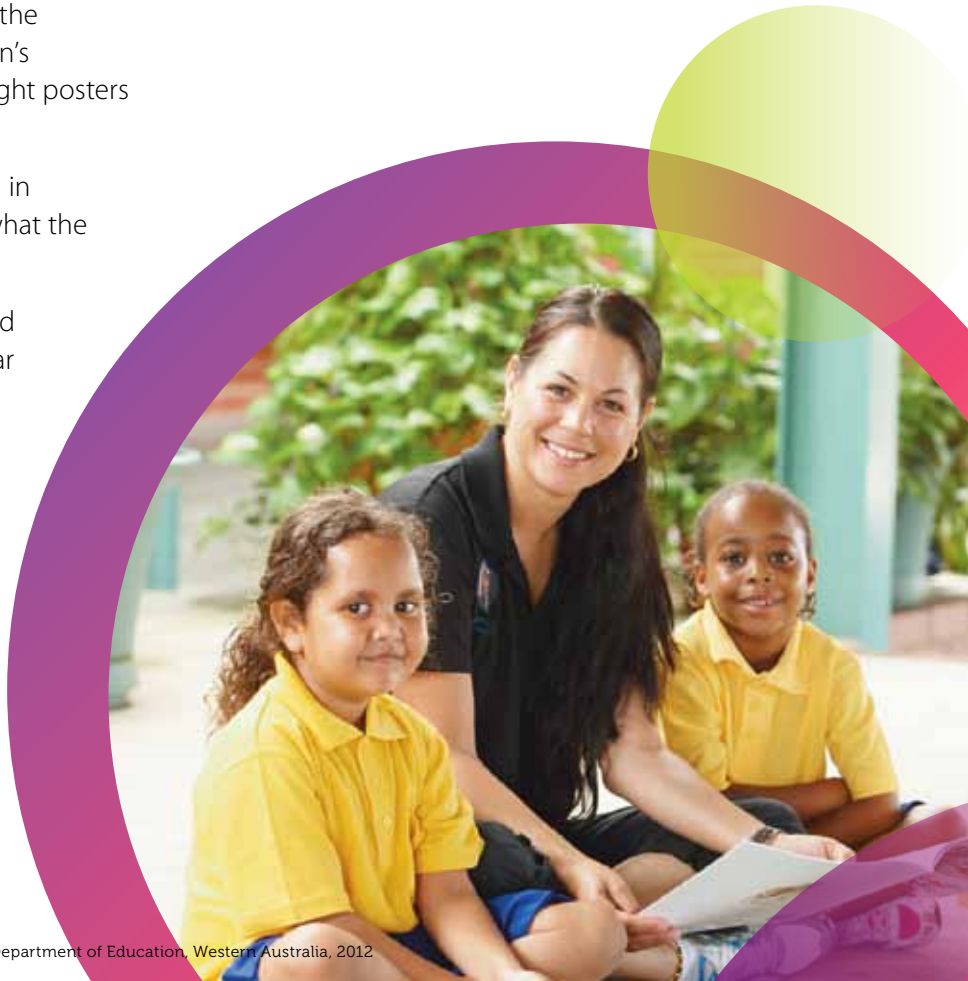
The Pre-primary classroom looks similar to the Kindergarten classroom with lots of children's creations for everyone to see, as well as bright posters and charts around the room.

Children start wearing their school uniform in Pre-primary so find out from your school what the uniform is and where to get it.

Just as in Kindergarten, the school may hold a parent information session before the year starts or during the first weeks of term so you can meet the teacher and find out what is planned for the year. If you are unable to attend, contact the school or talk with the teacher.

Your child's teacher often sends home written information. It is important that you take the time to read these messages.

Your involvement in the school helps your child settle quickly and helps you understand how you can support them.



Pre-primary: Beginning compulsory schooling

What happens during the day?

Teachers encourage parents/carers to visit the classroom at the start of each day.

Wherever possible, try to spend this important time with your child. This is where you find out what your child is doing at school and what you can do at home to support them.

Be sure to pack a healthy snack and lunch for your child each day.

Your child's teacher plans for a balance of activities as part of the children's learning. Each day involves some physical activities so make sure your child wears suitable clothing.

There might be set days when children can take books out of the library. Make a note of these days and put them on a calendar at home so you and your child are prepared.

At the end of the Pre-primary day, you need to collect your child from the classroom. If someone else is picking up your child, let the school know in advance so the teacher knows who to expect.



School canteens follow healthy eating guidelines which have a red, amber and green traffic light system for foods.

There are lots of great ideas for healthy and interesting school lunches.

W: det.wa.edu.au/schoolsandyou

Pre-primary: Beginning compulsory schooling



Keep up to date with the latest **news** and **opportunities** in public education. Sign up for our parent e-newsletter today at det.wa.edu.au/schoolsandyou.

What does my child learn?

Pre-primary schooling introduces children to a broad range of learning areas, including English, maths, science, the arts, social sciences, technologies and health and physical education. The focus continues to be on literacy, numeracy, social development and physical wellbeing. Teachers take into account the different experiences and backgrounds of children, and tailor programs to meet their learning needs.

The English learning area:

Listening and speaking

During Pre-primary your child participates in class, group and pair discussions. They listen to others and retell events and experiences with their class mates and known adults.

Reading and writing

Children may identify some words but are often more focused on the meaning rather than reading every word. They are encouraged to 'have a go' at words they do not know to keep on reading. As your child learns to read they may initially rely on pictures or their memory of the story. They will begin to read short predictable stories.

Pre-primary: Beginning compulsory schooling

Through storybooks, children learn that stories have characters and events. The teacher may ask your child to talk about how the characters are similar to or different from people in your child's life.

They continue to experiment with letters of the alphabet using things such as sand and play dough, as well as crayons and paints. In their writing they use known words and familiar phrases. Attempts at new words show developing sound-letter knowledge. They may represent a word with one, two or three letters.

The maths learning area:

Numbers

Your child will begin to match number names, numerals and quantities up to 10. They learn to solve number problems involving adding, removing, handing out and sharing very small numbers of objects. For example they may use toy farm animals to show *three cows were put in a paddock with four cows* and to work out how many cows there are all together.

The language of maths

Your child learns to count and use the relevant language of maths. For example: *How much? How many?* and *How long?* They use very small numbers to 'get enough' items for their games and activities.

In their games and activities they start to compare the size of things using language like *longer, shorter, taller, heavier, lighter, fatter* and *thinner*.

They begin to learn shape words, for example *round, circle, square* and *triangle* and position words, for example *near, far, between, under* and *behind*.



Pre-primary: Beginning compulsory schooling

What you can do at home

- Visit your local library and **borrow books** on topics of interest to your child.
- Encourage your child to **draw, write and tell stories**.
- Make time to **read** with your child every day. This not only promotes good reading habits, it's also a great way to spend time together as a family. Read your child's favourite book over and over. Encourage them to join in. Get them to tell you the story using the pictures for prompts or let them pretend to read and make up the story. Talk about the end of the story and encourage your child to express their opinions. Did they like the ending? How else could the story have ended?
- Encourage them to **write** and to tell you the reason why. For example: *I am writing a letter to Granny to say thank you for my birthday card.*
- Practise **using numbers and counting** with your child while doing everyday tasks. For example: *We have two visitors coming for dinner. There are four people in our family so how many plates will we need?*
- Encourage your child to use their new **number skills** to say how many objects when there is no need to count. For example: you can just 'see' three things, or even six things as three things and three things.
- Explore **measuring** by chatting with your child when you are cooking, shopping or at bath time about how different things might be *longer* or *shorter*, *thicker* or *thinner*, *lighter* or *heavier*.
- Help your child pour water or sand from one container to another to decide which holds more, or **investigate** whether a tablecloth is big enough to cover the table.
- Encourage your child to **observe** things in nature and to ask questions.
- **Collect** items and sort them into groups and talk about shapes, sizes, patterns and what they feel like.
- **Explore** your child's family history using photographs, objects and by telling stories. Talk about your relatives, where they were born and how life was different when they were your child's age.





Year 1: The learning journey continues

Rich learning experiences are planned in Year 1 when children continue to become readers, writers and users of maths.

You may notice a difference in how the class looks, with more desks or tables in the room than in the earlier years. You might also find that the learning program has a more formal look to it but still has a focus on the child.

Go along to parent information sessions which are held by the school before the year starts or during the first weeks of term. If you are unable to attend, contact the school or talk with your child's teacher.

Your child's teacher often sends home written information. It is important that you take the time to read these messages.

Teachers continue to encourage parents/carers to visit the classroom at the start of each day. Use this time to find out what your child is doing at school and what you can do at home to support them.

Just as in Kindergarten and Pre-primary, going to school every day is really important. Each day your child learns more – so every lesson matters! If your child is unable to attend school because they are unwell, ask the teacher what you can do at home to help them catch up.



Teaching can be challenging at times and it's great to be appreciated. If you think your child's teacher is doing a good job, why not acknowledge them!

Year 1: The learning journey continues

What happens during the day?

As in Pre-primary, the emphasis in Year 1 is on literacy, numeracy, social development and physical wellbeing within the broader learning areas of English, maths, science, the arts, social sciences, technologies, and health and physical education.

Speak with your child's teacher and attend the parent information sessions to learn what the focus for the term is and how it will be achieved.

Children may spend more time sitting at their desks and working in small groups. Your child's teacher plans for a balance of activities based on learning needs. For some learning your child may have a specialist teacher, for example in art, music and physical education.

Your school may have set times for physical education and using the library. Note these times on the calendar at home so your child is fully prepared.

There are a lot of opportunities for you to be involved and to help out in your child's classroom. The teacher may request assistance from parents to help with listening to children read, helping children with their writing and art work, as well as assisting with sporting activities, excursions and special events.

Your assistance with these activities is very important to both the teacher and your child and gives you an opportunity to know what is happening in the classroom so you are able to help at home.

In Year 1, your child needs lots of energy. Don't forget to pack a healthy recess snack and lunch for your child each day.



Year 1: The learning journey continues

What does my child learn?

The learning program in Year 1 builds on the learning from Pre-primary.

As well as continuing to build on your child's reading, writing, mathematics and social skills, your child learns more about the world around them, living things and how things work. The teacher plans sequenced lessons based on the broad range of learning areas. The teacher continues to take into account the different experiences and backgrounds of children, and tailors programs to meet their learning needs.

The English learning area:

Listening and speaking

In Year 1, children learn to understand words, syllables and rhymes in sentences. For example: the word 'monkey' is made up of two syllables; 'mon' and 'key', and the word 'cat', 'hat' and 'mat' all rhyme.

Reading and writing

When reading, your child will begin to use their knowledge of sounds and letters, high-frequency words and punctuation to make meaning.

Your child will build on their skills and learn to write words and sentences.

Throughout the year your child will become a confident reader and writer. Your support at home during this time as they learn these skills is very important.

The maths learning area:

Maths

Your child will take part in counting activities, for example counting by 2s, 5s and 10s. They will learn to trust that the number of objects will not change even when the objects are rearranged or counted in different ways.

Your child will begin to visualise combinations of small numbers, for example *Ten is made up of five and five or nine and one*. They also learn to read and write numerals and begin to add and subtract to solve problems.

They continue to learn about measuring, for example: *How many fit? How long? How heavy? How much taller?* Other activities focus on the shape and position of things.



Year 1: The learning journey continues

What you can do at home

- As your child starts to become a more confident reader, they may be able to **read** slowly and deliberately, paying attention to what is on the page. Encourage your child to talk about what happens in a story and predict what will happen next. Point out words such as *and*, *the* and *when* and see how many times familiar words come up. Use items such as shopping lists, recipes, newspapers and television guides to show your child how reading is useful in daily life.
- Help your child learn about **positions, time, distance** and **direction** by doing activities and talking about these ideas.
- Help your child to **compare** things, for example **small, big, heavy** and **light**, and how some small things can be heavier than big things depending on what they are made of.
- Your child may also learn that they can use **numbers** to count large collections and that the last number said tells them 'how many'. Count 20 or 30 objects with your child and then ask them to say *how many*.
- Help your child learn that **numbers** can be used in different ways by asking '*which one*', '*how many/how much*', and talking about volume and distance.
- Make jelly at home and use words such as **crystals, dissolve, liquid** and **solid** to describe the process.
- **Plant** vegetable seeds and watch them grow. Ask questions like *What do we need to help them grow?*
- Ask your child to **listen** to the sounds around them and ask them to describe to you what they **hear**.
- Encourage your child to use words such as **then** and **now, old** and **new** when talking about things and events.
- Talk about how things **change** over time.



There are many things you can do to make sure your child is happy and confident for their first day of school.

- **Read stories** with your child in the weeks leading up to the start of school.
- Start a **routine** a few weeks before school begins which includes having regular meal and bed times, waking your child at the same time each morning and getting dressed and ready to leave home by a certain time.
- Drive or **walk past the school** with your child and talk about how they will soon be going there, the exciting things they will do and the friends they will make.
- Clearly **label** your child's lunchbox, school uniform and other items so they can find their belongings.
- Talk with older children who already go to school. Ask them to **talk** with your child about all the interesting things they do and learn at school.

- Arrive at school **before the school siren/bell**. This allows your child to prepare for the day, meet friends and be greeted by the teacher before class begins.
- Walk with your child into the classroom and **pick them up** at the end of the school day.
- **Introduce yourself** to your child's teacher. Find out if parent helpers are needed for classroom activities.

Enrolling in school

When enrolling, make sure you mention if your child has any allergies or medical conditions. If your child has particular requirements, check with the school to see what plans it has in place for these. It's also helpful for the teacher to know if your child is seeing a specialist.

More ideas for you and your child

Talk with your child

At school your child learns about the importance of **communication**. You can help by talking with your child about the things they do at school. Ask them to explain or describe what happened during the day. Ask questions to draw out more information if they can't think of anything. Ask 'open' questions so your child answers with more than 'yes' or 'no'. Talk about your day, too.

Speaking with the teacher

Have regular contact with your child's teacher. Your school has a variety of ways for you to do this. If you want to speak with your child's teacher without interruption, it is best to make an appointment.

Contribute to the class

Teachers often need items for art, craft, maths and science such as buttons, material scraps, sea shells, plastic containers and bottles – the list is endless! Check with your teacher about **what items are needed**.

Read together

Children love being read to. The time you spend **reading together** helps your child develop a love of books and words. The earlier you start, the better – your child is more prepared for school if they are familiar with language and the many ways it is used. Your local **library** is a treasure trove of books – let your child pick out books that interest them.





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