

RISE & SHINE

RISE NI (NHSCT) PRESCHOOL NEWSLETTER

Welcome to the **summer** edition of the RISE NI (NHSCT) preschool newsletter! As the end of the school year is upon us, the focus of this edition is 'school readiness' and what parents/carers can be doing, to promote their child's readiness over the summer months. We hope you have an action packed and fun-filled summer, trying out some of our suggested activities. But first...

→ ALL ABOUT RISE NI (NHSCT) ←

WHO ARE WE?



RISE NI stands for Regional Integrated Support for Education NI, and up until this school year, we have been working with mainstream primary schools in the Northern Health & Social Care Trust (NHSCT) area to support staff and children in years 1 - 4.

The service focuses on 3 main areas of development:

- social, emotional and / or behaviour
- speech, language and communication
- sensory-motor and visual perceptual skills

WHERE ARE WE?



The Northern Health & Social Care Trust covers a large area within Northern Ireland. To manage this, we work across 4 different 'sectors':

- **East Antrim** which covers the Newtownabbey, Carrickfergus, Larne, and Ballyclare area
- **Antrim/Ballymena** which covers the Crumlin, Antrim, Randalstown, Ballymena area
- **Causeway** which covers the Ballymoney, Coleraine, Ballycastle area
- **Mid Ulster** which covers the Portlone, Maghera, Magherafelt, Cookstown area

OUR TEAMS...

Each sector team has a Team Lead, Therapy Assistant and admin support, and has input from behaviour therapy, clinical psychology, occupational therapy, physiotherapy and speech and language therapy.

WHAT DO WE DO?

Our regional aim is to support children in schools, by working closely with parents and school staff, to help children develop the foundation skills for learning. We do this through different levels of support - universal, targeted or specialist.

Universal support

General training, advice and strategies for school staff and parents to enhance and enrich the development of all children.

Targeted support

Targeted advice, consultation, strategies, training, class based and small group programmes.

Specialist support

Assessment for children with persistent needs who have not responded positively to strategies and support already used in school.

WHAT IS 'SCHOOL READINESS'?

School readiness refers to whether a child is ready to make an easy and successful transition into primary school. While many people think of academics (e.g. writing their name, counting to 10, knowing colours) as the important school readiness skills, school readiness actually refers to a much broader range of skills. In addition to some academic basics, school readiness skills also include self care (independent toileting and opening lunch boxes), attention and concentration, physical skills (e.g. having the endurance to sit upright for an entire school day), emotional regulation, language skills and play and social skills.



WHY ARE SCHOOL READINESS SKILLS IMPORTANT?

Without these basic skills already being established upon starting school, children can very quickly find themselves playing 'catch up.' Children who begin school with these building blocks (or foundation) skills in place, tend to progress more quickly than those who start school, only *then* to begin the process of developing school readiness.

WHAT CAN YOU DO TO IMPROVE YOUR CHILD'S READINESS FOR SCHOOL?

- **Parenting expectations:** Increase your expectations of your child around self-care tasks such as dressing, toileting, eating, and getting ready to leave the house. Provide only verbal rather than physical 'help' to complete the tasks where possible.
- **Social skills:** Encourage your child to develop relationships with other (unfamiliar) children of a similar age, and arrange suitable 'play dates' for social interaction practice where the adults actively facilitate this play practice.
- **Books:** Expose your child to books to prepare them for literacy so they learn to sit through the entirety of a book.
- **Early preparation:** Start preparing your child for school by talking about expectations at school, appropriate behaviour, and regularly engaging in 'sit down' activities.

The next few pages give you lots of practical activities and ideas to build your child's foundations for learning and hence their school readiness. HAVE FUN!

LET'S GET READY FOR SCHOOL

Children develop speech language and communication at different rates, but during their first year in primary school, children will usually:



- Understand spoken instructions, without stopping what they are doing.
- Take turns in longer conversations.
- Understand more complicated language e.g. first, last.



- Use sentences that are well formed. However, they may still have some difficulties with their grammar e.g. saying 'sheeps' for 'sheep' or 'goed' for 'went'.
- Use most speech sounds correctly so their speech should be mostly understood by both familiar and unfamiliar listeners.

PROMOTING SPEECH LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION SKILLS FOR SCHOOL:

LISTENING WALKS:



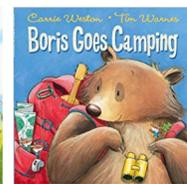
Go on listening walks in different locations e.g. the beach, forest, park or your own back garden. Explain that your child needs to listen very carefully to the sounds they hear around them. Let them walk around for a while and listen. Then talk about what they have heard.

This is a great way to develop listening skills and to encourage vocabulary.

READING ON RAINY SUMMER DAYS:

Trips to the library or reading at home are great ways to pass those rainy days and help expand your child's language further. Keep reading fun and interesting for your child by:

- Letting them choose their own book
- Letting them hold the book and turn the pages
- Letting your child 'read' the book in their way. Let them read to you!
- Acting the stories out – you could let them dress up too!



PICNIC TIME:



Name the things you brought on the picnic e.g. basket, rug, cutlery, containers, ball, food and drinks etc. Talk about what you use them for e.g. the rug is to sit on; the knife is to cut the sandwiches etc. Talk about how things change during the picnic e.g. the plate is now empty; the juice is finished; I see the core of your apple now etc.

WATER PLAY:



Let's have fun with water! You could use a paddling pool or if it's a rainy day use the bath or kitchen sink.

Gather up some items from around the house that float, sink or squirt e.g. plastic bottles, spoons,

sponges, stones, strainer, funnel etc. Simply PLAY with your child and incorporate these simple strategies:

- **Follow your child's lead** – wait, watch and when you see what your child wants to do follow their lead by joining in.

- **Get down to your child's level and face your child** – this helps them to feel connected with you and learn from your facial expressions, actions and language.

- **Balance your conversation** – whenever you ask a question or make a comment about what your child is doing, WAIT and give your child time to respond. **There's no right or wrong way to play in the water. Let your child play how they want to, whether it's pouring water into different sizes of containers or imagining a pirate searching for treasure; it's more motivating if you follow their lead – have fun!**

SCAVENGER HUNTS:



FOOTBALL:

Take turns shooting at the goal. Focus on position words... "Where did the ball land?" in the net; over the bar; beside; between; next to; in the corner etc.

SENSORY MOTOR & PERCEPTUAL

OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY & PHYSIOTHERAPY

GETTING READY FOR SCHOOL

Have a think about what your child's day will be like when they start school in September, and what sort of things they will have to do for themselves. They will have to put their coat on and take it off to hang it on a peg; they may have to change their shoes and jumper for PE; open and close their lunch boxes; go to the toilet by themselves; manage cutlery in the dinner hall; cut with scissors; hold a pencil to start to form letters and numbers; complete PE activities such as throwing and catching a ball; and remain settled in a chair or on the floor for longer periods. Being able to complete these basic every day activities will allow your child to focus more on the new learning and social challenges that the move to school will bring. These are activities that you can teach and practise with your child over the next few months to build up their confidence and readiness for school.

ACTIVITIES TO HELP YOUR CHILD GET READY FOR SCHOOL:

GETTING DRESSED:

Encourage your child to dress and undress themselves as much as possible. Practise those items that prove difficult for your child, but resist doing it for them. Get out the dressing up clothes, or let them dress up in your clothes! When you buy their uniform, help your child practise getting it on and off, so you know that they can manage this for PE if needed. Do the same with their school coat, and practise the zip.



If your child doesn't like the idea of dressing themselves, try a reward chart with a simple reward, if they succeed at dressing several days in the week. If they are a bit on the slow side at getting dressed, try a time challenge with them - have a race and see who gets dressed first, you or them; or time them and see if they can get faster each time.

GETTING READY TO CUT:

Allow your child to practise using child safe scissors. They will be using these in school.



Give them lots of opportunity to practise snipping / cutting - play doh sausages, straws, junk mail, magazines.



"Thumbs up!" - encourage them to put their thumb in the top and middle finger in the bottom.

GETTING READY TO USE A PENCIL:

Children need strong shoulders, arms and hands to hold and use their pencil well. Try these activities to help get muscles stronger for school:

BALLS & PEGS:



Have your child make little balls out of play dough, or spread some frozen peas on the table. Your child can pick them up, one at a time, using a clothes peg or tongs to put in a bowl.

MAKE YOUR OWN PLAY DOUGH:

Ingredients:

- 2 cups plain flour
- 2 tablespoons veg oil
- 1/2 cup salt
- 2 tablespoons cream of tartar
- Up to 1.5 cups boiling water (add in gradually until it feels just right)
- Food colouring (optional)
- A few drops of glycerine (optional)

Method:

- Mix the flour, salt, cream of tartar and oil in a large mixing bowl
- Add the food colouring to the boiling water; then add to the dry ingredients
- Stir continuously until it becomes a sticky, combined dough
- Add the glycerine
- Allow it to cool down then take it out of the bowl and knead vigorously for a couple of minutes until the stickiness is gone. Add more flour if too sticky

GETTING READY TO USE A PENCIL (CONTINUED):

THREADING:

Thread Cheerios onto a pipe cleaner.



TENNIS BALL MONSTER:



BALLOON BASKETBALL:

Put a bucket or a bin up high e.g. on a windowsill. Aiming high will strengthen shoulders.

CONSTRUCTION GAMES:

Any activity that your child has to use their two hands to build something is good for developing their hand strength and also their ability to use their two hands together. E.g. Duplo, Lego, K'nex etc.

PAINTING:

Paint the walls with water and a big paintbrush.



SPRAY BOTTLES:

Spray plants/ windows/ paper/ objects using a trigger spray bottle



PAPER TEARING:

Use different textures and thickness of paper e.g. card, paper, tissue, magazines etc. to increase hand strength. The torn paper could be scrunched up to play "finger football" or to make a collage.



LID OPENING:

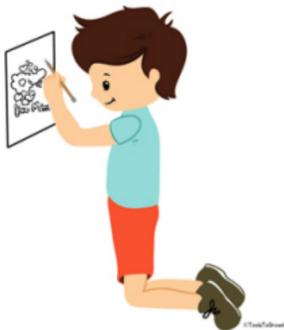
Practise unscrewing and screwing the lids of different types of jars and containers. Hide objects inside to make it more interesting.

GETTING READY TO STAY SETTLED IN SCHOOL:

It's hard work for our muscles to stay in one position for a long period. To do this they need to be strengthened:

- Get to the park! Climbing, running, swinging, sliding, jumping will all strengthen our big muscles we use for sitting.
- Complete activities e.g. jigsaws, colouring, construction games etc. in positions other than sitting. See the pictures below to give you ideas.

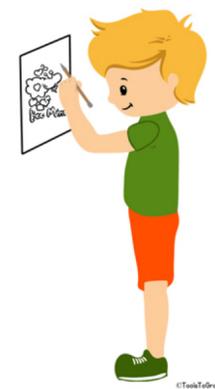
TALL KNEEL



ONE-HALF KNEEL



STANDING



SIDELYING



PRONE



4 POINT KNEELING



SOCIAL, EMOTIONAL AND/OR BEHAVIOUR

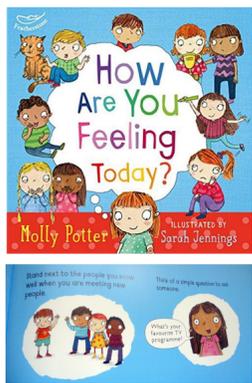
WHAT IS SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT?

This area of development involves learning to interact with others; and being able to understand and control your own emotions. Babies start to develop relationships with the people around them right from birth; but the process of learning to communicate, share and interact with others can take years to develop. Children continue to develop their social and emotional skills well into their teenage years or even young adulthood.

When children are focused they are better able to learn. Most schools incorporate social and emotional programming into their curriculum, but parents and families can get involved too, especially during the summer months.

ACTIVITIES AND GAMES TO PROMOTE SOCIAL EMOTIONAL SKILLS:

READING:



Visit your local library and read a book with a social emotional learning aspect such as 'How are you feeling today?' by Molly Potter. Remember to discuss the feelings and behaviours shown in the book. This will help your child identify with their own feelings and help recognise the feelings of others.

PLAY DATES:

Create cooperative learning opportunities such as play dates. This is a great way to reinforce social and emotional learning concepts such as, cooperation, understanding others, and promoting the development of friendship skills e.g. turn taking and sharing. Help your child to practise these skills by giving them a fun, safe space to play with other kids. Provide guidance if conflict arises, and work together to find a solution to the problem.



TALK ABOUT FEELINGS:

Check in with your child's feelings. Simply asking, "how are you feeling?" every day shows your children that their emotions matter. This also helps children learn to label their emotions and promote emotional literacy. Make this more fun by getting your child to draw out the facial expression showing their emotion onto a paper plate. Your child can then have fun decorating this.



SINGING:

Sing "If you're happy and you know it," but each time, choose a new feeling e.g. angry, sad etc.



Ask your child to think about something s/he does when feeling that way. If your child can't think of something, make a suggestion such as "I notice when you were angry at your brother you took a deep breath" then demonstrate the angry emotion in the song example, "if you're angry and you know it take a breath." This activity encourages a fun way for your child to identify and manage her emotions.

RELAXATION:

Relaxation exercises help children to manage their reactions to stress, anxiety and worry. Exercises, such as the ones below, are a good distraction from worrying thoughts and help reduce tension in the body. Ensure your child is in a quiet comfortable position and read the script in a calm voice, repeat as required.



"Imagine that a butterfly has landed on your nose. Try to get it off your face by wriggling all the parts of your face. Feel your face getting stretched and tight. Try even harder. Your face feels tight and stretched now. Then slowly let all the parts of your face feel calm and loose. Well done. Then imagine the butterfly flying away!"



"Imagine you are holding a lemon in each hand. Try as hard as you can squeeze the juice out of the lemons. Really squeeze hard and get every drop of juice out! You are doing great. Now slowly let the lemons drop to the ground and feel the nice relaxed loose feelings in your hands and arms."

DEVELOPMENTAL MILESTONES:

Between the ages of 3-5 your child should:

- Develop friendship skills such as sharing toys and taking turns.
- Enjoy playing games and follow simple rules.
 - Begin to show more independence.
- Become aware of their own and others' feelings.
 - Stick with a difficult task for longer.
 - Listen while others are speaking.
- Show an understanding of right and wrong.