



# Starting School

A guide for families of  
children starting school,  
brought to you by  
**Big Fat Smile.**



# School term dates

**2016**

**Term 1:**

Wednesday 27 January - Friday 8 April

**Term 2:**

Tuesday 26 April - Friday 1 July

**Term 3:**

Monday 18 July - Friday 23 September

**Term 4:**

Monday 10 October - Tuesday 20 December

**2017**

**Term 1:**

Monday 30 January - Friday 7 April

**Term 2:**

Wednesday 26 April - Friday 30 June

**Term 3:**

Tuesday 18 July - Friday 22 September

**Term 4:**

Monday 9 October - Friday 15 December

NSW Public School term dates from [www.schools.nsw.edu.au/calendar](http://www.schools.nsw.edu.au/calendar)

Check with your child's school to confirm, as dates may vary for Catholic and independent schools as well as your school's development days.

# 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 Big Fat Smile, 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 Program website at [www.transitiontoschool.com.au](http://www.transitiontoschool.com.au).



Bill Feld  
CEO, Big Fat Smile



# School readiness activities

Help your child prepare for school by giving them plenty of opportunities to practice and develop their skills through play. Here are some ideas you can incorporate into your everyday activities...

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## pre-writing activities

enhance your child's ability to adjust to the school routine.



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

## exercise

enhances gross motor skills and builds strength.

- Run, climb, march, jump, dance
  - Throw and catch balls, bean bags and other objects
  - Go for a bike ride
  - Create an obstacle course and follow simple instructions around the backyard or local park.
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## cutting skills

enhance fine motor skills and help small muscles develop for writing.

- Practice opening and closing scissors
- Encourage correct scissor hold
- Let your child practice cutting out shapes in old magazines or newspapers.



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

## read, read, read

to enhance your child's speech and language development.



- Read to your child every day
- 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 lunchboxes

**Children need to eat a variety of healthy foods everyday. Good lunch box foods include lots of fresh fruit and vegetables, breads and cereals, some protein and dairy foods and a bottle of water.**

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 your child to eat a healthy breakfast, as this will increase their ability to concentrate at school.



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



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

[www.freshforkids.com.au/recipes/lunchbox.html](http://www.freshforkids.com.au/recipes/lunchbox.html)

[www.taste.com.au/recipes/collections/kids+healthy+lunch+box+ideas](http://www.taste.com.au/recipes/collections/kids+healthy+lunch+box+ideas)

[www.healthykids.nsw.gov.au/recipes.aspx](http://www.healthykids.nsw.gov.au/recipes.aspx)





## Pear and banana muffins

Olive or canola oil spray  
2 cups wholemeal self-raising flour  
2 cups white self-raising flour  
1 cup brown sugar  
2 eggs  
150ml low-fat natural yoghurt  
1/2 cup orange juice  
1 large banana, peeled and chopped  
1 pear, cored and diced  
1/2 cup buttermilk or low-fat milk

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Preheat oven to 170°C. Lightly spray muffin trays with oil. Sift flours, returning husk from wholemeal flour to the bowl, add brown sugar. In a separate bowl mix eggs, yoghurt and juice. Combine with the flour mix and fold through fruit and milk (you may need less milk depending on moisture in fruit). Do not over-mix. Spoon mixture into trays. Bake near the top of the oven for 18-20 minutes. Turn onto a wire rack to cool.

*Makes 24 muffins. Use any unsweetened fruit juice or use apples, blueberries or any other firm fruit to vary the flavour.*

(Recipe from [www.healthykids.nsw.gov.au](http://www.healthykids.nsw.gov.au))

## Not another sandwich!

Why not try filling your child's lunchbox with these tasty replacements instead?

- Quiche or frittata
- Chicken drumsticks
- Rice, pasta or potato salad
- Cooked sausages, cut into pieces
- Dinner leftovers, in a small container with a spoon
- Corn chips with salsa to dip

## Satisfying snacks

- Popcorn
- Homemade trail mix (breakfast cereal, chopped dried fruits or seeds)
- Cherry tomatoes
- Cheese cubes
- Veggie sticks with dip



avocado tomato lettuce cheese carrot sultanas pineapple tuna  
bean sprouts baked beans baby spinach lean ham chutney roast  
beef egg chicken mayonnaise mashed banana hummus salmon  
cream cheese rissoles sliced apple chopped dates cottage cheese  
celery dried apricots egg vegemite grilled chicken roast vegetables  
mushrooms grated zucchini salsa mashed pumpkin sweet potato

# Your child's journey to school

Starting school can seem like a daunting step for mums and dads. Our monthly calendar shows the steps to take in your child's preschool year to help ease the transition.

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## 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 preschool staff and consider all aspects of your child's social and emotional development.

Enquire now for independent and Catholic school enrolments.

## may-june

Participate in local community events.

Enrol now for public schools: visit your school to 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.







## september-october

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 after school care to help your child adjust.

Check your school's start date for next year.

## january

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



# School age care



**If your child is going to attend School Age Care (SAC), they will need to be familiar with the routine.**

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

Visit the SAC 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 SAC 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 SAC buddy, to support them on the journey until they are comfortable doing it themselves.

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

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

## **Big Fat Smile - Fun Club!**

Big Fat Smile operates fifteen SAC services. These are located in Albion Park, Austinmer, Balarang, Bellambi Pt, Bingara Gorge, Bulli, Fairy Meadow, Flinders, Harrington Park, Koonaworra, Thirroul, Thirlmere, Unanderra, Wollongong City and Wollongong East.

For more information, phone 4283 9900 or visit [www.bigfatasmile.com.au/5-12-centres](http://www.bigfatasmile.com.au/5-12-centres).

# 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 calling 1800 653 809 or at [www.humanservices.gov.au/customer/services/medicare/australian-childhood-immunisation-register](http://www.humanservices.gov.au/customer/services/medicare/australian-childhood-immunisation-register)

### NSW Immunisation Schedule

The current NSW Immunisation Schedule can be obtained from NSW Health at [www.health.nsw.gov.au/immunisation/Pages/schedule.aspx](http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/immunisation/Pages/schedule.aspx)

## Childhood Vaccines

<b>Birth</b> (Maternity units)	Hepatitis B
<b>2 months</b> (all vaccines may be given as early as 6 weeks)	Diphtheria, Tetanus, Pertussis, Haemophilus influenzae type B (Hib) Hepatitis B Polio Pneumococcal Rotavirus
<b>4 months</b>	Diphtheria, Tetanus, Pertussis, Haemophilus influenzae type B (Hib) Hepatitis B Polio Pneumococcal Rotavirus
<b>6 months</b>	Diphtheria, Tetanus, Pertussis, Haemophilus influenzae type B (Hib) Hepatitis B Polio Pneumococcal
<b>12 months</b>	Measles, Mumps, Rubella Haemophilus influenzae type B (Hib) Meningococcal C
<b>18 months</b>	Varicella (Chicken pox)
<b>4 years</b> (all vaccines may be given as early as 3½ years)	Diphtheria, Tetanus, Pertussis, Polio Measles, Mumps, Rubella

## Adolescent Vaccines (School-based program)

<b>Year 7</b>	Human Papillomavirus Diphtheria, Tetanus, Pertussis Hepatitis B (catch-up only) Varicella (catch-up only)
<b>Year 9</b> (2013 & 2014)	Human Papillomavirus (male only)

*NSW Immunisation Schedule current as of 1 May 2015. Check the health website for updates.*

# When should my child start school?

**According to the NSW Department of Education and Communities, “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](http://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?
- Does my child listen well and respond appropriately to instructions?
- Will my child flourish in a structured environment or does s/he need a more relaxed, unstructured one?
- 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, who can help you identify your child's needs.



# Transition to School Statement

**The NSW Transition to School Statement is a practical and simple tool designed to make it easier for information to be shared between families, early childhood services and schools. It summarises the child's strengths, identifies their interests and approaches to learning, and suggests ways these can be supported.**



The Statement is completed by the child's early childhood educator, in cooperation with the family. All information is provided voluntarily. The Statement is then communicated to the child's intended school where it provides the school and teachers with information they can use in planning and preparing for the child's arrival and transition into the new learning environment.

Use of the Statement is optional. Each service and family will make the decision about whether to prepare a Statement, and the family will choose whether to make it available to the child's intended school and teacher.



# 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.

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.

For more information on the Best Start Kindergarten Assessment, visit [www.curriculumsupport.education.nsw.gov.au/beststart/parents.htm](http://www.curriculumsupport.education.nsw.gov.au/beststart/parents.htm).





# Starting school for children with additional needs

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

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The NSW Department of Education and Communities 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 NSW Department of Education and Communities 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 NSW Department of Education and Communities (see back page for details).

Speak with your School Principal and they will guide you in the process.

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

Child and Family Services  
Helensburgh to Dapto  
Port Kembla Hospital - 4223 8044

Kids Cottage, Albion Park to Gerringong  
Belfast Avenue, Warilla - 4297 1022



*For more information on transition to school, please visit [www.ecia-nsw.org.au/projects/supporting-transition-to-school](http://www.ecia-nsw.org.au/projects/supporting-transition-to-school)*

# First day of school checklist

## The night before the first day

- ☐ Lay out your child's clothes, shoes and socks.
- ☐ Make your child's recess and lunch and pop it in the fridge.
- ☐ Help your child to pack their school bag.
- ☐ Pack a spare pair of underpants, socks and a change of clothes in a plastic bag. Let your child know these are in their backpack in case they have any toilet accidents at school.

## The first day

- ☐ Be confident about the first day with your child.
- ☐ Let your child dress themselves as much as possible.
- ☐ Tie back long hair or plait hair.
- ☐ Apply sunscreen and take a hat.
- ☐ Take photos!
- ☐ Pick up your child on time.

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. You can also seek help from your local school principal or visit [www.transitiontoschool.com.au](http://www.transitiontoschool.com.au)

NSW Department of Education and Communities  
Phone: 4251 9900  
[www.dec.nsw.gov.au](http://www.dec.nsw.gov.au)



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