HARROW INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL DUBAI



SCHOOL READINESS IN THE EARLY YEARS

A Guide for Parents

Preparing Children for a Successful Start

Starting school is an exciting milestone for children and families alike. As parents, it is natural to wonder whether your child is "ready" for school and what skills they should have before beginning their educational journey.

At Harrow International School Dubai, we believe that school readiness is about far more than recognising letters, counting numbers, or writing a name. True readiness is built through play, exploration, movement, communication, and developing confidence and independence.

The strongest foundations for future learning are created when children are given time to play, discover, and develop at their own pace.

What Does School Readiness Really Mean?

School readiness is the combination of physical, social, emotional, and cognitive skills that enable children to engage successfully in school life.

Children who are school ready are beginning to:

- Feel confident separating from parents and carers.
- Follow simple routines and instructions.
- Communicate their needs and feelings.
- Play cooperatively with others.
- Show curiosity and enthusiasm for learning.
- Demonstrate increasing independence in everyday tasks.
- Develop physical strength, coordination, and control.

Importantly, school readiness is not measured by whether a child can write their name before starting school.

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The Importance of Play

Play is the most powerful way young children learn.

Through play, children naturally develop:

- Problem-solving skills
- Language and communication
- Creativity and imagination
- Mathematical thinking
- Social skills and friendships
- Confidence and resilience

When children build with blocks, create imaginary worlds, climb, dig, paint, or explore outdoors, they are developing the essential foundations for future academic success. Research consistently shows that play-based learning supports children's long-term development and prepares them for the challenges of formal learning.

Movement Comes Before Writing

Many parents are surprised to learn that writing is one of the final stages of a much larger developmental process.

Before a child can comfortably hold a pencil and write, they need opportunities to develop:

Gross Motor Skills

- Large body movements that build strength and coordination, including:
- Running
- Climbing
- Jumping
- Balancing
- Crawling
- Swinging
- Riding scooters and bicycles

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Fine Motor Skills

Smaller movements that develop control in the hands and fingers, including:

- Building with construction toys
- Threading beads
- Using playdough
- Picking up small objects
- Drawing and painting
- Using child-safe scissors

These skills develop naturally through active play and exploration.

Building Strong Foundations

Successful learners develop a wide range of foundational skills before formal writing emerges, including:

Physical Development

- Balance and coordination
- Core strength and posture
- Hand and finger strength
- Eye-hand coordination
- Body awareness

Communication and Language

- Listening and attention
- Following instructions
- Expressing ideas and feelings
- Developing vocabulary

Personal, Social and Emotional Development

- Building friendships
- Taking turns
- Managing emotions
- Developing resilience
- Growing independence

These skills are every bit as important as early literacy and numeracy.

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How Parents Can Support School Readiness at Home

Simple everyday experiences make a significant difference.

Encourage Active Play

Provide opportunities for:

- Outdoor play
- Climbing and balancing
- Running and jumping
- Playing in parks and playgrounds
- Exploring natural environments

Develop Independence

Encourage your child to:

- Put on shoes and clothing
- Use the toilet independently
- Wash hands
- Pack and unpack belongings
- Help tidy up after activities
- Be confident trying new foods

Read Together Every Day

Reading supports:

- Vocabulary development
- Listening skills
- Imagination
- Early literacy

Talk about stories, ask questions, and enjoy books together.

Have Meaningful Conversations

Talk with your child throughout the day about:

- Their experiences
- Their ideas
- Their feelings
- The world around them

Strong language skills support learning across all areas of development.

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Limit Pressure Around Writing

Rather than focusing on writing letters or names, encourage:

- Drawing
- Painting
- Mark making
- Scribbling
- Creative expression

These activities build confidence and strengthen the muscles needed for future writing.

What We Value at Harrow International School Dubai

In our Early Years classrooms, we recognise that every child develops at their own pace.

We prioritise:

- Play-based learning
- Exploration and discovery
- Physical development
- Communication and language
- Curiosity and creativity
- Social and emotional wellbeing
- Positive relationships

Our aim is to nurture confident, capable learners who are excited to come to school and ready to engage with new experiences.

A Final Thought

A child writing their name is not the best indicator of school readiness.
A child who is curious, confident, physically active, socially connected, and eager to explore the world is developing the strongest possible foundation for future success.

At Harrow International School Dubai, we encourage families to celebrate the joy of childhood, embrace play, and trust the developmental journey.

Together, we can ensure every child begins school with confidence, happiness, and a lifelong love of learning.