

Getting ready to start school

A warm welcome from the Hertfordshire School Nursing Service

Congratulations! Your little one is about to start school – what an exciting milestone! You’ve done an incredible job as their first teacher, and you’ll continue to be their most important guide as they grow and learn.

We warmly welcome you to the Hertfordshire School Nursing Service. We’re here to support both you and your little one as they begin their school journey and throughout their school years. Our team works with all children and young people in mainstream schools across Hertfordshire, right up to the age of 19.

We’re commissioned by Hertfordshire County Council to deliver the Healthy Child Programme, which includes hearing and vision screening and height and weight checks during the reception year. We’ll send you more details about these services closer to the time.

But our support doesn’t stop there – we’re also here for you as parents and carers.

Our team includes Specialist Community Public Health Nurses (School Nurses) – with extra training in child development and public health, Community Nurses, Associate Public Health



Practitioners (APHPs), and Healthy Child and Young Person Assistants (HCYPAs).

We're available Monday to Friday, 9am–5pm (excluding bank holidays) You can reach us in two easy ways:

Call our Duty Line: 0300 123 7572

Text our Parentline: 07312 263002 (text only)

Whether you're concerned about your child's development, wellbeing, school attendance, or minor health issues, we're here to help. Our goal is to support every child and young person to be healthy, confident, and resilient – ready to thrive at school and beyond.

This guide has been created to help you and your little one feel prepared and positive about starting school. Inside, you'll find checklists, tips, and helpful resources to make the transition as smooth as possible.

If you feel your child needs a bit of extra support before September, please don't hesitate to get in touch. We understand that this can be an emotional and sometimes overwhelming time – you're not alone, and there's lots of support available.



Starting school checklist

This checklist is to help you prepare your child for being in school, where they will need to have some independence. It will also help you in the mornings before school.

Routines

Help your child get used to the school day by practicing these routines:



- Eat meals at regular times
- Go to bed at a regular time having had a bedtime story and wake up on time – NHS recommends [10+ hours sleep per night](#)
- Understand the school day; start and finish times, break times and lunch time
 - Establish consistent boundaries and routines

Independence

Encourage your child to take care of themselves and their belongings:



- Practice putting on and taking off school uniform, doing up buttons and zips
- Practice putting on and doing up shoes
- Wash and dry hands independently
- Blow and wipe nose using a tissue
- Ask for help when needed
- Look after personal belongings



Toileting

Support your child in becoming toilet independent:



- Use the toilet independently, alone
- Wipe properly and flush
- Wash and dry hands after using the toilet

Eating

Help your child become confident with eating at school:



- Use a knife, fork, and spoon
 - Like a variety healthy of food and open to trying new food
 - Sit at a table to eat meals
- Open a lunchbox, food wrappers and packages
 - Drink from a cup or water bottle
 - Drink 6 - 8 small cups of water during the day including at mealtimes

Writing Skills

Support early writing and mark-making:



- Trace shapes and colour in
- Using scissors
- Practice holding a pencil
- Recognise and to begin to write their name



Counting Skills

Make learning numbers fun:



- Recognise



- Count objects during play or going up steps.
- Sing number rhymes some numbers

Social Skills

Help your child feel confident around others:



- Share toys and take turns
- Knowing that some parts of their body are private
- Try new things and experiences
- Be happy to be away from parents/carers
- Feel confident about starting school, anxiety is normal
- Read story books about starting school (ask for suggestions)
- Watch TV programmes about starting schools e.g. Topsy and Tim or Bluey
- Practice your journey to school

Listening and Understanding

Support your child in following instructions:

- Listen and follow simple instructions
- Sit still for short periods
- Understand the need to follow rules



General Health

Support your child's health



- Confirm all immunisations are up to date, including the pre-school booster and MMR.
- If your little one has a long-term condition ensure they have any routine check-ups, ask for medication if needed for school and a care plan for school
- Book a dental checkup and plan to have checkups in school holidays or after school

If you find your little one is struggling with any of the above or you would like support or reassurance, please call our Duty Line 0300 123 7572 between 9am and 5pm Monday to Friday where you can speak to a School Nurse or Health Visitor.



Useful resources to support you as parent or carer of a child at School

[Hertfordshire School Nurses](#)



School Nursing Duty Line

9am – 5pm,
Monday – Friday.
0300 123 7572.

[Dental Health](#)



[Is my child too ill for school?](#)



[Immunisations](#)



[School Readiness](#)



School Nursing Parent Text only line

9am – 5pm,
Monday – Friday
07312 263002,

[Find a dentist - NHS](#)



[Common Health Conditions](#)

[A to Z](#)



e.g. head lice /
threadworms

Toileting

[ERIC, The Children's Bowel & Bladder Charity](#)



Supporting your
Neurodivergent child
[Neurodiversity Handbook](#)



[Special Educational Needs
\(SEND\) local Offer](#)



[Hertfordshire Free School
Meals info](#)



[Hertfordshire Healthy
Lifestyles](#)



Starting School: What to expect and how to support your child

Tired and hungry? That's normal!

Starting school can be exhausting for little ones. They're managing expectations, disappointments, and challenges. All without your comforting presence nearby. It's a lot! They might be quiet or not talk much about their day, have a meltdown, seem overwhelmed or extra tired. This is all completely normal. We're here to support you and so is your child's school.

Top tips for after school







Bring a healthy snack for the journey home — avoid sugary treats and drinks.

Let them relax — quiet time helps them recharge.















Reassure them that you're there for them, whether you pick them up from school or an after-school club.

These are some gentle questions to ask

(Try just a few at a time)

-  Was today a good day or a bad day?
-  What did you like better today: snack time or circle time?
-  Who did you play with today?
-  Did anybody get in trouble today?
-  Did anyone do anything funny at school today?
-  What made you smile today?



-  What games did you play at playtime?
-  When did you feel most proud of yourself today?
-  Tell me one new thing you learned today.
-  What made you laugh today?
-  Did anyone do anything nice for you today?
-  what challenged you today?
-  What was the nicest thing you did for someone else today?
-  How was lunch today? What was it?
-  How would you rate your day on a scale of 1 to 10?
-  If one of your friends could be the teacher for the day, who would it be?
-  What's your teacher's most important rule — and did anyone break it?
-  Does your teacher remind you of anyone you know?
-  What did you have fun learning today?
-  What's one thing you did today that helped a friend or your teacher?

Good Luck – Starting school is exciting and fun but can be daunting for all too.



Remember

We're here for you – every step of the way

We know parenting can be full of questions, especially when it comes to your child's health, development, or school life. Whether you're feeling unsure, worried, or just need a bit of guidance — you're not alone.

 **You can reach us Monday to Friday, 9am–5pm** (excluding Bank Holidays).

Here's how:





 **Call our friendly Duty Line:**

0300 123 7572

 **Text our confidential Parentline (text only):**

07312 263002

No question is too small. Whether it's about:

-  Your child's development
-  Their emotional wellbeing
-  School attendance
-  Minor health concerns

We're here to listen, support, and help you find the right next steps.

Our aim is to help every child and young person feel **healthy, confident, and ready to thrive** — both in school and in life.

