

Top Tips for Organising a START/ School Readiness Event

Please find below some ideas to support you in organising a START event in your local area.

Why	<p>There are different definitions of ‘school readiness’ available and it can become overwhelming for parents to know the best ways that they can support their child in the early years in preparation for school. In Peterborough we have built our school readiness messages around 5 key areas, based on in-depth feedback from schools across the authority. Providing children with lots of fun experiences that cover the 5 areas will really help that child be ready to START school.</p> <p>Ready to ‘START’ School materials provide an easy guide for parents to help their child be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ready for pre-school or school • Ready to learn • Ready to succeed <p>START leaflets (see pack) emphasise that parents are their child’s first teacher and encourages them to practise with their child at home. Materials also acknowledge that children develop at different rates and signpost to other support. Information is presented under different headings using the START acronym, which stands for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shoes, socks & put on clothes • Talk, listen, share and follow instructions • Ask for help • Ready to try different foods and tools • Toilet on their own <p>Organising an event in your local area will enable you to talk to parents about what they can do at home prior to their child starting preschool or school. You can model some activities that could be done at home using easy to source resources.</p>
Who	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who will coordinate your START event? Do they know the rationale behind the START acronym and are they familiar with the messages we’re trying to promote to enable children to be pre-school or school ready? • For settings – do you already have a practitioner who leads on school readiness? • Who will your target audience be? • Who else do you need to communicate with, or involve in your START event e.g. settings might link with their feeder schools or other settings in their local community? Which other partners, agencies or professionals might be involved e.g. Speech and Language Therapist, local library, Child and Family Centres, Health professionals, Housing Association, local Faith groups. • Ensure that families attending understand their role and that you are working in partnership. The activities are for them to do together with their child. • Are parents/carers and children targeted and invited to attend or are these sessions open to all?
What	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will it be a stand-alone START event or will you be incorporating school readiness messages into something you already do? e.g. events that already take place in your local community, coffee mornings or events for parents of children making the transition into a setting or school. • Will it be a leaflet/information giving event or will you have some activities for families to get involved with? • Will you focus on one specific aspect of START or several? • Will you be providing activities/experiences for parents/carers and children to do together and will you be modelling how to do it including what to talk about and how it links to setting or school readiness e.g. environmental print trail? • Will you be providing some take-away ideas for parents and children to do together and if so how will you monitor what impact these have had? • What will you put in the packs to take-away? • If using books contact Sally Atkinson to see if she has any FREE books from the National Literacy Trust that you could give away to parents to encourage reading, or sharing a book, every day at home. • Consider how to collect children’s and parent’s views of how useful the session and follow-up activities have been e.g. children posting smiley/sad faces or brief chat with parents/carers.
Where	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where will you hold your START event? • Consider whether it will be indoors or outdoors. You could use your setting/school or a location in the local community e.g. the park. • You could link with the library service to see if they could facilitate something with you in your local library. • You could link in with the local Child and Family Centre. • Think about the environment. Will your families feel comfortable attending the location you have chosen? • Later sessions could be organised in the school.
When	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When will you do your event? Whilst holding a START event is fantastic at any time it’s useful if children and parents/carers have lots of time to practise the skills needed to enable the children to be ready for the new experience of starting school. • Will you organise sessions throughout the year, possibly with a focus on different aspects of START? • Will you organise a one-off event? • Think about the times of the day you might want to hold your event. If doing alongside a preschool session will you do it in the morning as the children are dropped off or at the end of the day before they are collected? • If you are holding your event in the holidays or at the weekend, consider which day would work best. Mondays and Fridays tend to not to be popular days for parents/carers. Likewise Saturdays tend to work better than a Sunday at a weekend. • Think about the parents work patterns e.g. shift work. • Gauge what timings suit parents best and go with the majority. • Do you do short sessions that are easy to repeat to enable different parents/carers to attend? e.g. am and pm sessions • Give the parents lots of notice about the sessions. • When do you start promoting the event/s and how? • Do the parents need to book or is it a drop-in?