

# Promoting Independence

Your child will really benefit from being as independent as possible when they start school. Teaching staff will always be on hand to help, but children feel a real sense of achievement when they can accomplish things by themselves!

## Washing Their Hands



Talk about the importance of good handwashing with soap and water and drying their hands, especially after going to the toilet or handling animals. A good way of showing how germs can stay on the skin is to let your child cover their hands in paint and then try to wash it all off.



## Going to the Toilet

Support your child to be confident about getting to the toilet in time and wiping properly. Let the class teacher know if you have a specific word/phrase at home for going to the toilet. This will ensure they understand what your child is trying to ask.

## Using a Tissue



Introduce your child to the routine of 'catch it, bin it, kill it'. Catching their sneeze or runny nose in a tissue, putting it in the bin straightaway, then washing their hands to kill germs. Children can find nose-blowing difficult, so play games; You can create a "race" for two extremely lightweight objects (a sequin or a feather works well) and see who can blow it from one end of a table to the other the quickest.



## Feeding Themselves

Having lunch independently may also be new to your child. If they will be having hot dinner, practise using a fork and spoon. If they are taking a packed lunch, practise opening the packets and containers of food they will be taking. Encourage them to help choose and make their lunches. Maybe use their new school lunchbox and water bottle when you go for a picnic in the park? This would enable them to practise opening their food and learn about their likes/dislikes and suitable items for school lunches.

## Dressing and Undressing

Let your child practise putting on their school uniform, taking them off in preparation for PE lessons, especially if there are fiddly fastenings such as buttons and zips. Clothes with elastic waists and shoes with Velcro are easier for the younger children. Children will also have access to an outdoor space throughout the day, so being able to put on their coat and zip it up independently will really help them; as well being able to put on a pair of shoes or taking off their jumper when they get hot. It also means that they can get straight to their playing and learning without having to stop and ask an adult for help!

## Tidying up

Get your child in the habit of hanging their coat up, putting their toys away, clearing the table etc. This will prepare them for doing these things at school. Why not turn it into a game? Many schools use a song to indicate tidy up time and motivate children to help. Try this at home and ask the class teacher what song they sing.

## Saying Goodbye

Your child will also really benefit from having experiences being away from you for short periods of time, such as going to a friend's house to play. This will really develop their confidence and independence and stand them in good stead when it comes to saying goodbye on that first morning at school.



BBC BITESIZE - How to help your child be independent