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# Starting primary school in Islington



The  
essential  
guide for  
parents

# INFORMATION

## Islington Family Information Service

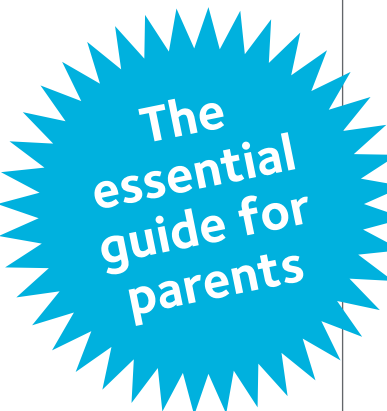
If you are looking for childcare, parenting and family support, things to do with your children, or help to get back into work, the Islington Family Information Service will point you in the right direction. The service is completely free.



Call our team of friendly advisers on  
**020 7527 5959** visit [www.islington.gov.uk/fis](http://www.islington.gov.uk/fis)  
or email [fis@islington.gov.uk](mailto:fis@islington.gov.uk)

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# Welcome

Starting school is a big occasion for both you and your child, especially if it's the first time you've left them with someone else for long periods of time. Both of you will have new routines to get used to and new information to take in, and for some children, this can be a bit scary.

This booklet is here to help you and your child settle in to this new stage in their life. It gives background to the school system, explains what your child will be doing at school and gives you tips so you can help them get the most out of their time there.

Islington's primary schools can offer support and guidance for you as a parent. Your child's teachers will play an important role in your child's life. They will always be happy to talk to you about how your child is getting on, answer queries and listen to any concerns you have. There is also a handy list of other useful contacts at the back of this booklet – see page 26.



# Things to know about school

Your child starting school can be particularly daunting if you're unfamiliar with how schools are structured nowadays, especially if it's your first child. So, here's some essential information to help prepare you both.

Now your child's place at an Islington school has been confirmed, you will receive information from them over the next few months. Here are a few pointers about what you should find out about between now and your child's first day at school. If you don't get the information you need, feel free to contact the school and they'll be happy to help.

## The school calendar

You will receive details of term times, including your child's start date, school holidays and days when the school is closed for staff training (called Inset days).

## Uniforms

Most schools in Islington have a uniform and you can usually buy these from the school.

## Home School Agreement

All schools produce a Home School Agreement that the school, parents and children sign. This lays out the school's promise to educate and look after your child, and to keep in touch with you. Through this agreement, you will promise that your child will get to school on time every day, behave properly, do their homework and dress appropriately. And your

child will agree to follow instructions, dress and behave properly and do their homework.

## School rules

All schools have rules that the teacher will explain to the children when they first start. It's a good idea to make sure you know what these rules are too.

## Home visits

In some schools teachers will visit you and your child at your home before your child starts school.

## Free school meals

All children in Islington primary schools are offered free school meals. You just need



to fill in an application form, which you can get from the school.

## Before and after school childcare

Many schools will provide breakfast clubs and/or after-

school childcare, either in the school or nearby. Or for information on childminders, contact the Family Information Service – see page 2 for details.

**All children in Islington primary schools are offered free school meals.**



## Attendance and holidays

**Going to school every day is very important for children's education and friendships.**

### Every day matters

Children who miss school regularly find it difficult to keep up with schoolwork and can start falling behind. Plus, missing out on the social side, especially at primary school, can make it more difficult for children to make and keep friends. Just think – if a child misses two weeks of school each year, they will have missed out on almost a whole year by the time they finish school!

### Being on time

It is also important that your child arrives at school on time. They must be there for morning registration or they may be marked as absent.

### Problems with attendance

As a parent, it's your responsibility to make sure your child attends school regularly and, by law, it's an offence to fail to do so. Sometimes, though, for a number of reasons, a parent can find it difficult to get their children to school every day. If you're struggling to ensure your child attends school each day, whatever the reason, talk to the class teacher about how the school can help.

### Sickness

If your child is ill, contact the school on the first morning of your child's illness, as the staff will be concerned if they do not hear from you. If your child has to visit a doctor or dentist, try to make an appointment after school or during the holidays. If it has to be during school time, always let the school know.

### Holidays

It's important to us that Islington children get the best possible education, so our policy is not to authorise term-time holidays except in very exceptional circumstances. If there's a reason you want to take your child out of school during term-time, even if it is for just one day, speak to the head teacher first.

Only schools can authorise absences. If they do not and you still take your child out of school, you will face an automatic fine of £100 from Islington Council. Failure to pay this will lead to prosecution, which could result in a fine of up to £2,500, a jail sentence of up to three months or a community sentence.

## Who's who at primary school

Although your child will have most contact with the Reception class teacher, there are plenty of other staff who you and they will come into contact with. Here's an overview to help you get to know who does what.

### Head teacher and deputy head teacher

The head teacher runs the school, helped by the deputy head teacher. The deputy head may also have their own class to teach, particularly in small schools.

### Class teacher

Each class at primary school, from Reception to Year 6, has its own teacher so your child will have one teacher who they see each day in Reception class.

### School office

The school secretary and other administrative staff usually sit in the school office, and they are parents' first port of call if there is anything you need to ask.

### Teaching assistant

Teaching assistants (TAs) support teachers in the classroom by helping with activities or working with groups of children.

### Bilingual parent support advisers

Bilingual parent support advisers help parents and families of children whose first language is not English. They can translate and help parents to be involved in their children's education.

### Learning mentors

Learning mentors do small groupwork, learning games, drama and art with some children – usually those

with special needs, emotional difficulties or behaviour problems.

### School home support worker

School home support workers can help parents and families in the school with a range of issues from housing or money problems to advice about getting children up on time.

### Ethnic minority achievement (EMA) coordinator

EMA coordinators have responsibility for helping the school in meeting the needs of ethnic minority pupils, including pupils with English as an additional language.

### Special education needs coordinator (SENCO)

SENCOs are responsible for making sure children with special educational needs receive the help they need at school.



### Educational psychologist

Educational psychologists come in to schools to help children who are having particular difficulties with their learning in school. They work with children, teachers and families.

### Educational welfare officers

Educational welfare officers work with families and school staff if poor attendance or punctuality is affecting a child's learning.

**Your child will have most contact with the Reception class teacher.**

# Top tips for settling in

Stick to the same routine where possible.

## Before your child starts school

There are certain things you can start making sure your child can do well before they start at school. This will help them feel confident at school and manage their new routine.

### Listen to others

There are lots of rules in schools, and your child needs to be able to concentrate on listening so that they can respond to an instruction.

### Use the toilet by themselves

This will help avoid any embarrassing incidents in the classroom.

### Have the confidence to ask for help if they need it

They need to be able to tell their teacher if (s)he has said something they don't understand or ask to go to the toilet.

### Understand what school will be like

Explain to them what sort of things they'll be doing, who their teacher is and who will be collecting them at the end of the day.

### Get dressed and fasten their shoes on their own

Most schools ask children to bring in clothes for PE, so your child will need to be able to take

their clothes on and off. Some shoes are easier than others for them to manage, such as those with Velcro straps. The school will tell you what clothes they need for PE.

### Choose a sensible lunch and use cutlery properly

Some children find that getting their lunch is one of the most stressful parts of the school day, as they are not used to choosing what to eat, and don't all know about taking a balanced meal. They may end up choosing strange combinations when they first go to school!



## During the first few weeks

Some children settle in straight away, but others will take a while to get used to being at school. Expect tiredness, tears and ups and downs for some time after they have started. Here are some ways that you can help your child settle in at school as smoothly as possible.

### Stay calm

If you seem confident, it will help them to feel confident too.

### Allow plenty of time to get ready

Planning well and getting things ready the night before means you don't have to rush.

### If possible, take your child to school yourself

This is especially helpful on their first day. Remind them who will pick them up at the end of the day too. If they are upset when it's time for you to go, stay calm, explain that you have to go, but will see them later. If you're worried, you can always make a quick phone call to the school later to check they are fine.

### Make sure you know which entrance to use

Some primary schools have a separate entrance and playground for reception children.

### Make sure you and your child have a routine

Stick to the same routine where possible. You could make a calendar together, showing after-school arrangements and reminders to take in PE kit or reading books.

### Starting school is very tiring

It's important for them to have a regular bedtime, which isn't too late.

### Give them a healthy breakfast

They'll need it to concentrate!

# Keeping in touch and getting involved

Even once your child has settled, it's useful to stay in regular contact with the school. This section gives you an overview of some of the ways you can keep in touch, as well as ways in which you can get more involved.

## Keeping up to date

The school has a duty to keep you informed about your child and they must send you at least one written report on your child's progress each year. They will often send you letters about other things via your child too, so check they give you everything they're supposed to. You can get up-to-date news about the school through their website. Most Islington schools produce regular newsletters too.

## Parents' evenings

Most schools have a parents' evening once a year, either in the afternoon or evening, but some will have them more frequently. The teacher will talk to you about your child's progress, and you can find out more about what they do in class, as well as raise any queries or concerns you have. Parents' evenings needn't be the only time you speak to your child's teacher though – do try to chat to them every

now and again. If you have a serious concern or issue, you should make a separate appointment with the teacher.

## Getting involved with the school

Getting involved with your child's school can help both of you enjoy these school years. Schools in Islington welcome parents' involvement, and it can help you to build good relationship with the staff.



## Volunteering

There will be plenty of opportunities to volunteer and help out at the school. If you want to volunteer, talk to your child's teacher.

You may want to join the Parent Teacher Association (PTA), which often organises social events and fundraising activities.

## Governing body

There are different kinds of governors on the school's governing body, which is responsible for setting the direction of the school and monitoring its performance. Parent governors are elected by parents of children at the school for a term of four years. If you're interested

in becoming a governor, speak to the head teacher, who can give you more information.

**Get involved if you can.**

# Reception class – what to expect

This section gives you some background on what your child will be learning in Reception class, including what a typical day is like.

The Reception class teacher will spend the first few weeks getting to know the children and finding out what they can do. They may ask you what your child likes to do at home, and will find it useful to get some background on their abilities. And they may look at their nursery records to make sure they teach in the right way for them.

Play is a key way that young children learn and it makes it challenging and fun. The teacher will plan a balance of activities – those traditionally thought of as ‘teaching’ and those where children will be playing within a carefully designed environment. There will be both indoor and outdoor activities with things for pupils to do on their own and in groups. The activities help children develop their skills, understanding, knowledge and attitudes.



Play is a key way that young children learn.

## Subjects in Reception class

Teaching within the education system is split into stages. See the table below for more details of all the stages. The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) sets out what children will learn up until the end of Reception class. In the EYFS, there are six areas of learning and development.

Age	Year	Stage	Primary school
0-3	n/a	Early Years Foundation Stage	
3-4	Nursery		
4-5	Reception		
5-6	Year 1	Key Stage 1	
6-7	Year 2		
7-8	Year 3	Key Stage 2	
8-9	Year 4		
9-10	Year 5		
10-11	Year 6		

### Personal, social and emotional development

Your child will learn about themselves and what they like, and will learn to talk confidently about it. They will be taught about the difference between right and wrong and how to think about other people too.

### Communication, language and literacy

Your child will learn to talk confidently and clearly, and enjoy listening to stories, songs and poems. Through activities, they'll hear and say different sounds, linking them to the alphabet, and they'll learn to read and write.

### Maths (also called Problem Solving, Reasoning and Numeracy)

Your child will develop an understanding of maths through stories, songs, games and imaginative play. They will learn about numbers, sizes and shapes.

### Knowledge and understanding of the world

Your child will find out about the world around them – past events and different cultures and beliefs. They will also learn about everyday technology and its uses.

### Physical development

Your child will learn to move confidently, and to control their actions.

### Creative development

Your child will explore using colours and shapes. They will tell stories and make music.

At the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage the teacher will assess your child's progress in each of the six areas of learning and development to help plan their learning when they go into Year 1. The assessment is based on day-to-day observation of the child and doesn't involve any testing. The assessment is called the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile.



## A day in the life of Reception class

All schools are different, but your child's school day is likely to look something like this:

### Start

Most schools start at 9am or shortly before. Children go into the classroom and there may be 'self-registration' where the pupils find their own name cards. The teacher will also do a more formal register.

### Morning activities

After registration, the teacher will tell the class the plans for the day and perhaps read a story. There might be the opportunity for children to share any news, and if it is someone's birthday they may sing 'Happy Birthday'. They'll then start on the work that the teacher's prepared. For example, they

might do activities to help them learn the alphabet or to count, or they might paint, or play with sand and water. The teacher and teaching assistant will get involved and support children in activities, perhaps reading a book together or playing a game. Sometimes all the activities will focus on one theme. For example, one group of children might paint some animals, while another group counts and arranges toy animals.

During the morning, children may have a piece of fruit and they always have access to drinking water.

### Lunchtime

Lunchtime is often around 12 noon to 1.15pm. Most schools ensure that children in Reception class eat their lunch in a small, quiet area, away from the pupils in other classes.

### Finish

Most schools finish some time between 3.15 and 3.30pm.

### Other activities that might happen during the day

- Some days the children will go to assembly. Some schools have special assemblies, for example, a 'good deeds' assembly where children are acknowledged for good work or good behaviour. Sometimes

parents are invited to attend assemblies to see something special that the children have done in school. If your child's class is doing something special and parents are invited, do try to go.

- Schools often arrange visits to places in the local area, like a library or park.



Your child will do activities to help them learn the alphabet.

# School life after Reception class

Your child will always move up a class each year, even if they are not learning as fast as expected.

After Reception class, children move into Year 1, where they will probably have a different teacher, who will meet them towards the end of their time in Reception class.

This transition into Year 1 is a move from the Early Years Foundation Stage and into Key Stage 1, as shown in the table on page 18. The National Curriculum starts in Year 1 and is used by all schools up until Year 11.

In Year 1, there's less emphasis on learning through play and your child will learn

13 subjects, including Maths, English, Science, Information and Communication Technology (ICT), Religious Education, History and Music.

You can find out more about the National Curriculum and which subjects are taught at different key stages on [www.direct.gov.uk/parents](http://www.direct.gov.uk/parents). Click on 'Education and Learning'.

## Measuring your child's progress

The teachers will monitor how well your child is learning all the time and

they will assess them based on their everyday work, as they progress through school. You'll find out how your child is getting on at parents' evenings and in a written report. If you want more information about how teachers assess children, your child's teacher will be happy to explain.

**The teachers will monitor how well your child is learning all the time.**



# Helping your child learn

Although your child will soon be starting school, as a parent you will still have a huge impact on their learning.

You can help them do well at school by ensuring they go every day, but there are plenty of ways they can build on this learning outside of school too – just through playing and being involved in everyday activities.

For example, encourage your child to observe and talk about their surroundings, and read with them whenever you can. Everywhere you go there are things to read – whether you are shopping, waiting for a bus, visiting a museum or sitting at the doctors. Even young children can be helped to read notices and signs, and understand what they mean.

Get into the habit of reading a book at a time that suits you both. It doesn't have to be for long – just ten or 15 minutes. Talk about the plot, the characters and what might happen next.

If English is not your first language, make sure you continue to speak and read to your child in your own language too. That way they will develop their language skills which will make learning English much easier.

Talk to your child about their day at school, as children do better at school when their parents show an interest in what they're learning. Some schools take pictures of your

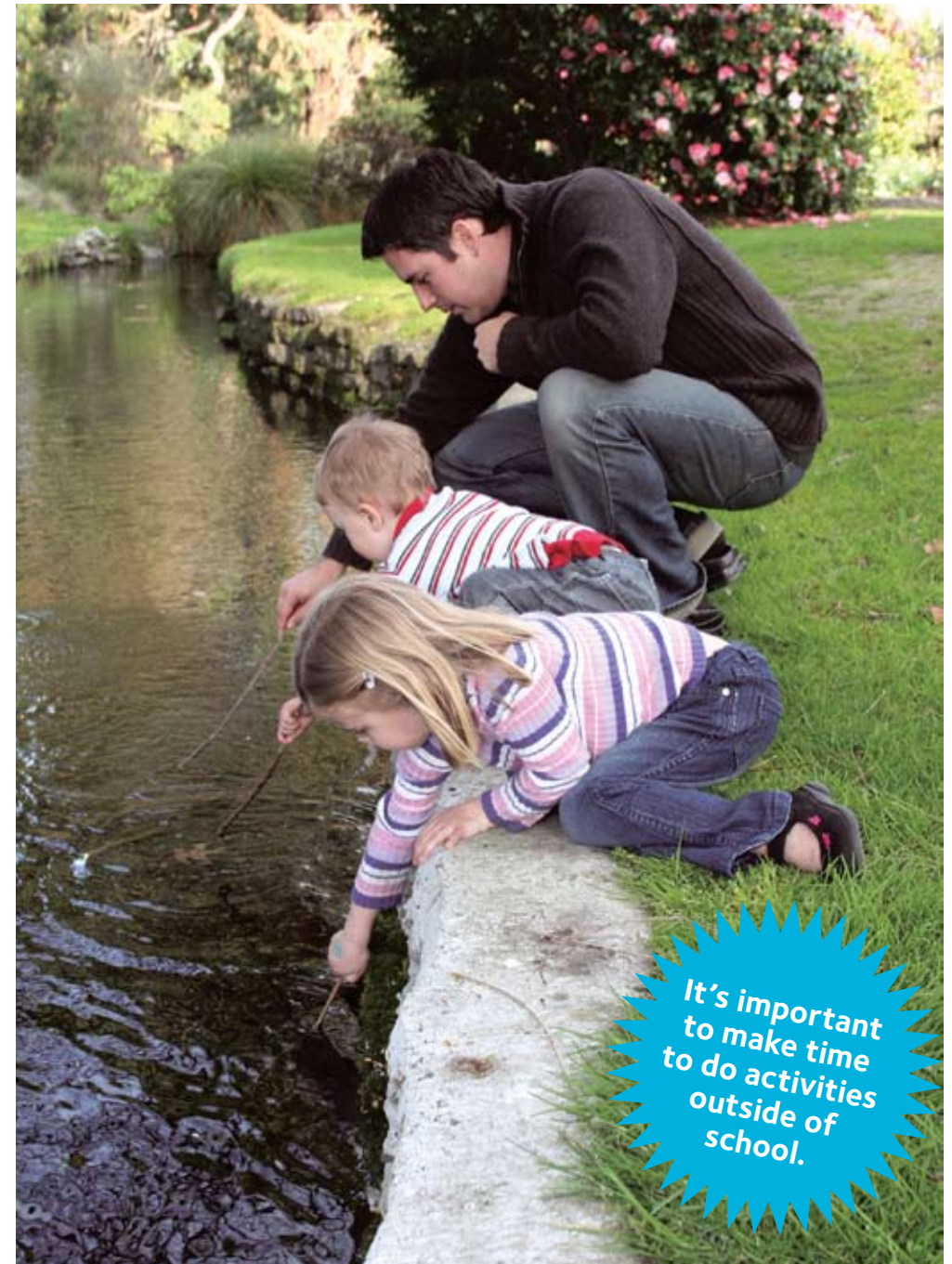
child to put in 'profile books', along with examples of their work.

Once your child starts school, it's important to still make time to do activities together outside of school as a family – for example:

- going to your local library, park or museum
- going to your local leisure centre.

Don't forget that an Izz card gives you big discounts.

For ideas of out-of-school activities, contact the Family Information Service – see page 2.



**It's important to make time to do activities outside of school.**

# Useful contacts

All these organisations provide support for Islington families.

## Centre 404

### Family Support

This is part of a parent-led organisation providing advocacy, support and information to parents of children with special needs and disabilities.

There are several parent groups meeting at Centre 404, including a parents' coffee morning, a Turkish mothers' group and a breakfast club.

**T:** 020 7697 1325

**W:** [www.centre404.org.uk](http://www.centre404.org.uk)

## Community Child and

### Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS)

CAMHS provides specialist assessment and treatment services for children and adolescents with emotional, behavioural and/or developmental difficulties and disorders.

**T:** 020 7445 8150

## Disability Action in Islington (DAII)

DAII offers services for disabled parents and carers and parents of disabled children and young people. There are drop-in sessions at the Upper Street offices and elsewhere. You can also get practical help, information, advice and signposting on issues relating to disability.

**T:** 020 7354 8925


or 020 7226 0137

(Disability Information Line from 10am-1pm)

## Islington Family Information Service

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Call our team of friendly advisers on **020 7527 5959**, visit **[www.islington.gov.uk/fs](http://www.islington.gov.uk/fs)** or email **[fs@islington.gov.uk](mailto:fs@islington.gov.uk)**



Islington's primary schools offer support and guidance to parents.

## Family Action Islington Children's Support Service

This service supports families that are worried about their child aged five to 13, with a focus on managing behaviour issues and improving relationships within the family, building self esteem, and helping families access other agencies where appropriate. They offer flexible home-based support from family support workers, run parenting courses and provide a counselling service for parents.

**T:** 020 7272 6933

**E:** [islington@family-action.org.uk](mailto:islington@family-action.org.uk)

## Islington Families

Islington Families offers support for families with children of all ages living in Islington or temporarily housed outside the borough who might be at risk of becoming homeless. This includes support with housing, accessing benefits, education and training. They also give help with problems such as mental health, drugs, alcohol and domestic violence.

**T:** 0845 600 1055

## Parentline Plus

Are you feeling stressed and need to talk to someone? You can ring the Parentline Plus free, national 24-hour helpline or visit their website for information.

**T:** 0808 800 2222

**W:** [www.parentlineplus.org.uk](http://www.parentlineplus.org.uk)

For information about parenting courses, please contact the Family Information Services – details on page 26.

**If you would like this document in large print or Braille, audiotape or in another language, please contact 020 7527 2000.**

#### **Bengali**

যদি আপনি এই তথ্য গুলো আপনার নিজ ভাষায় পেতে চান, তাহলে দয়া করে 020 7527 2000 নম্বরে যোগাযোগ করুন।

#### **Chinese (Traditional)**

如果你想要這資料的中文本, 請致電 020 7527 2000 聯繫。

#### **Somali**

Haddii aad jeclaan lahayd macluumaadkan oo ku qoran luqadaada fadlan la xidhiidh 020 7527 2000

#### **Turkish**

Buradaki bilgilerin Türkçesini istiyorsanız, lütfen 020 7527 2000 numaraya telefon edin.

#### **Contact Islington**

222 Upper Street, London N1 1XR

**E** contact@islington.gov.uk **T** 020 7527 2000 **F** 020 7527 5001

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