

Starting School; a Guide for Parents

April 2025



Welcome To Our School

Welcome to Milford Infants' School, we are very excited to meet you and your child very soon. This short guide is designed to help make the first few weeks of starting school easier for you and your child.

We always try to have some sessions for new starters to help familiarise your child with our school. If they attend our on-site pre-school, they may already know some of the school very well! They will need to know where their new classroom is, how to get to the toilets, where they can play at play time and where they will have their lunch.

Before September, why not take a walk or drive with your child to spot the school. What can you see on your journey here? Which route might you take on your first day? Have a trial run of parking at Mudford Rec and walking the short distance to school.



Before School Starts – Be Ready!

Things to buy

September can still be very warm so you may want to buy a pair of shorts or summer dress for your child.

Children are expected to be able to tie their own laces – please bear this in mind when purchasing shoes. Children will need comfortable sensible shoes that they will be able to run around in at playtime.

Label uniform, or use a permanent marker, so that items can easily be returned if misplaced! Full uniform information can be found on the school website <https://www.milford-inf.somerset.sch.uk/uniform/>

If your child is having a packed lunch, buy a lunchbox that is easy to clean and easy to open. Remember, all Infant children are entitled to universal infants free school meals, so school lunches are free; they do need to be booked online in advance. Details to follow.

A book bag and PE bag is all they will need – please do not buy them a big rucksack; we do not have room! Drinking water is provided in class and at lunchtime, so children do not need to bring a drink bottle unless they are having a packed lunch.



Tights are tricky for children to put on – if they struggle, socks might be a better option.

Suddenly having to wear a uniform is a big change for a little person. Try to make the idea of uniform fun – maybe plan your shopping trip and an activity afterwards to celebrate this new chapter.

Read all about it!

Share picture books with your child about what school is like, this is one of the simplest ways to get children excited and prepared for school.

<https://home.oxfordowl.co.uk/blog/top-8-books-about-starting-school/>

Toileting

By the time they start school, children need to be able to go to the toilet by themselves. They will be expected to wipe their own bottom and understand good hygiene practices such as flushing the toilet and good hand washing.

Hand washing tips <https://youtu.be/S9VjeIWLnEg>

Practise 'please and thank you'

The social side of school is really important. Learning to share, take turns and say 'please' and 'thank you' helps them to build positive relationships. All children need reminders about

this, but it definitely helps when parents model friendly, social behaviour, praise their children for being well-mannered and play games that teach them about taking turns.

Using a knife and fork

Using a knife and fork at mealtimes enhances children's fine motor skills and hand eye co-ordination. Practicing using a knife and fork can be incorporated within role play at home and creative activities.

<https://www.nhsggc.org.uk/media/249111/using-cutlery-information-sheet.pdf>

Books, books, books!

Help your child build a love of books. Loving books encourages children to learn to read and to write. It builds their creativity and encourages skills like empathy and conversation. There is nothing better than a bedtime story as part of your routine! Encourage your child to share books with other members of your family.



Practising skills

Encourage your child to try and put their shoes and socks on independently and get themselves dressed – this will really help at school when they need to get changed for PE. Most children will be able to pull on their skirt or trousers, but they may struggle to turn the clothes the right way round. Practising these key dressing skills will really boost their confidence in school. Zips are always tricky, particularly on coats! If they are inclined, practise some drawing, count and share books together. Being armed with a few of these skills can make them feel a bit more grown up at big school.

Fine motor skills

Children do not need to be able to write when they start school, but it does help if they have used the motions we make when we write. Get them drawing and painting, using scissors, playing with playdough, building with blocks, threading or doing puzzles. If they really want to start writing, ensure they are holding their pencil correctly and start with lower case letters first. Do not force them! All children reach development stages in their own time.



Counting

There are so many opportunities to count – count stairs, putting cutlery on the table, see if they can count their toys when they are putting them away. Count forwards and backwards, this will give them more confidence with addition and subtraction in school. Name and count days of the week and months in a year – all these things will help your child once they are in school.

Tackling the PANTS chat

Lots of parents have found the NSPCC PANTS method helpful when addressing the sensitive issue of private parts and keeping ourselves safe. There is a colourful cartoon and song and plenty of guidance for parents and carers. Please see the NSPCC website for all the resources:

<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/support-for-parents/pants-underwear-rule/>

Preparatory playdates

Whether it's a one off meeting over the summer holidays or regular playdates, making friends first can help children settle into their reception year. Not to mention the support parents can give each other as they watch their little ones take that new step together. Help your child to practise social skills like sharing and taking turns with other children.

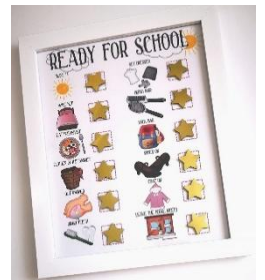
Be positive

If your memories of school are predominantly negative, now is not the time to talk about it. Being positive about school and all of its benefits is the best way to get your child off to a great start. Showing an interest in what your child is learning also helps them to engage.

Term Is About To Begin – Be Organised!

It is not just up to you now – your child is ready to help organise themselves. Get them into good habits by choosing and laying out uniform and getting their book bag ready. Make it part of a new bedtime routine.

Your mornings will need a new routine too. Try getting everyone dressed and fed before there's any playtime or cartoons. Keep a checklist on the fridge door so you can't forget their coat, book bag and PE kit.



Keep up to date with school news and events by...

*Synching the school calendar with your personal device

<https://www.milford-inf.somerset.sch.uk/diary/grid/2024/4/>

*Downloading the School App to receive notifications and reminders <https://www.milford-inf.somerset.sch.uk/school-app/>

*Following the school Facebook page

<https://www.facebook.com/Milford-Infants-School-1785537301729905/>

Checklist for the start of term

Preparation

- 🌳 Make sure your child attends any school inductions or settling-in sessions
- 🌳 Fill in all paperwork well before term starts – photograph consent forms are vital, especially if you would like to see what your child is up to on the website and Facebook page!
- 🌳 Arrange play dates with other new starters over the summer

-  Practise the new school routine to check timings
-  Get doctor, dentist, optician and hair appointments out of the way
-  Check you have booked school lunches (details to follow)
-  Ensure you have everything ready – school shoes, uniform, book bag, PE kit
-  Practise getting dressed and undressed, doing coats up and hanging them up again afterwards
-  Label/name EVERYTHING!

First day advice

Try to make the day as normal as possible. Arrive on time – there is nothing more daunting than your child having to walk into a class of already settled children.

Ask the class teacher or teaching assistant to give your child a task if you are having problems leaving at drop off. Children love to think they are being helpful. Do not worry! Children settle down remarkably quickly – if there is an issue, the class teacher will speak to you.

The big day

You can do this. More importantly, your child can do this. Say hello to the other parents at the school gate – you will end up leaning on each other a lot over the coming years.

The class teacher and teaching assistant will be there to greet your child and will encourage them to hang up their own coat, book bag and wave goodbye to you!

Most children will just want to play with their friends and may well not even say goodbye!

At school

-  Get to know the school

The more embedded you feel in the school, the better you will feel about how hard the teachers work, how committed all the staff are and just how much is going on to support the children and give them the best possible start. Take a good look at the school website and Facebook page to see what is happening. Enquire about joining the Friends of Milford and speak to other parents. The school office will always answer any questions you may have – but please try to avoid first thing in the morning!

-  Reinforce the school pattern

Some children are so excited about their starting school but it may wear off when they realise they have to come every day. It is helpful to just keep reminding them that they need to go to school on a Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday – and stay at home Saturday and Sunday.

Talk to the teacher

If you have any concerns at all, let us know. Telephone the office to pass on a message, email the teacher on the class emails or speak to them at the end of the day. Please remember that the teachers are teaching all day. Your concerns are very important but it may not be possible to call back straight away.



Build resilience

Children come across difficult situations in school, like falling out with friends, finding so many children in one place overwhelming and dealing with children they do not know. The most important thing you can do is to help them learn resilience. Remind them that if someone does not make them feel good, there is always a member of staff close by, so encourage your child to share any worries with the grown up. Let your child know that it is ok to have lots of different friends and that it is ok to play with different children.

Dealing with tiredness

Even if your little one is used to being in a childcare setting for whole days, school is different. It tends to be more structured and routine-led; there's less free-flow when children can take their activities at their own pace. Plus, there'll be more children around, and big ones too! So do not underestimate how tired your child will be by the time they get home.

At first, don't plan anything in the evenings after school – just an early dinner and an unhurried bedtime routine. Let them take their time telling you about their day, try not to bombard them with questions – they will have a lot to process.

Be patient, there are likely to be some meltdowns. Understand that they might be difficult at home sometimes. Ensure you stick to bed-times, and make that a priority over activities or play-dates.

We look forward to meeting you and your child very soon. If you have any questions at all, please do not hesitate to get in touch.



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www.milford-inf.somerset.sch.uk

Starting School Glossary

EYFS – Early Years Foundation Stage, Ages 0 - 5

Governors - Appointed people who oversee the running of the school, in terms of strategy, performance and budget.

INSET Day - A teacher training day when the school will be closed – there are five of these a year.

Key Stage 1 (KS1) - Ages 5 – 7 / Years 1 - 2

Key Stage 2 (KS2) - Ages 7 – 11 / Years 3 – 6 (Junior School)

PFSA – Parent and Family Support Advisor

PTFA - Parent Teacher Friends Association, at Milford they are known known as Friends of Milford (**FOM**). They organise events for the school to raise money and bring the school community together. Joining the FOM is a great way to get to know people.

SEND - Special Educational Needs or Disabilities

SENCO – Special Educational Needs Coordinator

