



Is your child going to make the transition from preschool to regular school? M&B lets you in on how to make it simpler for your little one

BY ARUNDHATI NATH

THE transition of a child from preschool to regular school can be a stressful one. We offer the following tips to make your kid's introduction to a new, regular school smoother and easier.

DO NOT BUILD UP THE STRESS: If you want your child to have a smooth transition, do not build up unwanted stress in the family space. Although a child goes through several transitions, the one from a preschool to regular school is a major event in his or her

life. Dr Anita Madan, curriculum development head of playschool chain EuroKids, feels that children's transitions are most strongly influenced by their home environment and the preschool they attend. "It is important for parents to treat the child's entrance into regular school as a normal occurrence and not build up the event in children's minds," Anita says.

MAKE THE LAST DAY SPECIAL: Try to make his last day at playschool a memorable one and let him feel that

he is going to have the same level of comfort at regular school. "On the last day at EuroKids, we provide the child with the certificate and trophy which reads 'I have graduated from.....(the programme name)' and also arrange for some celebration," Dr Anita says.

VISIT THE NEW SCHOOL: Dr Anita feels that a visit to the new school with the child helps as they can meet the teacher and see what the school is really like. Schedule one or two trips beforehand so that the child gets enough time to adjust

to the new environment. Familiarise the child with the classrooms, teachers and the overall environment at the new school.

STAY CONFIDENT: Eileen Kennedy-Moore, professor for *The Great Courses* audio/video series, *Raising Emotionally and Socially Healthy Kids* feels that parents should be calmly positive and confident about the transition from preschool to regular school, so that children can be, too. "If your child is anxious, it may help to share concrete information along the lines of: This is what your new school looks like. Your teacher's name is XYZ and this is what she looks like. This is what you will do in school. This is where I will drop you off and pick you up," Eileen says.

TALK TO THE TEACHER: Kashika Dabra, psychologist and counsellor at Delhi Public School, Gurgaon feels that preschool teachers, with their knowledge of different learning styles and the temperaments of their students, can help everyone with this important transition. "Encourage social opportunities or summer camps, play with your child indoors and out, and explore new activities. Show your kids you are proud of them and express a positive attitude about school, Kashika says. You can try to normalise their fears

by talking to them and being a good listener.

NEVER THREATEN HIM: Aarti C Rajratnam, parenting expert and co-author of *Parenting: Innocence to InnerSense* feels that we should never use threats regarding the school or the teacher even in casual conversation. "In India we often tell our children that we will report misbehaviour to the teacher; such threats make children take longer to adapt," Aarti says.

SPEAK THE TRUTH: Make sure you do not lie to your kid about her going to a new school. Speak the truth even if she cries or throws tantrums because this will help her adapt better. "Tell your child that she is going to school. Never tell her that she's going to some other place and then rush them into the school gate," Aarti says.

If your kid feels cheated, she will expect the same thing again and will naturally take longer to adapt while losing trust in you.

FOCUS ON THE PLUS POINTS: You should try your best to focus on the positive aspects of the new school. Talk to him about the fun time spent with his friends, great interaction time in class and lunch time. "The simple messages

you give will help the child understand what is expected of him/her in school. For example, you could say: when ma'am asks you a question, you can answer confidently, or when you wish to use the rest room you can ask the kind nanny for help," Aarti says.

MAKE HER FEEL SPECIAL: Make your kid feel special in the new school. "In playschool, kids are given the bag and meals from school, so going shopping was an adventure for her to choose her own bag, bottle and lunch box. This made her excited to go to school. A uniform was an added feature," says Prachi Mittal, mum to two adorable young kids. Her younger daughter Vanya recently joined a regular school.

HELP PREVENT ANXIETY: "Children may sometimes show signs of stress like mild sleep disturbances, expressing their fears by blaming the teacher, nanny or caretaker and sometime have issues with a regression in toilet habits or change in food habits," Aarti says. In this situation, listen to your child calmly, collect balanced information from the teacher and reassure him without underestimating his fears. Aarti advises parents to allow their child to play in wet sand or to indulge in finger painting on old newspapers as it helps reduce the anxiety. ■

