

Life at school.

Pointers for parents.







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Life at school

Children's first teachers are their Mums and Dads and the other people who care for them.

Both parents make a difference, at every stage, to how well their children do in school, whether the children live with one or both parents. The amount of interest parents take in their children's schooling has a big influence on their progress. Mums and Dads know their children best and help their children when they:

- Let children know that they think school is important
- Take an interest in what they do at school
- Encourage their children's efforts
- Visit the school regularly and talk to the teachers
- Play and have fun together
- Support school learning by:
 - Reading books at home with their children
 - Taking children to the library
 - Visiting museums and arts centres
 - Exploring the big outdoors
 - Encouraging finding out by using books, experts or the internet.

Did you know?

Research shows that 'father involvement in children's education at age 7 predicts higher educational attainment by age 20 in both boys and girls'

The Impact of Parental Involvement on Children's Education DFES 2003

Your Responsibilities

Statutory School Age is the age at which legally children must attend full-time school. In England and Wales that is the beginning of the term following the term in which they are 5 years old. Once your child reaches Statutory School Age you are responsible for ensuring that he or she receives education.



This usually means attending school regularly. A child may only be absent from school if he is unwell, is observing a religious holiday or has the agreement of the Head-teacher to be absent. Taking holidays in school term time is strongly discouraged.

If your child is absent you must let the school know the reason for the absence as soon as possible.

Often when children first start school they pick up coughs and colds easily. If your child is more seriously ill and is absent from school for longer than 15 consecutive days he may be able to be taught by the Home Tuition Service.

To enquire about such help for your child ask at school or phone the **Surrey County Council's Contact Centre on 08456 00909**

If your child's absence from school is due to other family problems the school's Education Welfare Officer may visit you to offer help in sorting out any difficulties.

You may also contact the Education Welfare Officer yourself through the school or by ringing the Contact Centre.

For help with family problems

Talk to someone at school, the Family Liaison worker, your child's class teacher or the Head-teacher who will be able to direct you to the appropriate person to help you or for a confidential service that listens to your concerns and can direct you to appropriate help

Phone Familyline Surrey
Parent line Plus

0808 800 5678
0808 800 2222

What will my child learn?

The National Curriculum

The National Curriculum sets out what children should be taught at different ages.

The years children spend in Nursery and Primary School are divided into Key Stages.

3 -5 years	Foundation Stage
5 – 7 years	Key Stage 1
7 – 11 years	Key Stage 2

When children start in Reception class they will continue to follow the Foundation Stage curriculum that was used in their preschool.

The Foundation Stage curriculum covers six areas of learning:

- Personal, social and emotional development
- Communication, literacy and language
- Mathematical development
- Knowledge and understanding of the world
- Physical development
- Creative development.

At this stage children learn best through practical activities and play. Many of the activities and ways of learning in reception class will be similar to those they are familiar with from preschool.

When children move into Year 1 they start Key Stage 1 and follow the National Curriculum that covers twelve areas of learning

- English
- Mathematics
- Science
- Design and Technology
- Information and Communication Technology
- History
- Geography
- Art and Design

- Music
- Physical education
- Religious education
- Personal, social and emotional education and citizenship

Want to know more?

Learning Journey booklets explain what schools teach and why.

They answer the most common questions that parents ask about education and give useful tips to make learning fun for your child.

You can order a free copy of the Learning Journey by:

- **calling 08000 96 66 26**
- ordering online
- downloading from the internet www.parentscentre.gov.uk.



Schools must, by law, allow parents to see the schemes of work and syllabuses, or schemes of work that the teachers follow.

Schools will also be able to help by telling you how they teach reading, letter formation, spelling, maths and how you can help at home.

Want to know more?

www.bbc.co.uk/schools/parents/work/primary/literacy/reading_help.shtml

www.dfes.gov.uk/read

To download information on how to help your child with reading at different ages go to *Reading is Fundamental* at:

www.rif.org.uk/parentsandcarers



Your child's progress

At the end of the Foundation Stage, while children are in the reception class, the teacher completes the Foundation Stage Profile.

This is the assessment required by the DfES for children in the final year of the Foundation Stage. It looks at the stage your child has reached in moving towards the Early Learning Goals for each learning area.

These goals set out the skills, understanding, knowledge and attitudes we hope children will reach or exceed by the end of the Foundation Stage. The Goals also aim to make learning a fun and challenging experience and specifically recognise the value of play.

Children will be at different stages of progress towards these Goals depending on their age and stage of development. There is no passing or failing. The finished profile will be discussed with you and will help the teacher to plan your child's learning.

Every school has its own way of giving parents information about children's progress.

It is often possible to have a quick word with the teacher when you pick him up at the end of school. It is best to avoid trying to have a discussion with the teacher in the mornings, as she needs to give her attention to the children at that time.

Many schools send home a Reading Record in which you and the teacher can write comments.

Schools hold regular meetings with parents, usually once a term, to discuss children's progress. These are often held in the evenings so that working parents can more easily attend.

All schools must provide a written report on the child's progress once a year.

At the end of Key Stage 1 in Year 2 when children are 6 or 7 years old, there are teacher assessments and tests in English and Mathematics. The results of these tests will be reported to you.

The tests are intended to check on school standards and to monitor children's progress. Children should be encouraged to take them in their stride.

The Government is planning to change these tests slightly - to find out more, ask at school when your child reaches Year 2.

Remember

A good education is more than just the three Rs, reading, 'riting and 'rithmetic. The Three Cs are equally important - Confidence, Communication and Co-operation

At test time help your child feel confident and good about himself whatever level he achieves.

Want to know more?

- www.DfES.gov.uk and select 'parents'
- The Advisory Centre for Education (ACE) is an independent advice centre for parents, offering information about state education in England and Wales for 5 to 16 year olds. ACE operates an advice line and produces information leaflets on a range of topics such as exclusion from school, bullying, special educational needs and school admissions. ACE can be contacted at:

1c Aberdeen Studios,
22 Highbury Grove,
London N5 2DQ

Tel: 0808 800 5793
(Mon to Fri, 2 - 5pm)



Special Educational Needs

Children learn at different rates and most children receive help in their own school.

As many as one in five children may at some time need extra help with some aspect of their schoolwork.

If your child's needs have already been identified, the arrangements should already be in place to meet them. If new needs arise and the teacher thinks your child needs extra help she will talk this through with you and explain how the school can give your child the help he needs. After a term, if she still thinks more help is needed she will consult the school's Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCo), who should talk to both you and your child's other teachers and draw up an Individual Education Plan (IEP).

Explanation

An Individual Education Plan (IEP) is the recommended way of recording the action being taken to support a child with SEN. It sets out the targets (what it is hoped to achieve), how this will be done, by whom and when the plan will be reviewed.



All the work done at this stage may mean that your child does not need any more help, but some children may still need more help. If so the school will look for specialist help or advice from outside the school. For example, they may call in an educational psychologist or a learning support teacher. (Your school will be able to explain how different professionals can help the school to help your child.) The school's SENCO will consider the information collected and the action already taken to meet your child's special educational needs. The staff will then decide what further help your child needs, and your child's teachers and the outside specialist will draw up a new IEP for your child. The school will keep a close check on how your child is doing and will record the progress carefully. You will be kept informed and invited to review meetings.

The outcome of the review may be that your child has progressed enough not to need further additional help, that the help needs to continue or to be changed, or occasionally that your child does not seem to be making as much progress as expected despite appropriate help being given. For a very small number of children who have severe and complex special educational needs the Head-teacher may then decide whether to ask the local Special Needs Manager to consider the child for a Statutory Assessment. This could lead to a Statement of Special Educational Needs.

A Statutory Assessment is the process set out by the Government for assessing the needs of a child who has severe and complex educational needs.

A Statement of Special Educational Needs sets out the special educational needs of the individual child and describes the extra help he/she should receive and any additional funding to be made available. The Statement is reviewed each year.

Did You know?

The Government recommends that Statements may be issued for approximately 2 in 100 children who have severe and complex special educational needs and may require additional resources or alternative provision.

For more information, see Code of Practice in the booklet Finding a School.

Worried about your child's progress?

- Speak to your child's teacher. She is the person who will know your child best in school. Or contact:
- The school nurse, your health visitor or any other professional who knows your child, or
- The Special Educational Needs Manager at your local Childrens Services Office, or
- Contact Partnership with Parents who support parents of children with Special Educational Needs. www.pwpsurrey.org or phone on **01737 737300**
- Go to www.surreycc.gov.uk

The School day

Leaving you

Each school sets its own starting and finishing times. These will be set out in the school's brochure.

It is very important for your child that s/he arrives on time to start the day. Teachers settle children into school very carefully and usually know when it is best for parents to leave. Do so cheerfully and quickly when the time comes. A hovering parent makes a child more anxious. Most children settle quite quickly if they know when you will be back. Talk to the teacher at the parents' Open Day if you think your child will have more difficulty than other children in parting from you so you can work out together how to overcome any difficulties.

Don't be surprised if it is you who feels tearful on that first day as your child starts out in the big wide world of school. It is the end of an era and it is understandable if you have some regrets, as your baby becomes a schoolchild.



What will children do at school?

Every school has its own arrangements but all will have a variety of activities each day. There will be a timetable that sets out when some activities take place. These may include:

- Time to talk and share news from home
- Listening to a story in a group of children while sitting on the carpet
- Choosing from the playthings available
- Painting, sand, water and creative activities
- Cutting and sticking
- Small group table activities
- Outdoor play
- Playtime. Some schools have separate arrangements for reception class children so that they do not go out into the main playground with the older children at first.
- Lunchtime

When children move into Year 1 and progress up the school more time will be spent sitting working at tables and listening to the teacher as a class. Much learning however still takes place in groups doing practical activities.

As they become settled the children will use the hall for physical activities, singing, drama and perhaps assembly with other classes. Everyone in school understands that some young children can find moving away from the security of their own classroom a bit daunting. They will give the children a lot of support and encouragement.

Early 'homework'

Most children go to nursery or playgroup and will be used to bringing books home. After a settling-in period at school children will again bring books home to share with you. Later other activities may be sent home.

You can help by

- Checking every day whether your child has brought anything home to do
- Trying to do what is asked even if you can only find a few minutes
- Turning off the TV and sitting down with your child
- Praising your child for his efforts
- Writing comments in the record book
- Putting the book back in his bag so that it goes back to school the next day





Friendships and falling out

Friends begin to be very important in the primary school years.

In reception class he will rely on you to help him develop friendships that can continue out of school.

Children fall in and out of friendships very easily at this age. It is usually wise to give a child time to sort things out for themselves rather than getting involved yourself too early. These are valuable learning experiences for your child.

However it can be very painful for a child if she feels she has lost a friend and she may need adult help to settle differences, make amends or find new friends. An understanding ear and supportive word always helps.

If you are concerned that your child is having real difficulty with friendships talk to your child's teacher.

When your child starts school it is a chance for you to make new friends too.

Finding other parents who live nearby and can take turns with you at taking or fetching children from school can be a big help.

Holiday times too are much easier if you can build friendships that enable you to do things together or care for each other's children.

A word of caution

Before you leave your child with someone else it is worth checking that you share each other's views and rules on safety.

As children move through primary school they will begin to choose their own friends but it is always good to know a little about another family before invitations to play are accepted.

Did you know?

Seven year-olds whose parents let them out to play without knowing where they are are more likely than other kids to be in trouble with the police as teenagers.

Talking to teachers and other adults in school

Meetings with teachers

Teachers are keen to have the support of Mums, Dads and Carers.

You are the people who know your child best, who have his interests at heart and who can give him the extra support that will help him be happy and successful in school. Getting to know your child's teacher takes time.

Remember

The teacher has 30 children and parents to get to know. You have 1 teacher to get to know.

Your child's teacher may be able to have a brief word with you when you pick him up after school. Mornings are not a good time, as the teacher needs to give her attention to the children. If you need a longer chat ask for an appointment at a more convenient time.

If you need to speak to the Head-teacher speak to the secretary in the school office or telephone the school to arrange an appointment for her to see you.

You should get in touch with the school if:

- Your child is or will be absent from school for any reason
- There is any family matter that you feel may affect your child's progress at school
- He is reluctant to go to school
- There are any problems such as bullying.

Tips to help reach good solutions in difficult situations

- Listen to what your child has to say carefully but remember there are always two sides to a story and your child may have misunderstood the situation.
- Make some notes to take with you to any meeting - it will help you remember what you want to say.
- Take a member of your family or a friend with you.
- Present your case calmly.
- Listen carefully and try to keep an open mind even if you don't like what you hear.
- Don't leave the meeting until an agreement has been reached about a way forward.

Most schools hold Open Evenings when you can go into school to see your children's work and discuss their progress with the teacher.

If your child is on School Action or School Action Plus of the Code of Practice there will be a more frequent meeting with the class teacher and /or the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO) to discuss your child's Individual Education Plan, which should be reviewed at least termly.

Want to know more?

- The Code of Practice sets out the way in which schools should record and provide for children whose learning is causing concern. A copy is available in all schools or it can be obtained from www.surreycc.gov.uk/sen
- An Individual Education Plan is the recommended way of recording the action being taken to support a child with SEN. It sets out the targets (what it is hoped to achieve), how this will be done, by whom and when the plan will be reviewed.



A child whose needs are severe enough to have a Statement of Special Educational Needs will also have an Annual Review to which parents and professionals are invited by the school's Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator. (SENCO)

Need support?

Get in touch with **Partnership with Parents**
Tel 01737 737300
www.pwpsurrey.org

There will be many opportunities to go into your child's school. Many schools hold workshops or talks when you can find out more about what your children do in the classroom. You may be invited to come in to Assemblies or to see class or school performances. Your child will always be pleased to see you there, pleased that you show an interest in his life in school and pleased that you know the teachers so well. And you will be in a better position to sort things out should any difficulties arise.

The Friends of the School or Parent-Teacher Association (PTA)

The Friends of the School or PTA bring together parents and teachers, with the common interest of increasing the child's enjoyment of school.

The group meets and works together to raise money for extra activities and equipment.

PTAs always need more parents to share the work. All parents can contribute something, sharing their skills, having new ideas or giving a few hours help each term.

A school benefits from extra money and good communication between parents and teachers on an informal basis.

A parent also benefits.

"I never realised how much I could learn about my child's school and the difficulties faced by the school's Head-teacher in providing equipment for school clubs." - Carol, parent

A child with a parent on the PTA benefits too. He likes them to be involved with the school and learns from his parents how to be a good citizen.

"I love Mum being around school and playing with things she has helped to buy. I feel like I am a member of a very important club" - Sam aged 8

Want to know more?

National Confederation of Parent Teacher Associations at www.ncpta.org.uk



Thinking about you

Helping in school

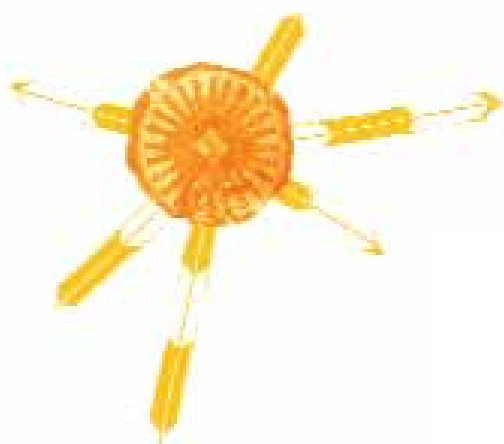
Most schools welcome Mums, Dads, Carers and Grandparents to help in school in a variety of ways.

Dads are particularly welcome because there are very few male teachers in primary schools to provide children with positive male role models.

These are some of the ways your school may need parents to help:

- In the library
- Hearing children read
- Preparing art and craft material
- Cooking with children
- With school clubs
- Talking about the songs and games you grew up with or
- On trips outside school

So if you would like to help, tell a teacher. Your help will be welcomed.



Family Learning

Family Learning involves learning activities where children and parents or those caring for children learn together.

Family Learning is free. Family Learning activities are held in schools and other community venues. It gives parents and carers an understanding of how their children are taught at school and helps them to value their involvement in their children's learning.

Want to know more?

Contact **Family Learning**
on **01932 794539** or go to
www.surreycc.gov.uk/familylearning



Volunteering

If you have a few hours a week to spare now that your child is at school your child's school may welcome your help. Volunteering can also be offered in a range of other environments.

It can be a great way to use your skills to help others, and at the same time learn something new and meet new people. There are many local and national organisations that would welcome a few hours of your time on a regular basis. You need to think through the kind of help you can offer and the hours you can commit to before contacting the organisation of your choice.

Want to know more?

Surrey Community Action, Astolat, Coniers Way,
New Inn Lane, Burpham, Guildford, GU4 7HL
Phone: 01483 566072 Fax 01483 440508
Email: info@surreyca.org.uk

Central Surrey CVS, The Old Town Hall,
The Parade, Epsom, Surrey KT18 5AG
Tel: 01372 722 911
Email: centralsurreycvs@btconnect.com
www.volunteeringcentralsurrey.org.uk
or **www.Volunteering.org.uk**



Further Education

There is lots of help and support available if you want to return to learning. Whether you want to develop a new interest, learn a new skill, keep fit and healthy or simply have fun and make new friends there are courses for you.

Want to know more?

Go to **www.surreycc.gov.uk/adultlearning**

For free and impartial advice on on-line opportunities call the learndirect advice line on **0800 100 900** from 8.00 am to 10.00 pm seven days a week. If you want advice on learning and careers, you could be entitled to three telephone sessions. You'll also be able to get advice about financial help available. You can book a free call back at a time to suit you, by using the Learndirect Advice Interactive Telephone Service. If you have an email address you can email a learning advisor with your query.

Access your local Jobcentreplus for advice on training at **www.learndirect.co.uk**
You will find the address in your local Phone book or from your library.



Finding a Job

Finding a job that will fit in with school hours and family responsibilities can be difficult but employers are becoming more family friendly. It is always worth asking whether hours can be adjusted to fit your needs.

Places to look for jobs include:

- Your local newspaper
- Your local Jobcentre Plus office (you will find the phone number in the phone book)
- **www.surreycc.gov.uk**
- **www.jobsite.co.uk**



Life at school.



Other booklets
in this series:

*Helping your child in the
year before school.*

Safe and healthy children.

Finding a school.



Surrey Parenting
Education & Support



SureStart

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