May 2026

welcome to...

Your child's journey to school

A guide to preparing your child for nursery and school

Small steps to achieving a brighter future

...giving children the best start

In partnership with

Nottinghamshire County Council

NHS Nottinghamshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust

BEST START IN LIFE

This Journey to School booklet belongs to:

To support this resource, please take a look at the Nottinghamshire Best Start offer - a guide to local support and services taking you from early pregnancy until your child is five years old.

This guide has been designed with help and feedback from parents.

Nottinghamshire Best Start offer

You can help your child by:

- Having fun with them - talk, play and share everyday experiences together
- Supporting their language development by singing songs and nursery rhymes
- Sharing books and talking face to face
- Recognising and talking through their feelings and emotions
- Allowing enough time for sleep, relaxation, rest and play
- Providing opportunities for them to socialise with other adults and children outside of the immediate family
- Supporting their self-help skills so that they learn to do things for themselves
- Encouraging them to be active and make healthy choices
- Remember, children develop at their own rate and in their own ways

This booklet aims to guide you and your child on an exciting journey to prepare them for their early years education. You will find top tips and checklists throughout to help you and your child on your journey.

Early years settings are wonderful places for children to learn, develop new skills, make new friends and have fun. Early education supports children's development and their overall wellbeing and helps to give them a routine.

If your child doesn't yet go to an early years setting (registered childminder, nursery or pre-school) now would be a great time for them to start. From 2 years, some children are eligible for up to 15 or 30 hours of childcare funding until they start school (eligibility criteria applies). All children can access 15 hours of funded childcare from 3 years.

Take a look at: Find Childcare | Your Notts Directory
Page for information about the types of childcare, the funding available and local childcare providers.

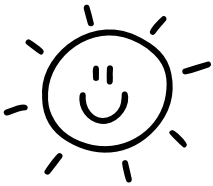
Find Childcare
Your Notts

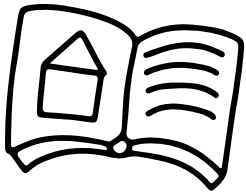
Support, advice and guidance

If you would like more information or have any questions after reading this booklet, you could contact your child's early years setting, local Healthy Family Team or Family Hub Network. For contact information, please see pages 13 & 14.

Your Healthy Family Team and Family Hub Network are made up of professionals with a background in early years and child development including:

- Health Visiting
- School Health
- Early Years
- Family Support
- Speech and Language





By 2 years old your child could be:

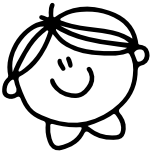
- Trying to feed themselves
- Using a spoon, fork and cup at family mealtimes with your help
- Drinking from a cup or able to use a straw
- Trying to use a toothbrush
- Saying at least 50 words and making 2-word sentences
- Understanding at least 100 words and simple instructions
- Knows what the toilet or potty are and sometimes sits on it
- Can take off some clothes and have a go at putting them back on
- Playing outside and enjoying imaginative and pretend play with you
- Able to walk on their own
- Getting a good night's sleep Children - The Sleep Charity
- Able to say some counting words in their play

If your child has additional needs you may need more support and information. Please contact your Healthy Family Team for advice. You can also speak to your early years setting that your child is attending for support about your child's needs.

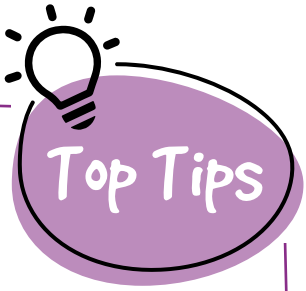
Children - The Sleep Charity

Inspire, Culture, Learning, Libraries

Find out more about the local library service Inspire at: Inspire, Culture, Learning, Libraries



Two year old top tips



- Ensure your child is up to date with their vaccinations
- Book a visit to your dentist
- Attend toddler groups/nursery/Family Hub group
- Ensure your child has a good bedtime routine
- If your child uses a dummy, save them just for sleep times
- Try to stop using bottles
- Share stories, singing and talking time together with your child
- Use number words in meaningful contexts e.g. 'Here is your other mitten. Now we have two'
- Your child will soon have a 2 year development review with your Healthy Family Team who will contact you to arrange this*
- If your child attends an early years setting, he/she will have a 2 year progress check as part of the Early Years Foundation Stage. Your setting will contact you about this*
- Check if your child is eligible for a funded two-year old childcare place. Check here to see if you are eligible at Childcare & Early Years Education - Best Start in Life

Childcare & Early Years Education Best Start in Life

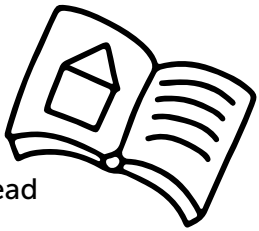
If you want to change a behaviour or introduce a new routine, it might take up to 2 weeks.

* When asked, please give permission for your information to be shared between your child's setting and the Healthy Family Team.

By 3 years old your child could be:

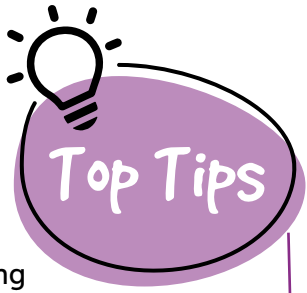
- Trying to get themselves dressed
- Using the toilet or potty regularly
  The Potty Training Guide - Starting Reception
- Able to brush their own teeth with your help
- Beginning to recognise and describe their feelings
- Listening to and following longer instructions
- Eating a variety of healthy foods
- Able to say hundreds of words (500-700) and using sentences of 4 or more words. Your child may start to stumble over their words - try not to draw their attention to it
- Using an open cup for drinking
- Running, jumping and balancing
- Able to turn pages of a book, do a peg jigsaw or thread bobbins
- Making some friends and may have a special friend
- Able to say some number names in order

The Potty Training Guide - Starting Reception



It's a great idea to book a FREE NHS eye test at any high street optician before your child starts school – or as soon as you can afterwards. This quick and simple check can spot any issues early on and really help support their learning and development. Just a reminder: children don't have routine vision screening when they start school. For more information see Free NHS vision tests - Nottinghamshire | Health for Under5s

Free NHS vision tests



Three year old top tips

- Have a morning routine that includes breakfast, washing, teeth, toileting and dressing
- Have a bedtime routine that includes quiet time, getting ready for bed, toilet, teeth and story
- Give your 3 year old the opportunity to mix with children their own age
- Start thinking about your child's pre-school booster, check it out at the overview website 4-in-1 pre-school booster
- Visit an optician for a free eye test
- Limit sugary food and drink to meal times only Reducing sugar - Food facts - Healthier Families - NHS
- If you have any concerns about behaviour, sleep, toileting, talking, eating or health development, have a chat with your Healthy Family Team, Family Hub or early years setting
- Don't forget to take up your funded childcare place, find out more at Help with Childcare Costs
- Now is the right time to look for a primary school Applying for a school place

4-in-1 pre-school booster

Reducing sugar Food facts

Help with Childcare Costs

Applying for a school place

By 4 years old your child could be:

- Able to cut out simple shapes or form letters from their own name
- Able to have a conversation with you but makes simple mistakes with sounds e.g. "I goed for a walk"
- Using lots of words to communicate
- Using the toilet on their own
- Able to dress and help themselves
- Confident and curious to try new things with or without you
- Playing with a circle of friends and beginning to take turns and share
- Enjoying family mealtimes
- Using a pencil to draw and write
- Able to say numbers in order to 10 and beginning to represent numbers using fingers, marks on paper or pictures
- Able to settle happily without a parent/carer

Top Tips

Four year old top tips

- NHS dental care for children is free.
  From the age of 3, children should be offered fluoride varnish application at least twice a year as part of their dental care. Younger children may also be offered this treatment if your dentist thinks they need it. The Children's Toothbrushing Guide - Starting Reception
- Ensure your child has had a pre-school booster
- Ensure your child has visited the optician
- Check your child is registered for a place at school
- Encourage your child to talk to you about their day and describe how they feel
- Make meal times a time to talk
- Give your child a reason to count, e.g. counting money and change when playing shops
- Play games which involve turn taking and sharing, and read stories that encourage talking about friends and feelings

The Children's Toothbrushing Guide - Starting Reception

It is not unusual for your child to still be wetting the bed at this age. If you would like advice about this or any other continence issues speak to your Healthy Family Team.

Contact details are on page 13.

By 5 years old your child could be:

- Understanding their own and others' feelings
- Able to dress, undress and feed themselves
- Able to blow their own nose, wipe their bottom and wash their hands
- Able to go to the toilet on their own
- Saying words clearly but making occasional small errors e.g. "r" and "th" used incorrectly

- Joining in 30 minutes of physical play/exercise per day
- Confident in being with others and in trying new things, taking turns, listening and playing
- Able to understand and re-tell a story with a beginning, middle and end
- Able to understand rules but sometimes finds it difficult to accept them
- Beginning to understand the needs of others and can wait to have their needs met
- Able to use a pencil confidently
- Able to change their behaviour to different situations

As part of your child's health & development reviews you may be asked if you have any concerns about your child's hearing NHS Hearing test

NHS Hearing test

Top Tips

Five year old top tips

- Go to the optician every year and encourage your child to brush their teeth with fluoride toothpaste twice a day and continue supervising them until they're at least 7 to help build good habits.
- Encourage your child to drink a litre of water a day
- Have a regular bedtime routine with 10 hours of sleep
- Go to the doctors if you think your child has hearing problems
- Follow the eat well guidelines on The Eatwell Guide NHS website
- Look out for information from your local Healthy Family Team providing useful information and contacts when your child starts Reception year.
- Your child will be weighed and measured in Reception year which is part of the National Child Measurement Programme (NCMP).

The Eatwell Guide NHS website

You can contact the Healthy Family Team, Family Hub Network or your child's early years setting for more information. **please see pages 13 & 14.**

Nottinghamshire's SEND Local Offer

All children's development is unique. If you are worried that your child may have a SEND need or if your child has a disability, please take a look at Your Notts Directory | Nottinghamshire's SEND Local Offer for more information and support.

Healthy Family Teams Contact Details

NHS
Nottinghamshire Healthcare
NHS Foundation Trust

Healthy Family Team Contact Details

Advice Line

0300 123 5436

ChatHealth
TEXT ONLY 07507 329952
(11-19 YEAR OLDS)

Parentline
TEXT ONLY 07520 619919

Health for U5s
WWW.HEALTHFORUNDER5S.CO.UK

Best Start Plus offer
CALL 01623 484829

Health for Kids
WWW.HEALTHFORKIDS.CO.UK

Health for Teens
WWW.HEALTHFORTEENS.CO.UK

www.nottinghamshirehealthcare.nhs.uk/healthy-family-teams

Family Hub Networks Contact Details

Ashfield Family Hub Network
Email: **FHAshfield@nottscc.gov.uk**

Hucknall Family Hub
Tel: **0115 9773748**

Ashfield North Family Hub (Sutton)
Tel: **0115 9773741**

Kirkby Family Hub
Tel: 0115 9773746

Bassetlaw Family Hub Network
Email: **FHBassetlaw@nottscc.gov.uk**

Retford Family Hub
Tel: **0115 9773754**

Worksop Family Hub (Manton)
Tel: **0115 9773758**

Bassetlaw Rural Family Hub (Langold)
Tel: **0115 9773759**

Broxtowe Family Hub Network
Email:**FHBroxtowe@nottscc.gov.uk**

Broxtowe North Family Hub (Eastwood)
Tel: **0115 9773742**

Broxtowe South Family Hub (Chilwell) Tel: **0115 9773743**

Gedling Family Hub Network
Email: **FHGedling@nottscc.gov.uk**

Gedling North Family Hub (Arnbrook) Tel: **0115 9773752**

Gedling South Family Hub (Netherfield)
Tel: **0115 9773751**

Mansfield Family Hub Network
Email: **FHMansfield@nottscc.gov.uk**

Mansfield South/East Family Hub (Ravensdale)
Tel: **0115 9773740**

Mansfield North Family Hub (Mansfield Woodhouse)
Tel: **0115 9773765**

Mansfield West Family Hub (Ladybrook)
Tel: **0115 9773763**

Newark & Sherwood Family Hub Network
Email:**FHNewarkSherwood @nottscc.gov.uk**

Newark Family Hub (Hawtonville)
Tel: **0115 9773745**

Sherwood Family Hub
Tel: **0115 9773744**

Ollerton & Boughton Family Hub
Tel: **0115 9773747**

Rushcliffe Family Hub Network
Email: **FHRushcliffe@nottscc.gov.uk**

Rushcliffe Family Hub (Bingham)
Tel: **0115 9773749**

Attend groups in the community / at your local Family Hub. For information on groups take a look at Nottinghamshire Family Hub Network Nottinghamshire Family Hub Network

Nottinghamshire Family Hub

Useful websites

Your Notts Directory

Health for Under 5s (Nottinghamshire)

Health for Kids (Nottinghamshire)

Starting Reception

Language for Life

Start Talking Together

Best Start in Life health advice - NHS

Nottinghamshire Family Hub Network

Nottinghamshire Healthy Family Teams

Skills for starting school

Home - Ask Us Nottinghamshire

Health for Teens

Baby and toddler screen time guidance

Find out more details about your local SEND offer on the Your Notts Directory website.

Nottinghamshire Families Information Service has lots of information for parents including support to find childcare and things to do with your child to help their play and learning. You can also find it on Facebook, search: Nottinghamshire Families Information Service.

Family Hub Network Facebook

Gedling - FamilyHubNetworkGedling/

Rushcliffe - FamilyHubNetworkRushcliffe/

Broxtowe - FamilyHubNetworkBroxtowe/

Newark and Sherwood - FamilyHubNetworkNewarkandSherwood/

Bassetlaw - FamilyHubNetworkBassetlaw/

Mansfield - FamilyHubNetworkMansfield/

Ashfield - FamilyHubNetworkAshfield/

Nottinghamshire Families Information Service Instagram

You can also follow the Healthy Family Team on social media via the following channels:

Healthy Family Team on

Facebook

instgram

X

Nottinghamshire Family Hub Network

Helping families get the right support at the right time

In partnership with

Nottinghamshire County Council

NHS Nottinghamshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust