

Transition to Junior School

In addition to the physical move, there are a number of new skills that children need in KS2. They won't be expected to master all of them at once; their teacher will break them in gently over the first few weeks of term. But a helping hand at home can make the transition much easier for your child.

KS2 skill: going into school independently

Unlike in KS1, where you probably supervised your child until the moment they went into school, in KS2 it's more common for children to be dropped in the playground and then line up and go into school by themselves when the bell rings.

How you can help: If your child is anxious about being dropped off, encourage them to find a friend they can stay with until it's time to go into the classroom. It's also worth making your child's teacher aware of their worries so they can make sure they're not left upset in the playground.

KS2 skill: working in a group

In KS1, group work is typically closely supervised by a teacher or Teaching Assistant. But in KS2, children are expected to be more independent when working in groups. This involves a whole raft of new skills, such as listening to each other, explaining ideas clearly, taking turns, helping others, allowing everyone to contribute, and pulling the group's ideas together into the end product.

How you can help: Look for opportunities to practise group work at home, such as baking a cake together, with one person reading the recipe and the other weighing out the ingredients, or collaborating with siblings or friends on making a LEGO model.

KS2 skill: managing homework

The volume of homework usually steps up in Year 3. Children will usually get an English task and a maths task each week, plus reading, spellings and times tables practice. They'll be expected to manage their time to make sure their work is handed in on time, and to work independently.

How you can help: Check your child's home link folder regularly, and encourage them to decide when they want to do their work: would they rather get it out of the way as soon as they get home, or do it later when they've had a chance to relax?

Be available to help with homework, but avoid hovering over your child while they're doing it: it's important that they learn to work independently, and that the work they hand in is their own.

KS2 skill: organisation

Children in KS2 are expected to take more responsibility for organising themselves, for example by remembering to bring their reading books and PE kit to school on the relevant days. It's also common for teachers to expect children to pass on messages from school themselves, rather than sending letters home.

How you can help: Get your child into the habit of unpacking and repacking their school bag themselves the evening before. Prompt them to pass on messages by asking them regularly if there's anything you need to know.

KS2 skill: independent work

In KS2 children are expected to work independently and try to solve problems themselves.

How you can help: There are lots of ways to build your child's independence at home, for example by giving them some household responsibilities. If they're stuck on a homework task, don't step in with the solution; instead, encourage them to work it out themselves by asking questions such as, 'Where do you think you could look for help with this?' or, 'Can you come up with three possible solutions, then decide which one would be best?'

KS2 skill: concentration

Being able to concentrate for longer periods goes hand-in-hand with the ability to work independently. In KS2, children need to get used to staying on task for increasing lengths of time, maintaining their focus and avoiding distracting other children.

How you can help: A good night's sleep and a decent breakfast before school are vital to children's concentration, and they need to be well hydrated, too, so provide a water bottle for them to keep on their desk (with the teacher's permission).

You can also improve their concentration skills by playing family games that involve focusing on the task in hand, such as Scrabble, Bananagrams and chess.

KS2 skill: extended writing

In KS2 Children are expected to be able to write at greater length and to develop their writing by using more sophisticated sentence structures and a range of grammar.

How you can help: Encourage your child's communication skills by making plenty of time to talk as a family, such as over the dinner table. Give them lots of experiences to inform their writing, such as visiting farms, beaches, the countryside and museums: it's easiest to write about what we know. Keeping a diary is another great way to practise writing.

KS2 skill: coping with playtimes

In many schools, KS2 play is generally more independent, unlike in previous years, where play leaders may have organised break time activities.

How you can help: Many schools have 'buddy benches' where children can go if they want someone to play with, so encourage your child to use these if they're feeling anxious or lonely. Taking a reading book or colouring book to school will give them something to do if they don't like boisterous play or team sports; most schools have designated areas for quiet activities.

KS2 skill: choosing reading books

At some point in KS2 children usually become 'free readers', having finished the school reading scheme. They'll be expected to choose their own books, either from the school library or the class bookshelf; they may also be allowed to choose a reading book from home.

How you can help: Taking your child to your local public library is a good way to get them used to picking books that tap into their interests. They can then use this skill to choose books at school.

KS2 skill: writing in pen

In KS2, children graduate from writing in pencil to using a pen. Children have to earn a 'pen licence' by demonstrating that their handwriting is good enough.

How you can help: Practice makes perfect, so spending some time helping your child with handwriting exercises will help them make the transition from pencil to pen. It's also a good idea to ask the teacher what sort of pen they'll be using in school, so you can provide the same type for writing at home.