



# The Best Start: Ready for School Policy for parents, early years providers and schools



*‘For a child to be school ready they will be an independent and curious learner, developed through positive interactions and investigation within safe, secure environments. They will be confident to communicate their needs, have the ability to regulate their emotions and will have become an emotionally resilient, happy child who is supported by aspirational Parents/Carers, early years providers and schools’.*

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## **Introduction**

School readiness remains high on the political agenda and this document aims to set out a mutual understanding of what school readiness means for Warwickshire.

Within Warwickshire we deem children to be School Ready if they have achieved a Good Level of Development (GLD) at the end of Early Years Foundation Stage (Reception). In 2019, 71.8% of Warwickshire children achieved a 'Good Level of Development'. This in line with national statistics (England: 71.8%, 2019).

This measure is an assessment taken at the end of the reception year and looks at children's achievements in relation to physical development, personal, social and emotional development, communication and language, literacy and mathematics.

This policy recognises that all children are unique and, for some, achievement of the 'Good Level of Development' is unattainable. This does not mean however, that they have not made progress in their learning and development.

Outcomes vary across the county with children in the south of the county achieving consistently higher results than those in Rugby and North Warwickshire. Some areas of the county fall below the national average with boys scoring significantly lower than girls in all geographical areas.

In addition, in 2019, there is a 'gap' in achievement of the 'Good Level of Development' of 20 percentage points between children who are disadvantaged and their non-disadvantaged peers.

All the evidence indicates that if a child is not ready for school, they find it harder to catch up. The impact on their social and emotional development and their learning can be significant and last throughout compulsory schooling.

This document has been developed by Warwickshire County Council in collaboration with key partners to ensure that a common understanding regarding school readiness is embedded across all partner agencies. It will foster a values-led approach and supports Warwickshire's Education (WE1) Strategy 2019-2024

## **Purpose**

The policy will:

- Provide parents/carers and professionals with an agreed shared goal and a clear understanding of what school readiness means within Warwickshire to ensure a consistent and shared approach is applied throughout the county.
- Support practitioners to reflect upon the effectiveness of their existing practices and provision and to consider any developments required to ensure that children are school ready.
- Encourage a multidisciplinary approach to school readiness and provide pathways to improve school readiness.
- Support clear communication with parents and carers, ensuring that they have the confidence and clarity of how to prepare their child for school.
- Consider the school readiness needs of children not participating in any early years setting
- Promote effective transition.



## **Scope**

The policy is relevant to all parents/carers of pre-school children and Warwickshire early years partners who work with them.

- Parents/Carers
- Early years settings:
  - Childminders
  - PVI settings
  - Children & family centres
  - Pre-school settings
  - Maintained nursery schools and nursery classes
- Infant and primary schools
- Health Visiting service
- School Health & Wellbeing service
- Speech and Language service
- SEND and Inclusion
- Physiotherapy
- Occupational therapy
- Community Paediatricians / G.P
- Warwickshire County Council
- Voluntary organisations

## **Stakeholder's Commitment**

Warwickshire early years professionals and partners will be asked to support and sign up to the principles of supporting documents that accompany this policy.

- The Best Start: ready to learn, ready for life: Reception Readiness Stakeholder Partnership Agreement
- Information sharing guidance
- Early years data sharing agreement
- Service level agreements
- Warwickshire Education Strategy: Working in partnership, celebrating success, aiming for excellence

The purpose of these documents is to ensure that services work effectively together using a consistent approach enabling children to achieve the best outcomes.

## **Policy Statement**

### **1. Warwickshire School Readiness definition**

There are many definitions of School Readiness, however the principles of this document and the Warwickshire "Ready for School" definition are based upon the framework that is described within School Readiness and Transitions – *A companion to the Child Friendly Schools Manual (2012) UNICEF* which states that school readiness is defined by 3 interlinking components:

**Childrens readiness** – focuses on what a child should know and be able to do in order to enter school confidently with an enthusiasm for learning and is applicable to all children, particularly those that are economically disadvantaged and vulnerable.



**Early years settings and schools' readiness** – Promote a child friendly learning environment which recognises and adapts to the needs of individual children and families and supports the smooth transition into reception and the next stage of education.

**Families Readiness** – Promotes the positive involvement of parents and carers regarding children's early learning, development and transition to school.

Additionally, we recognise that other services/agencies have an important role in promoting and supporting a child to become school ready and therefore have included a fourth element:

**Services Readiness** – Health, Social Care and other agencies will support families collaboratively to address health and social care issues that impact on the child's ability to become school ready.

Within Warwickshire we recognise that the skills required to be school ready are skills that a child will need for life and therefore the following definition has been applied:

***'For a child to be school ready they will be an independent and curious learner, developed through positive interactions and investigation within safe, secure environments. They will be confident to communicate their needs, have the ability to regulate their emotions and will have become an emotionally resilient, happy child who is supported by aspirational parents/carers, early years providers and schools'***

It is this definition that we ask all partners, families and professionals to sign up to.

## **2. Achieving School Readiness**

Play is the key principle for learning in early childhood as it provides the platform for children to acquire not only physical skills but also to develop their cognitive skills, language and social skills which includes emotional resilience. Children who become proficient at these skills become socially adept, confident and eager to learn.

**Therefore: School Readiness is not about compliant behaviours nor is it about a formal learning approach**

Secure relationships and positive emotional wellbeing underpin the ability to learn. To ensure this every child will be allocated a keyworker within the early years provision including the reception year who will plan and deliver learning activities that support the child to meet the requirements.

They will also engage with and support parent/carers in guiding their child's development at home to ensure that all practitioners and parent/carers provide children with the opportunity to:

- Become interested in their surroundings and environment to enable them to explore confidently
- Feel socially secure, create meaningful and respectful relationships and develop emotional resilience and coping strategies
- Learn to make decisions, exercise independence and autonomy
- Practice and extend language and listening skills ensuring that consideration is given to the needs of children who communicate in alternative ways are met.
- Learn to look after themselves and, age/developmentally appropriately, manage their basic needs.
- Play and work cooperatively to sharing ideas and negotiating through differences and independently exploring their own ideas.

**All other services and agencies will work in partnership with the early years settings to support the child and family to become school ready. Service referral pathways and guidelines will be available to ensure that children can access appropriate services in a timely manner.**



### **3. Raising concerns / referrals**

All Safeguarding concerns must be made following Warwickshire Local Safeguarding Board Procedures alongside local policies and guidelines. <https://www.safeguardingwarwickshire.co.uk/>

Referrals of children to agencies for assessment and support must be completed on the correct referral form and in a timely manner.

### **4. Transition**

It is well understood that transition into school can be stressful for children and therefore should be a process which happens gradually. Smooth transitions within the Early Years Foundation Stage are crucial to support the emotional health and wellbeing of children. This is particularly relevant for children with additional needs who may require flexible support.

Children who are well supported learn positive ways of coping with change and are more likely to be emotionally intelligent, resourceful, resilient and fulfil their potential. This requires commitment from all professionals involved and it is important that policies, procedures and practitioners roles are clearly defined to ensure that children and parents/carers are well supported during this time.

Within Warwickshire, early years Managers, Head Teachers and parents/carers can best support a child's transition into school by ensuring that it is a key element throughout the pre-school year and extends into the reception year. This is achieved by:

**Information Sharing** – For transition to be successful there needs to be a shared understanding and equal partnership between parents/carers, early years settings and Schools and partner agencies, such as health visiting and speech and language therapy. Effective communication is key and therefore all services will have robust policies and guidance in place to support information sharing.

**Transition between early years setting and school** - This will take place during the summer term prior to the child starting school to discuss and share information on individual children. The information shared will be holistic to include the child's social, emotional and physical development and needs to ensure that transition plans are bespoke for each child.

**Information exchanged about the child's learning and development should be valued and respected whilst recognising that children will respond differently in a new environment**

At this point information will also be shared relating to services working with the child and family and any safeguarding concerns. Transfer of safeguarding records should include collection of the signature of the recipient organisation

Parental consent must be obtained for the transfer of all other records in line with GDPR regulations

**Children/families being familiar with their new school, teaching staff and routines.**

Building secure attachments is important to ensure a smooth transition, therefore school arrangements should meet the needs of the children/families that they are accepting. As a minimum, a child should experience a visit to their new school and the classroom staff should visit the child within their nursery setting or childcare provision.

A one-off visit, however, may not meet the needs of some children therefore Schools and early years settings should plan extra time for helping children in transition and explore other ways that a child can familiarise themselves with their school.



Equally, all parents should be offered an induction event at their child's school with the opportunity to meet the adults who will be supporting their child. Early in the autumn term a progress meeting will take place between parents and school.

Within school settings there should be clear welcoming procedures for children and parents with the aim of promoting and sustaining positive working relationship between parents/carers and Schools.

Best practice indicates that every child new to the school offered a home visit from school staff prior to starting School with the aim that staff can see the child in a familiar setting and parents/carers can talk in a relaxed environment.

### **Children/families being familiar with partner agencies**

Transfer of individual children from Health Visiting services to Warwickshire School Health & Wellbeing Service (WSH&WBS) will take place from the beginning of June to the end of August to ensure that children's health needs continue to be addressed. WSH&WBS will work with parents/carers and liaise with schools to ensure that children receive the support that they require and that schools are able to manage individual children's health needs.

Services working with individual children (e.g. SALT, Physio, IDS) will liaise with their school age team to ensure seamless transition to their school age services.

## **5. Key Outcomes**

Warwickshire Education Priority 1: Our challenge is to foster childrens love of learning from birth through early childhood and into Year 1, so that all young children achieve their potential

Our key outcomes are:

- The percentage of children achieving a Good Level of Development (GLD) will be in line or better than the national average and Warwickshire's statistical neighbour position will improve from 10th out of 11 (Nov 2019)
- The gap in Good Level of Development measure at age five for disadvantaged learners compared with non-disadvantaged in Warwickshire will be halted in 19/20 and then start to decrease
- The percentage of early years providers that are judged by Ofsted as good / outstanding for overall effectiveness at least match the national figure
- The percentage of 2-year olds that are eligible and benefitting from funded early education places will be maintained at 75% or above.
- Parents, carers and professionals understand the role they play in supporting children to be ready for school

## **6. Responsibilities**

Compliance, monitoring and review – The effectiveness of the Ready for school policy will be monitored by the Early Years Board, via the early years strategy 2020 – 2024

The policy will be reviewed bi-annually