

Preparing for the New School Year at Keelonith Primary School

As we near the end of another fantastic year at Keelonith Primary School, it's a perfect time to reflect on the journey we've shared and look forward to the new school year ahead. The holidays are a time for relaxation, fun, and family, but as the first day of the new school year approaches, the transition can bring a mix of emotions for both children and parents.

While some children may be excited about returning to school, meeting new teachers, and reconnecting with friends, others may experience anxiety or uncertainty about what the next year will bring. It's completely normal for children—and even parents—to feel this way as the holidays come to an end and routines start to shift again.

As you prepare for the new school year, here are some helpful tips to make the transition smoother for your child and your family:

1. Listen to Your Child's Feelings

Talk to your child about how they feel about returning to school. Some kids may express excitement, while others may be nervous or unsure. Validate their feelings and remind them that it's okay to feel a mix of emotions. Reassure them that many others feel the same way.

2. Read Books About Going to School



Reading stories about starting school can help children feel more confident. Books can provide comfort and give them a chance to explore their feelings in a fun, low-pressure way. Ask your child what they liked or didn't like about the story and connect it to their own experience.

3. Talk Positively About School

Focus on the exciting aspects of school, like meeting new friends, learning new things, or fun activities. Talking positively about school helps set a hopeful and enthusiastic tone. Your excitement will help your child feel more comfortable about the year ahead.

4. Discuss the New Routine

Set clear expectations about the daily routine. Plan out the details of your new routine together—what time school starts, what to pack in their backpack, and any after-school activities they might be involved in.

Preparing for the first day ahead of time, such as picking out clothes the night before and ensuring backpacks are packed, can help set a positive tone for the morning and make things feel less rushed. A smooth start to the day helps set a positive tone for everyone.

5. Be Patient with the Transition

Adjusting to a new school year takes time. If your child is still feeling anxious after a few weeks, reach out to their classroom teacher for extra help. It's important to give them space to adjust.

6. Take Care of Yourself

Parents can feel stress too! Managing your own routines and staying calm helps create a peaceful environment at home. Keep your stress in check to model healthy coping strategies for your child.

We're excited to welcome everyone back for another fantastic year at Keelonith Primary School! Let's make it a great start to a year full of learning and growth!

Allied Health Team

When they don't want to say "goodbye"

Separation anxiety occurs when your child becomes distressed at being separated from you.

It's normal for children to show separation anxiety in early childhood. You are their "safe base", and naturally they will feel a bit unsure about leaving you at times. While most children settle into their day after a brief adjustment period, some may struggle longer. Here are some suggestions to help with tricky goodbyes:

1. **Start with empathy:** Your child's anxiety is real, even if you've reassured them countless times. Their young brains prioritise emotion over reason. Instead of comparing their experience to others or past incidents, focus on supporting them now. Try using validating statements such as "I can tell you're finding the goodbye difficult, I feel sad saying goodbye to you too!"
2. **Develop a calm morning routine:** "Mornings" and "calm" don't often go together when it comes to children so plan ahead to reduce stress. Prepare school essentials the night before, use visual schedules, and create a peaceful atmosphere to help your child feel more secure.
3. **Use a transitional object:** Young children don't have a good concept of time. The school day can feel like forever and they may – for whatever reason – worry that you won't come back. Offer your child a special item to keep during the day, reminding them of your return. It can be any special item that you agree on, from a hair band to a scarf or a picture. Coordinate this with their teacher/Ms. Loren to ensure it's comforting and appropriate.



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4. Be calm and confident: Children are great at reading their caregivers body language and they know if you are worried about school drop off. While it may be challenging, try and maintain a calm and confident demeanour about school drop off.

5. Shared language: It can be helpful to read books to your children, like the invisible string, so you have a shared language. Books also help explain challenging concepts to children in simple terms that

they can understand.

My Big Moments have a book you can personalise about starting school:

This personalised book:

<https://mybigmoments.com/starting-school?name=Miles&gender=boy&avatar=bf001&step=preview#create>

6. **Prepare them:** "Honey, when we get to your classroom this morning, I'll read you a story then kiss you and then we'll say goodbye. Then you can go and play with your friends on the mat."

By approaching goodbyes with empathy and preparation, you can help ease your child's separation anxiety and promote a smoother school experience.

When they won't go to school

School refusal can be a challenging issue for both children and parents to navigate. It often stems from anxiety about leaving home, fear of a new environment, or difficulty coping with social pressures. Here are some strategies to help you support your child through this period:

1. Call in Reinforcements: If you are having trouble getting your child to school let us know! We have a school psychologist, social worker and our leadership team who can help you and your child. We have worked with many families to overcome this issue so please lean on us.

2. Understanding the Cause: Recognize that school refusal is usually a symptom of underlying concerns such as separation anxiety or bullying. Talk openly with your child to understand their specific worries.

3. Communicate and Reassure: Listen to your child's concerns without judgement. Reassure them that their feelings are normal and that you are there to support them. Encourage open communication with teachers as well.

4. Establish a Routine: Create a consistent morning routine that includes calm and positive interactions. Planning ahead can reduce stress for both you and your child.

5. Gradual Exposure: We will work with you and your child to gradually increase their time at school. We can start with short visits or partial days, gradually extending as they become more comfortable.

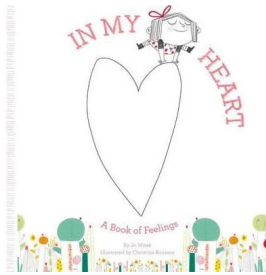
6. Keep it boring: No one likes to see their child upset and it can be tempting to keep them home and let them have some fun. However, it only reinforces the thought that home is "safe and good" and school is "scary and bad". If you have tried everything to get them to school and it isn't working then make home between 9 and 3.30 boring. No pancake breakfasts and no xbox.

Remember, each child is unique, and overcoming school refusal may take time and patience. By offering understanding, consistency, and seeking appropriate help when needed, you can help your child navigate this challenging phase successfully.

Together, we can ensure your child feels safe, supported, and ready to learn.

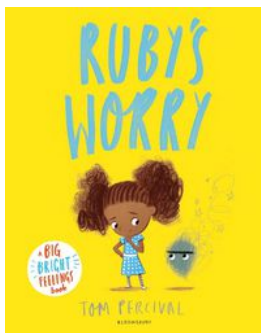
Increasing emotional literacy at home

Teaching children about emotions is crucial for their overall well-being and development. By understanding and managing their emotions, children can build healthier relationships, cope with challenges more effectively, and communicate their feelings in constructive ways. Learning to recognize emotions in themselves and others fosters empathy and enhances social skills, preparing them for success both academically and socially. Here are some books that can increase your child's social and emotional literacy:

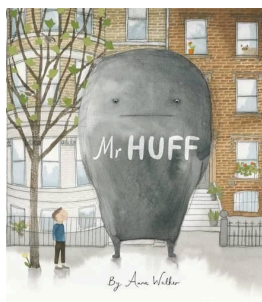


In My Heart is a beautiful hardcover book which explores emotions, explaining in lyrical text what an emotion feels like, physically, inside:

When I get really angry, my heart feels like it's going to explode! Don't come near me! My heart is yelling, hot and loud. This is when my heart is mad.

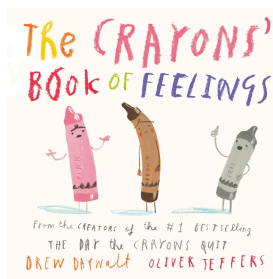


A reassuring and sensitive book - the perfect springboard for talking to children about sharing their hidden worries. From the Big Bright Feelings series by Tom Percival Be open, be honest, be you! Big Bright Feelings for little people.



Award-winning and much-loved author and illustrator Anna Walker gives us a gentle, poignant, affirming and wise picture book sure to delight all ages.

Mr. Huff is a story about the clouds and the sunshine in each of our lives. Bill is having a bad day. Mr Huff is following him around and making everything seem difficult. Bill tries to get rid of him, but Mr Huff just gets bigger and bigger! Then they both stop, and a surprising thing happens...



The crayons are back in this board book all about feelings from the creators of the #1 New York Times bestselling The Day Crayons Quit and The Day the Crayons Came Home!

Everyone knows the crayons love to colour, but did you know that crayons have feelings too? Sometimes they are happy and sometimes they feel downright blue. This is a perfect book for our early readers to introduce emotions and explore the concept that two emotions can exist at the same time.

Understanding the Zones of Regulation: A Guide for Parents

What Zone Are You In?



KPS has recently started incorporating the 'zones of regulation' into our classrooms. This approach helps children recognize and manage their emotions in a structured way, fostering self-regulation skills that are vital for success in various aspects of life.

What is self-regulation?

Self-regulation can go by many names, such as self-control, self management, and impulse control. It is defined as the best state of alertness of both the body and emotions for the specific situation. For example, when a student plays on the playground or in a competitive game, it is beneficial to have a higher state of alertness. However, that same state would not be appropriate in the library.

What are the Zones of Regulation?

The Zones of Regulation categorise emotions and states of alertness into four distinct zones, each represented by a different colour:

- **Blue Zone (Low Energy):** This zone represents feelings like sadness, tiredness, or boredom. Children in this zone may feel lethargic or withdrawn.
- **Green Zone (Good to Go):** The green zone signifies a calm and focused state. Children in this zone are typically happy, focused, or ready to learn.
- **Yellow Zone (Caution):** This zone represents a heightened state of alertness and elevated emotions such as excitement, frustration, or anxiety. Children may find it challenging to concentrate or control impulses when in the yellow zone.
- **Red Zone (Stop, I Need Help):** The red zone indicates an intense state of heightened emotions such as anger, rage, or panic. Children in the red zone may struggle to make good decisions or control their actions.

How Can Parents Support Their Children?

- **Identify and Label Emotions:** Encourage your child to recognize which zone they are in throughout the day. Use examples from their own experiences to help them understand each zone.
- **Teach Coping Strategies:** Help your child develop a toolbox of strategies to manage their emotions depending on the zone they are in. This could include deep breathing exercises, using a grounding strategy, taking a break, or talking to a trusted adult.
- **Model Self-Regulation:** Children learn a lot by observing their parents. Show them how you manage your own emotions and problem-solve calmly when faced with challenges.
- **Practice Patience and Understanding:** Learning to regulate emotions takes time and practice. Be patient with your child as they navigate their feelings and encourage their efforts.

The Importance of Deep Breathing Exercises for Children

In the hustle and bustle of daily life, even children can feel stressed or overwhelmed. One simple yet powerful technique that can benefit them greatly is deep breathing exercises. These exercises are not just for adults; they offer numerous advantages for children's physical, emotional, and mental well-being.

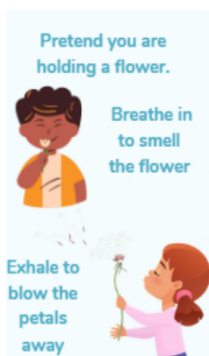
Why Are Deep Breathing Exercises Important for Children?

1. **Calming the Mind and Body:** Deep breathing triggers the relaxation response in the body, helping to calm racing thoughts and reduce feelings of anxiety or stress. This can be particularly beneficial during moments of frustration or when facing new challenges.
2. **Improving Focus and Concentration:** By encouraging deep, slow breaths, children can enhance their ability to concentrate and stay focused. This can be especially helpful during tasks that require sustained attention.
3. **Enhancing Emotional Regulation:** Teaching children deep breathing techniques provides them with a valuable tool for managing their emotions. It promotes self-awareness and self-regulation by giving them a way to step back and respond thoughtfully rather than react impulsively.
4. **Building Resilience:** Learning to use deep breathing as a coping mechanism teaches children resilience. It equips them with a lifelong skill for handling stress and adversity in a healthy way.

How Can Parents and Caregivers Encourage Deep Breathing?

- **Lead by Example:** Children learn best by watching others. Practise deep breathing yourself and invite your child to join you.
- **Make it Fun:** Use playful imagery or incorporate storytelling to make deep breathing exercises engaging for younger children.
- **Practice Regularly:** Incorporate deep breathing into daily routines, such as before bedtime or during transitions, to help make it a natural habit.
- **Offer Gentle Guidance:** Be patient and encouraging as your child learns to regulate their breath. Allow them to explore what techniques work best for them.

Simple Deep Breathing Exercise for Children:



Balloon Breath: Have your child imagine their belly as a balloon. Inhale deeply through the nose, filling the balloon (belly) with air. Hold for a moment, then exhale slowly through the mouth, deflating the balloon completely. Repeat several times.

Flower Breathing: Have your child imagine they are holding a flower. Ask them to inhale deeply, imagining they are smelling a flower. Hold for a moment, then ask them to exhale slowly through their mouth, as if they are blowing the petals away. Repeat several times.

What is Mindfulness?

One of the best ways we can help our children develop is by teaching them mindfulness. It is particularly important now more than ever as the pace of the world becomes faster and we are bombarded with distractions (social media, electronics etc.). Mindfulness is more than just a buzzword; it's a practice that encourages individuals to be fully present in the moment, acknowledging thoughts, emotions, and surroundings without judgement. This practice not only benefits adults but is increasingly recognized for its positive impact on children.

By engaging in mindfulness exercises, children learn to manage stress and regulate their emotions effectively. This ability to stay calm and resilient enhances their concentration and learning abilities in academic settings. Moreover, mindfulness fosters empathy and compassion towards others, promoting healthier social interactions and reducing conflicts among peers.

Ways to incorporate mindfulness at home:

- **Smiling Mind** is suitable for use at home or school. It is a free web and app-based program developed by psychologists and educators. It offers quick and easy-to-follow guided mindfulness programs catering for different age groups. Visit: www.smilingmind.com.au for more information.
- **The 3 breath hug.** One way to practise mindfulness with kids without them realising is the 3 breath hug. It's a great morning activity or something you can do when you need to say goodbye to each other. Hugging your child, encourage them to take three deep breaths with you. As you take those breaths, drop your shoulders and clear your mind, letting the tension sink away.
- **Slow everything down** to role model mindfulness to children. Try walking slower, talking slower and being more mindful or present in your day-to-day life. Teaching mindfulness to children may simply be a case of role modelling the type of mindful person you'd like to see them become. Understanding and teaching yourself mindfulness first should be a priority.
- **Taking a self-guided safari walk.** On your walks in your neighbourhood, tell your child they are going on a safari and it is their job to find as many bugs, flowers, birds as possible. This exercise allows them to focus and centre their five senses to notice the environment they are walking through and what they may discover.

Mindful glitter jars



Creating a glitter jar with your kids can be a delightful introduction to mindfulness. Often known by various names like glitter bottles or calm down jars, these mesmerising creations offer a tangible way to explore emotions and practise calming techniques together. You can explain to your children how shaking the jar mirrors the swirl of emotions in their minds and how watching the glitter settle can help them

find peace during tough moments. It's a fun and educational activity that fosters mindfulness and emotional awareness in a playful way.

How to start using a Glitter Jar with kids

Tell your kids that sometimes we have really big feelings. Your mind may feel swirly and mixed up because you are mad, angry, confused, or sad. When you have these feelings, you can take a mindfulness break, watch your feelings, and then let them settle.

Just like your big feelings, shake up a glitter jar and watch it swirl all over, crazy-like. Then set the jar down, watch it swirl, and breathe. As you breathe and are still, the glitter starts to slowly settle and become calmer. Watch until you can see through the jar again. We don't want our feelings to disappear, but we don't want them to block our view of what is really going on.

Materials:

- Half-pint plastic jar (use any size or reuse a plastic water bottle; increase quantities accordingly)
- Hot water (NOT boiling)
- Small coloured glitter
- Large glitter
- Glitter glue
- Super glue
- Measuring spoons

Instructions:

1. Add 1-2 Tablespoons of small glitter and ½ teaspoon large glitter to the bottom of a jar.
2. Fill the jar with hot (but NOT boiling) water, leaving about a half-inch head space.
3. Add about 2 Tablespoons of glitter glue to the water.
4. Run a bead of super glue around the lip of the jar. Screw the cap down tight.
5. Shake the jar until the glitter glue is dissolved in the hot water.