

# FIRST DAY FEARS?

## Preparing your child (and yourself) for Reception



Whether it is your first or last child preparing to start Reception, as parents we all want the same thing. For our child to feel safe, supported and confident. At the same time, parents can inherently struggle with not wanting to make a fuss or impose on anyone. You might be saying to yourself, "There are children with greater needs" or "I don't know what to say." This can lead to a loop of knowing you need to do something and then not knowing where to start.

Here are some tips that, as a teacher and Mum of two, I hope will instill you with the confidence to advocate for your child as they commence their educational journey.

### START BEFORE TRANSITION

Your first interaction with the school does not have to be at the initial transition visit. It is perfectly reasonable to contact the Principal or Inclusive Education Coordinator to set up a meeting to discuss your child's needs well in advance of the scheduled transition date. Please remember your child does not need to have a diagnosis for you to request this. It could be separation anxiety or even a gut feeling that the transition process might be tricky. You know your child best and this is the time to act.

**TIP:** Do not assume that because you have sent in reports or information about your child this has been received. Schools are busy places and communication can break down. Seek confirmation in your first contact if what you have provided has been acknowledged.

### HOLIDAY PREPARATION

The Christmas break is long and the weeks between transition and school commencing in January can seem like a lifetime. Ask the Principal or Inclusive Education Coordinator if they have a transition booklet for your child for the holidays. Ideally, this would include different areas of the school, teachers and some information about routines. Also think about going to the playground at the school over the break. This is a great way for your child to familiarise themselves with the grounds without the pressure of a full school yard on day one.

**TIP:** Consider setting up some playdates with children you know will be in your child's class over the break.

### TAILORING TRANSITION

All schools run completely different transition programs. Some have visits for a whole term, others may only have one. Don't be afraid to ask for extra visits for your child either prior to the first scheduled session or following. This might involve you staying with them to explore the school or your child joining a class for an extra morning or two. Building confidence in the school setting and rapport with teachers takes time and transition programs can be restrictive.

**TIP:** Try to not feel pressured to leave your child at their visit. If you think it is best to stay, even for a short time, make this known. The school of course would not want every parent staying in the classroom, but if you know this is going to make the process easier for your child, say so, journey together.

### TEACHER PLACEMENT

It can be worthwhile confirming if your child's visits will be with the teacher they will be having in the coming year, as this is not always the case. If the school intends to rotate each visit, consider if this is something that is going to help or hinder the transition process for your child. If you feel they need most, or all, of the visits to build rapport, request if they can be placed with their teacher for the coming year for the duration of the transition program.

If this is not possible, it would be a great idea to set up a meeting in the week before school starts for your child to meet their new teacher.

**TIP:** Ask to meet the teacher the week before school commences if the your child does not have them for transition visits.

### INFORM

The more information you can provide to the school and teacher the better. Draw on the members of your child's support team, whether that is the Kindergarten, child care or allied health professionals to provide the school with information and strategies to best support your child.

**TIP:** Consider summarising this information in a concise "This is me" page for the class teacher.

*As a dedicated Professional Organiser with a background (a teacher of 15 years) in Early Childhood and Inclusive Education, Georgina Martin brings a unique blend of expertise to her mission of making everyday life simpler for families.*