

## What day will my child start school?

In South Australia, it is compulsory for children to be enrolled in primary school by their sixth birthday. At the moment, it's most common for children to start school at the beginning of the school term following their fifth birthday.

From 2014 all children will start school on the first day of term one in that year. If your child

- turns five before May 1 they will start school on the first day of term one in that year
- turns five on or after May 1, they will start school on the first day of term one the following year

You can visit the Dept for Education and Child Development website to find out more [www.earlyyears.sa.edu.au](http://www.earlyyears.sa.edu.au).

Starting school is a major life transition for your child and for you, which brings with it a lot of excitement, anxiety and sometimes tears. By supporting your child to have a positive and enjoyable start to their school life, you increase their chance of liking school and engaging in learning.



## South Australian Association of School Parents Clubs (SAASPC)

- promotes and develops the interest of parents in the education and general wellbeing of children at preschool and school
- develops and maintains contact with parent groups throughout the state
- acts as an advocate for parents on educational matters
- supports parents with information on parent group organisation and meeting procedure; the rights and responsibilities of parents in preschools and schools; the regulations, policies and programs of the SA Department for Education and Child Development
- offers free information sessions to parents on *Reporting abuse and neglect* and *Principal/Director selection panels*



More information can be found at [www.saaspc.org.au](http://www.saaspc.org.au)



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## SAASPC'S Tips for parents



## Starting school



## Preparing for school

School can be a scary place for young children. They often have to cope with big buildings and lots of children who are older and bigger. There are different rules to get used to and many new things that they are expected to do. Even the playtime breaks can be very frightening for them.

Children need lots of support from you before starting school and in the first few weeks. It will help if you prepare your child as well as you can, and show that you believe they can manage the new challenges. Some things you can do are

- Be positive – tell your child what you enjoyed about your school days or read a story about starting school; there are some good books on starting school
- Make sure your child is familiar with the school – that they know where the toilets are, where to eat their lunch, where the water taps are. Show your child where you will pick them up at the end of the day
- Let your child go to an orientation session – many schools run these before students begin and they may include information sessions for parents
- Get them enthusiastic – involve your child in buying things such as stationery, school bags and uniforms. Try to have clothes they can manage themselves. Label everything. Put something distinctive on your child's bag like a large key ring, tag or ribbon
- Let your child practice dressing for school, using their lunch box and drink bottle and packing their school bag in readiness for their first day
- Try to catch up with other parents and their children who will be attending the same school as

your child so they can get to know other children in their class before they start school

- Going to the local preschool or kindergarten, even for a short time, before going to school can really help a child to settle in more quickly. They will be with other children they already know, will be used to being part of a group and will know how to take part in group activities

## At school

- Let your child know you'll be there on the first day – most schools allow parents to stay with young children until they are settled
- Be unobtrusive – gently prompt your child to engage in classroom activities
- Say goodbye – be prepared to explain when you are going, say goodbye and leave
- Make sure that your child is at school on time – it can be very scary to walk into a class that has already started the day.
- Don't be late picking your child up – a few minutes can seem a long time to a young child
- Make sure your child has a healthy lunch and mid morning snack

## At home

- The more predictable you can make things for your child the less anxiety they will feel. Be organised and have a good morning routine for school days
- If you know there will be something different happening at school that day like school photos or a special visitor, talk about it with them beforehand.

- In the first few weeks they might be too tired to really want to eat dinner – they might need a snack straight after school and don't plan too many after school activities
- Some children want to tell you all about their day as soon as you pick them up so, make time for your child then if they need it, or as soon as you get home if you work. Some children prefer time by themselves before they want company. Listen, but don't ask too many questions. Children will talk when they are ready.
- Hear your child read and read to them. Bedtime stories are a great way to end your child's day
- New learning takes a long time and children learn at different rates. Don't expect too much. You can best help by encouraging, taking an interest and showing you care

## Get involved

- Catch up with other parents but don't hang around the classroom at the start of the day as it can be unsettling for your child and disrupt the class early morning activities
- Read all school notices and reply as soon as possible
- You may not have much spare time for school activities – if you can't help in the classroom or go to meetings you may be able to contribute in other way such as in school social and fundraising events and working bees
- Get to know your child's teacher, make a time to talk together especially about any health problems or if your child is upset, if you are worried, or if there is bullying or teasing going on. Children do best at school when their parents and teachers work together to support them