



Illawarra
Children's Services



**Starting
School!**

CEO's message

Dear Parent/Carer,

Starting school is a time of high excitement and expectation, when every child needs to be socially and emotionally ready for the changes ahead.

At Illawarra Children's Services, we know that children thrive at the start of school when they bring the skills and confidence necessary to deal with new surroundings.

Quality preschools, child care centres and playgroups offer important foundation experiences to support each child's development, confidence and readiness for school.

For many families, these prior-to-school services play an important part in preparations for 'big school'.

I commend this publication for the practical assistance it offers families in their preparations for the transition to school.

For more information about school readiness and transition programs, visit the Transition to School Project website at www.transitiontoschool.com.au, or contact the Transition to School team at Illawarra Children's Services on 4283 9900 or enquiry@transitiontoschool.com.au.

Bill Feld

CEO, Illawarra Children's Services



www.ics.org.au

school readiness activities

You can help your child prepare for school by providing opportunities to develop their skills. Here are some ideas you can incorporate into your everyday activities.

Pre-writing activities enhance fine motor skills and develop concentration:

- Provide plenty of opportunities for children to recognise their name
- Trace or copy shapes and letters, using thick pencils to start with - this helps to develop little fingers
- Encourage children to hold their pencil between their thumb and pointer finger, but don't stress if this is hard - children develop at different rates
- Encourage clapping and rhyming games and provide opportunities for fine motor skills to develop (such as threading, play dough)
- Encourage drawing and art and craft activities

Cutting skills enhance fine motor skills and help develop small muscles for writing:

- Practice opening and closing scissors
- Encourage correct scissor hold
- Let children practice cutting out shapes on old magazines



Exercise enhances gross motor skills and builds strength:

- Run, climb, march, jump, dance
- Throw and catch balls, bean bags, other objects
- Go for a bike ride
- Obstacle course - follow simple instructions around the back yard or local park.

Social skills enhance your child's ability to adjust to the school routine:

- Have regular conversations and encourage children to express their thoughts and needs
- Take turns
- Use hanky or tissue
- Explain rules and how to follow instructions in a variety of situations
- Encourage independence - putting your own shoes on, looking after your jumper, packing up toys and being respectful of others
- Have daily routines
- Encourage independent toileting - visit public toilets and allow children to use toilets and wash their hands independently
- Visit public places, such as the swimming pool and the library
- Practice road safety.



Read, read, read!

- Read to your child everyday
- Identify stories as having a beginning, middle and end.
- Limit screen time in front of the TV or computer
- Point out words in everyday situations, on street signs and at the supermarket
- Visit the library for story time
- Encourage independent reading. Your child will not be able to read yet - this is something that will develop later on - but children can learn to love books by looking at them.

healthy lunch box

Children need to eat a variety of healthy foods everyday. Good lunch box foods include:

- Lots of fresh fruit, vegetables and breads and cereals
- Some protein and dairy foods
- A bottle of water

Include a frozen drink or small freezer pack to keep lunch cold.

When your child first starts school, they may not eat everything you give them for lunch. Children are often very busy dealing with new routines at recess and lunch times, and eating takes second place.

Don't worry - this will settle once your child feels comfortable with new routines.

Include small, healthy and easy-to-eat snacks, as children often want to eat quickly so they can go and play. Limit sugary, salty or fatty foods to occasional treats.

Some schools participate in healthy eating programs, where children are allowed to eat fruit and drink water at their desk. Check if your school is one of these and provide appropriate food, if so.

Always encourage a healthy breakfast, as this will increase your child's ability to concentrate at school.

For links to healthy lunch box ideas and suggestions, visit:

- www.healthinsite.gov.au/topics/Healthy_Lunch_Boxes



immunisation

You will be asked to provide an Immunisation History Statement when enrolling your child at school.

A child without an Immunisation History Statement will not be prevented from enrolling. Under the NSW Public Health Act 1991, however, children without proof of immunisation may be asked by Public Health Officials to stay at home during an outbreak of vaccine preventable disease.

For more information on immunisation, speak to your GP or contact your local early childhood health centre.

Australian Childhood Immunisation Register

The Australian Childhood Immunisation Register is a national register administered by Medicare Australia that records details of vaccinations given to children under seven years of age who live in Australia.

The Immunisation History Statement can be obtained by contacting the Australian Childhood Immunisation Register on 1800 653 809.

- www.medicareaustralia.gov.au/public/services/acir/index.jsp

NSW Immunisation Schedule

A copy of the current NSW Immunisation Schedule can be obtained from the NSW Health website:

- www.health.nsw.gov.au/living/immunisation/index.html



your child's journey to school...

February

Start health checks (eye, dental, hearing). Ensure immunisation is up to date.

Practice independent skills with your child (going to the toilet and dressing independently, being responsible for their own clothes and toys).



March-April

Consider the question - is your child ready for school? Speak with centre staff and consider all aspects of your child's social and emotional development.

Enquire now for independent and Catholic school enrolments.



September-October

Visit your local School Starters Picnic. Check the TTS website for dates and locations.

Buy uniforms and label everything!

Visit your school and point out important buildings (toilets, canteen, office, playground)

Practice eating lunch with a lunch box, opening drinks and putting things back in a school bag.



November-December

Participate in orientation programs and school events.

Practice walking to school, catching the bus, and/or visiting OSHC.

Check your school's start date for next year.



January

Practice morning routines and wearing uniforms... and be positive!



May-June

Visit your local Big School Expo. Check the Transition to School website for your local date and venue:
www.transitiontoschool.com.au

Enrol now for public schools - visit your school and complete an enrolment form.



July-August

Meet with other parents and organise regular play time with children that will be attending the same school.

Look out for Transition to School playgroups.

Contact your school for orientation dates.



outside school hours care

If your child is going to attend Outside School Hours Care (OSHC), they will need to be familiar with the routine.

Sometimes OSHC services will be located at your child's school. At other schools, children are transported to the OSHC service located at a nearby school or community centre.

Visit the OSHC service with your child in the months prior to starting school, and become familiar with the staff and routines. Ensure your child is comfortable with transport facilities, or getting to the OSHC centre from their classroom.

Speak to staff at your child's school. They may be able to arrange for an older child to pair up with your child as an OSHC buddy, to support them on the journey until they are comfortable doing it themselves.



Once your child has started school, speak to them about OSHC in the morning and remind them of what will happen in the afternoon.

To find out which OSHC service/s provide care for students at your child's school, speak to staff at the school.

- Illawarra Children's Services operates *Skoolzout* services from Flinders in the south to Narellen in the north. For more information, phone 4283 9900 or visit the website at www.ics.org.au/primaryage

best start kindergarten assessment

The Best Start Kindergarten Assessment identifies the literacy and numeracy knowledge and skills that each child brings to school as they enter Kindergarten. It provides support to Kindergarten students with literacy and numeracy during their first year at school.

Children start school with a range of early literacy and numeracy knowledge, skills and understandings. The Best Start assessment helps teachers develop effect learning programs that build upon what students know and can do.

For more information on the Best Start Kindergarten Assessment, visit the website at www.curriculumsupport.education.nsw.gov.au/beststart/parents.htm.

Remember - this is not a test, and you do not need to prepare your child in any special way. Support your child by reassuring them that there is no need to worry about this type of assessment. It is merely another part of school life.



when should my child start school?

According to the Department of Education and Training, “Children may enter Kindergarten at the beginning of the school year in NSW government schools if they turn five on or before 31 July in that year”.

“Some gifted or talented children may be ready to start school at an earlier age while others may benefit from being a little older. By law, all children must start school by their sixth birthday.”

(www.schools.nsw.edu.au/gotoschool/primary/startingschool.php)

Starting school at the right time is important. We want to ensure that every child has the optimum opportunity to have a successful transition to formal schooling.

Deciding if your child is ready for school is an individual matter for your family to consider. The following questions may assist you in making a decision, based on how ready your child is to start school:

- Is my child emotionally ready for the challenges of school?
- Can my child mix well with others?
- Does my child separate from me easily?
- Will my child flourish in a structured environment or does s/he need a more relaxed, unstructured one?
- Does my child listen well and respond appropriately to instructions?
- Does my child communicate effectively?
- Do I want my child to go to school because it will be more convenient for me, or because s/he is ready?
- Will another year at a prior-to-school service be more beneficial for my child?
- Will my child cope with the tiredness of five days at school?

If you have concerns about your child’s school readiness, speak with your centre director and staff, they are professional and can help you identify your child’s needs.

starting school for children with additional needs

Some children may need extra support because of difficulties with hearing, vision, language, mobility, learning or behaviour.

The Department of Education and Training may provide for your child's needs in a number of ways. Depending on your child's individual circumstances, s/he may be enrolled in mainstream classes with specialist support, in special classes within mainstream schools, or at a special school.

Schools need to know if your child has special learning needs at least 12 months before enrolment. Schools also need time to prepare for your child's needs. If your child has a physical need, you should inform the school at least 18 months prior to starting school

The Department of Education has developed transition guidelines to assist you with enrolment of your child with special learning needs. There are special enrolment procedures for children with additional learning needs:

- Contact the Department of Education and Training (see back page for details)
- Speak with your School Principal and they will guide you in the process.

If you have concerns about your child's development, you can contact:

- Illawarra Child Development Centre (Port Kembla Hospital— 4238044)
- Kids Cottage (Belfast Avenue, Warilla) - 4297 1022



kids' page

a b c d e f g h i j k l m
n o p q r s t u v w x y z

a b c d e f g h i j k l m
n o p q r s t u v w x y z

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9



'hey billy backpack!' - lyrics

[chorus]

Hey Billy Backpack
(Hey Billy Backpack)
I take you off to school
And I bring you back

Now I've packed my backpack
And I'm off to school
What will I find there?
Lots of friends with backpacks

Hey Billy Backpack
(Hey Billy Backpack)
One, two, three, four
Let's all clap!

What will they have in their
backpacks?

(One!) A drink bottle
(Two!) A big sun hat
(Three!) A healthy lunch
(Four!) A pencil case

What do I put in my backpack?
(1!) A drink bottle

[chorus]

[chorus]

What do I put in my backpack?
(One!) A drink bottle
(Two!) A big sun hat

I said, Hey Billy Backpack
(Hey Billy Backpack)
I take you off to school
And I bring you back

[chorus]

What do I put in my backpack?
(One!) A drink bottle
(Two!) A big sun hat
(Three!) A healthy lunch

Hey Billy Backpack
(Hey Billy Backpack)
I take you off to school
And I bring you back

[chorus]

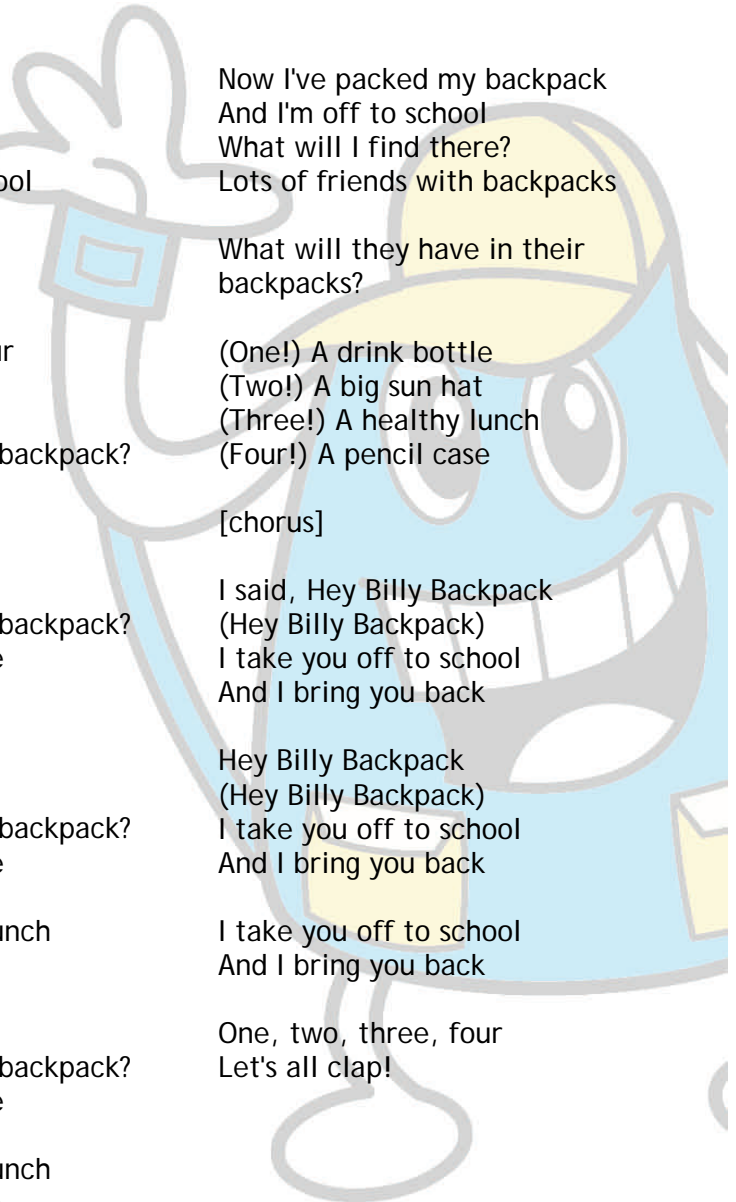
What do I put in my backpack?
(One!) A drink bottle
(Two!) A big sun hat
(Three!) A healthy lunch
(Four!) A pencil case

I take you off to school
And I bring you back

One, two, three, four
Let's all clap!

[chorus]

Download Billy's song from the
Transition to School website at
www.transitiontoschool.com.au.



Starting School!

If you would like to speak to professionals that can support you on your transition journey, or have further questions, help is only a phone call away!

Speak to your early childhood service director about your child's needs, or contact:

**Illawarra Transition to School Project
(Illawarra Children's Services)**

Phone: 4283 9900 - www.transitiontoschool.com.au

Department of Education and Training

Shellharbour office - Phone: 4295 2200

Wollongong office - Phone: 4224 9200

Your local school principal



**Illawarra
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familiesnsw
supporting families to raise children

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