

Coalition of education and childcare organisations develop new definition of skills for children starting school

- Aim to close 'deeply worrying' information gap between teachers and parents
- Calls for the new definition of 'Starting Reception' skills to be adopted nationwide
- Checklist for parents and carers follows government pledge to hit 'school readiness' target

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A collaborative group of leading early years organisations has created a new definition of starting reception skills that can be used by parents, carers, childminders and primary school teaching staff.

This is the first time that such a large group of organisations involved in education, parenting and early years have come together to define what being ready to start reception actually means, and what they recommend for parents, carers and children. There is currently no official description of 'school readiness'.

The 'Starting Reception' definition of school readiness is an agreed list of suggested skills and activities which parents should be practising with their children in preparation for starting school in Reception year.

The new Starting Reception website has all the information and recommendations for parents, carers and families (<https://startingreception.co.uk/>)

The 'Starting Reception' definition has been created to plug the information gap highlighted by teachers in the latest Kindred Squared annual report on [School Readiness](#). This year's survey found that teachers and parents have very different views on what school readiness means; with 9 out of 10 parents saying they thought their child was ready for school, but according to teachers, only 1 in 3 children were actually ready. 1 in 5 parents hadn't heard about school readiness at all.

The new website includes instructions for schools or organisations working with families to download and re-brand the definition with their own logo and link to their own local support services for families. It's hoped that schools will use the website as an easy and clear source of information to send to families with children due to start in Reception.



The new definition lists recommendations in four categories for children arriving at Reception, to help them develop a range of abilities and the confidence to get off to a flying start.

- **Growing independence**
- **Building relationships and communication**
- **Physical development**
- **Healthy routines**

Each category includes links to expert organisations offering practical steps for parents or carers to try and build these skills into their child's daily lives, including:

- Able to use cutlery
- Use the toilet by themselves
- Being able to take turns and share toys
- Recognising their names
- Hanging coats on pegs
- Paying attention for short periods of time
- Drawing, painting or colouring in
- Talking about their feelings
- Being active for at least 3 hours a day
- Limiting screen time is also recommended
- Put their own coats on
- Brushing their teeth twice a day

At the core of the new definition is the desire to highlight the importance of a child's relationship with their parent or carer. The guidance is there to help parents feel confident their child will be ready for school, whilst having fun practising skills and daily routines at home.

This new definition comes after the recent pledge by Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer to raise the number of children who are 'school ready' to 75%.

Felicity Gillespie, Director, Kindred Squared said: "Our annual school readiness reports consistently highlight a persistent problem. There is a deeply worrying gap between what teachers expect children starting in Reception to be able to handle from day one when compared with what parents say their children are able to do.

Too many parents say they don't know what sorts of skills their children should be developing prior to starting school or where to go for help. I'm delighted this partnership of leading education groups and charities is trying to close that information gap to ensure all children get an equal start from their very first day at school.

We want to see official backing for this new definition and for it to become the definition adopted by every local authority, primary school and early education and childcare setting in the UK as well as parents and carers.

This new definition, backed by many leading experts and trusted partners, will help parents and carers ensure their children reach school readiness milestones so that they can be confident they are ready to start school and thrive from day one."



Bridget Phillipson, Secretary of State for Education, said: "Giving every child the best start in life is my top priority, and is a cornerstone of our Plan for Change which will ensure tens of thousands more children are school ready by the end of the parliament.

"Children arriving at school without the skills they need not only limits their opportunities, but the opportunities of every child in that classroom. That's why we have already started urgent work on new school-based nurseries, extending early learning support, and strengthening join-up of family services – but this issue can't be tackled by government alone.

"This new resource will be a vital tool for parents as they navigate the myriad information out there to support their child's early development, and it's brilliant to see Kindred Squared and the wider sector coming together on something so central to children's life chances."

Jason Elsom, Chief Executive of Parentkind, said: "Starting school is a big moment for any child but it's a big moment for parents too. We wanted to make sure the voice of parents was heard loud and clear in a new national definition of what it means to be school ready.

Experts, including those at Parentkind, have come together to work out what children do and don't need to know before they start school. Most importantly, parents have had their say on this new definition of school readiness. It's not a standardised test, every child is different and not every child will be able to achieve everything set out in this new definition at the same time, but the most important thing is we help parents understand what will help their child thrive when they begin at school."

Catherine McLeod, Chief Executive of Dingley's Promise, said: "We are delighted that the 'Starting Reception' definition considers the needs of children with SEND and their families. As an organisation which supports children with SEND in the early years, we are acutely aware of the importance of taking a collaborative approach. Sharing information around developmental progress and needs ensures that education settings are ready to support children, and helps parents with the vital preparation of key skills in the home."



Notes to editors:

Kindred Squared, has been working alongside several named partners to develop the agreed Starting Reception definition:

ArkStart

Big Education

Busy Bees

Collective Futures

Confederation of Schools Trusts

Dingley's Promise

Early Years Alliance

EasyPeasy

Eric

ISOS Partnership

LEYF

National Day Nurseries Association - NDNA

PACEY

Parentkind

Reach 2

Tiney

About Kindred Squared

Kindred Squared is a charitable foundation working collaboratively with partner organisations to improve early education and early child development.

Notes to Editors

Kindred Squared - <https://kindredsquared.org.uk/>

Starting Reception - <https://startingreception.co.uk/>

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