

School Readiness Policy

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Next review: April 2023

Related Policies:

Assessment and Observation policy

SEND policy

Endorsement

Full endorsement is given to this policy by:

Name: Joel Chalfen

Position: Cambridge Steiner School Trustee

Signed:



Date: April 2020

Guidelines for Observing School Readiness

Discerning a child's readiness to begin Class One is an important responsibility for early childhood educators and the child's parents. The age at which the child begins school has implications and consequences for the rest of life. The decision is not only about beginning Class One alone but of embarking upon an educational path that will last for the next twelve years or more.

In our school we set August 31st as the cut-off date for children turning six years old. However we believe that age is not the only factor to be considered for school entrance and there may be occasions where it is in the child's best interests for them to remain in kindergarten for an additional year, in particular for summer born children who have not yet reached developmental maturity to benefit from formal learning.

In terms of best practice we look at the children on a case-by-case basis in a process that fully includes the parents and all those involved in the education of the child. From ongoing observations assessments and progress checks against the starting point (Baseline assessments) concerns are raised within the close Kindergarten team, all Early Years teachers and if necessary the SENDCo. We also involve parents in these discussions as early as possible. We commit to each child, with the goal that he or she enter school confidently and experience success and satisfaction academically, socially, and emotionally. Therefore, school entry needs to be a carefully considered decision.

SEND

We do not routinely keep children in kindergarten an extra year for SEND reasons alone, although this may be a consideration where a child is spring/summer born and the additional year is likely to benefit their general development. The SENDCo is involved in making observations, carrying out screenings and contributing to the discussions between the teacher and parents.

Signs of Physical Readiness for School

In the first seven years of a child's life the emphasis lies on growth and development of the body. Considerations are listed below, although these are not a definitive guide to 'readiness':

- Loss of milk teeth
- Lengthening of limbs in relation to head size.
- Facial features individualise; young child roundness fades
- S-curve appears in the spine
- Rib cage becomes visible as separate from the tummy region. The child grows taller and seems to "stretch" in height
- Arch develops in the foot

The child has the ability to move with increasing coordination and intention. For example:

- Throw a ball in the air with one hand and catch it with two
- Stand on one leg and hop sideways, forward, and backward
- Walk on tip toe; string beads, finger knit; set the table, wash and dry dishes; dress and undress; tie shoes and do buttons
- New forces of levity enter into movement. The child can skip more lightly and begin to jump a rope

Premature Birth - Research reports that premature children have a much higher incidence of learning challenges and immaturity in emotional, behavioural, and cognitive domains. There is the growth and maturation to "catch up" with that would otherwise have been completed in the womb before physical birth. And there is also the stress placed upon the premature infant to complete this growth under the forces of gravity and sensory stimulation for which their small bodies were not prepared. The prematurity may place added stress upon the child and cause additional developmental delay.

Memory -In the school ready child access to memory has shifted from needing external reminders or triggers in the environment to being accessible to the memory at will. The child is now able to call up memories in response to direct questioning, independent of concrete situations. The child can 'activate the process of remembering without outside prompting'.

Imagination - The impetus for play now arises within the child out of his or her own motivation and inner picturing. The child starts to see that if one thing happens, another event or result will follow. With this new capacity, the child can begin to plan. The maturing child has an idea of what to play and then looks to the environment to gather the props and materials needed to manifest the idea. Previously something in the environment suggested the idea.

Social readiness - The child demonstrates social skills for group interaction. Social readiness “involves learning to align his own interests with those of others (with the teacher’s help). The child’s intentions are increasingly receptive to being guided by the spoken words of adults as instinctive imitation activity recedes.

Verbal skills - Rhyming and changing tempo of speech and song are typical for this age. The school ready child is able to be directed by speech without needing a model to imitate. As a general rule, children of school age can sing, pronounce all the speech sounds with clarity, retell stories in complete sentences, and express what they want to say in conversation in a variety of different ways. The child understands what is said to her (receptive language) and has the ability to express herself (expressive language).

Emotional maturity / Behaviour - The child shows increasing ability to put aside personal desires and impulses in deference to the needs of the group. One can see emerging maturity and independence in the child. Levels of attention, concentration, and listening ability are strengthening.

Drawings - Free drawings include a representation of a person. There is a sense of “groundedness” of the elements in the picture (person, structures, trees and plant life, etc.) with awareness of above/below and symmetry of right/left.

Perceptual abilities - The child shows awareness of and ability to draw geometric shapes (e.g. square and figures with diagonals). She can reproduce form drawing(s) that an adult has demonstrated.

Additional factors

The child is able to attend school regularly and cope with attending 5 full days and is happy and able to meet other adults.

The child is able to sit at a desk and participate as one of a group; accept authority of a class teacher; independently take care of personal needs—clothing, toileting, washing; hold his own in play time.

Demonstrates the unconscious skills cultivated in kindergarten, such as holding a brush or crayon.

The child demonstrates sufficient stamina to last through the school day. He can follow through on craft or task that takes days or even weeks to complete and shows initiative. He asks for work.

She is able to bring forth independent imaginations from her inner life as impetus for play and social interaction

She can work through the internal process (of transforming) the wonderful fantasies of her earlier kindergarten years into a conscious imagination.

Gender- Neurological and developmental studies confirm that boys and girls have different maturational timetables. Boys generally require six months more to achieve equivalent maturational levels with girls. This can make a crucial difference, especially when considering children for school entry who are born between May and August.

Health—Any known medical issues: vision and hearing, stamina in managing regular school attendance as well as sustaining energy through the school day, constitution, sleeping and eating habits, and relationship to rhythms should also be factored into the complete picture of the child.

Reaching a Recommendation

When we observe and consider all the areas above, we must remind ourselves that we are not looking for a “qualifying score” to demonstrate readiness. Rather we want to observe the gesture the child is communicating in his or her interaction with the world.

Does the child’s development seem age-appropriate and give an impression of wholeness?

Are the different aspects of development keeping pace with one another?

What is the experience for the child in how the world enters into his being?

How ready is he/she to meet the world with growing confidence and competence?

Once a mutual agreement has been made a School Readiness consent form should be completed and signed by the parent and teacher (see attached).

It is important to note that we continue to monitor the child closely. If at any point during the process things change and a child makes a developmental 'leap' we would then reconsider and make plans accordingly.