

# Instruction guide

Wondering about school:  
Children's investigations



## Introduction

Wondering about school: Children's investigations provides opportunities for collaborative engagement between schools and local Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) services to explore what it means to start school from the perspective of Prep and kindergarten-aged children.

The project acknowledges the importance of listening to children's voices in situations that directly affect them. It aims to gain insight into how children feel about going to school, and what they think is important for other children to know about starting school.

The project is intended to have several outcomes.

1. Deliver a child-centred booklet written and illustrated by children and published and distributed by the school, containing messages from children to children to help support a positive transition to school.
2. Enable children to contribute their knowledge and experience to their school community, to build new connections and encourage a sense of belonging for new school families.
3. Offer a resource for parents, designed to promote one-on-one conversations with their children about starting school.
4. Provide an opportunity for schools to get to know children entering Prep by building relationships with:
  - new school children and their families
  - local ECEC services.
5. Provide a new resource that becomes part of the suite of strategies schools and their transition partners undertake to support children's successful transition to school.

## Contents

The pages included in the *Wondering about school* booklet template are intended as a guide only. Schools can choose to include or omit pages to suit school and community needs.

The template includes:

**Part 1:** Introductory messages from key people including the school principal, local community members, parents/carers and ECEC services.

**Part 2:** Children’s messages and artworks.

### Part 1

The booklet template prompts teachers and educators to consider including the following suggested components.

1. Your school logo next to ‘Our school community’ (state school pledge).
2. An appropriate Acknowledgment of Country that is meaningful to your community.
3. A welcome message from the school principal, including a link to the school website and phone number for more information.
4. A message for parents/carers which includes:
  - a brief introduction, ‘Helping children enjoy a positive start to school’
  - the department’s parent/carer tips about supporting a positive start to school.
  - Links to related online resources <https://earlychildhood.qld.gov.au/early-years/activities-and-resources/transition-to-school-resources>
  - personal messages and advice from Prep families about their experiences in the transition to school.

### Part 2

Prep children’s messages and artworks in response to kindergarten children’s questions will be the focus of this section.

## Getting started

The primary purpose of this resource is for teachers to gather children’s voices and perspectives about their experiences starting school in order to support other local prior-to-school children. The resource also provides an opportunity for schools to foster a collaborative partnership with their neighbouring ECEC centres. Through this process, children, teachers and educators are afforded the time to have meaningful dialogue and gain valuable insights from each other.

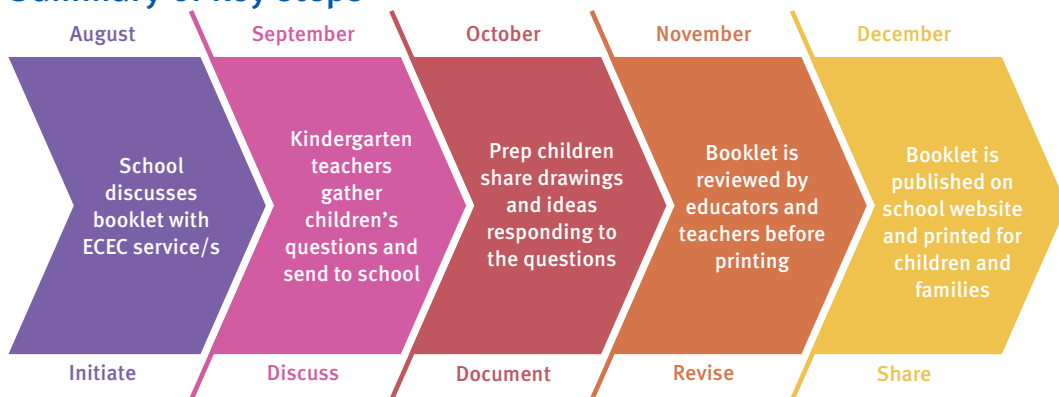
The discussions and associated activities will develop mutual understanding not only about children and their current experiences, but also about the contribution that each setting plays in the development of successful transitions to school. These insights may impact on the design of future transition plans that effectively respond to the needs of each unique community.

## Some questions to consider when creating this resource

- How do we propose to use this resource so that it is part of our broader transition program?
- How can we use these ideas as a vehicle to further strengthen collaborative partnerships with ECEC services?
- When is the appropriate time to complete the steps involved in such a project?

## Suggested timeline and approach

### Summary of key steps



- Where appropriate, seek permission to proceed with the project from your principal.
- Negotiate a suitable time with your transition partners to discuss the project.
- Gather questions from kindergarten children and responses to these questions from Prep children.
- Download the booklet template from the website <https://earlychildhood.qld.gov.au/early-years/activities-and-resources/wondering-about-school>.
- If you wish to collate ‘helpful tips’ from current parents, decide how you will do this.
- Decide whether you will publish the document on the school website. Additional parental consent forms may be required to enable this.
- Decide how and when the booklet might be presented and distributed to new families, considering how it fits within your community transition-to-school strategies.

## Conversation starters

Below is a list of suggested questions to begin a conversation about the transition to school. They are designed to encourage exploration of children's ideas, experiences, understandings, feelings and approaches to starting Prep.

These are a guide only to seek and share children's perspectives through open-ended questioning. Questions can be adapted by educators/teachers who are best placed to know the most effective approach for the children in their group/class.

Kindergarten children	Prep children
What do you like about kindergarten?	What do you like about school?
What do you think might be different at school?	What was different about school?
What do you want to know about school?	What kinds of things happen at school?
How do you feel about starting school?	How did you feel when you started school?
What things are you looking forward to learning about when you start school?	What things did you enjoy learning about when you started school?

In both the kindergarten and school environment, the teacher supports children to share and discuss their thoughts and ideas. This may involve working in small groups over a period of time. These conversations can provide opportunities for children to actively participate in discussions to explore concerns, check and share understandings, and develop potential solutions alongside their peers. Engaging children in these types of conversations can help build their capacity for coping with new situations they will face when starting school and for future transitions.

As part of the activity, students can draw pictures to describe their answers or employ other methods to describe what they feel is important to share with children starting school. Students may choose to describe their picture in their own writing, and have this included, as well as descriptions transcribed by an adult. This will ensure that each student's voice and intention is captured accurately and authentically.

## Resources

A number of resources will be required to complete this booklet, these may vary depending on your chosen format.

- Approximately two hours of class time for discussion and artwork.
- Paper for painting or drawing and paints, felt pens, pencils, crayons.
- Teacher/teacher aide/volunteer time to transfer children's artworks and transcribe their descriptions and words into the booklet template.
- Technology skills as required by your chosen approach to completing the template.
- Scanner to scan finished book pages into electronic document suitable for reprinting.
- Microsoft Word.
- Colour copier if printing colour copies of your finished booklet for distribution.

## Tips for creating your booklet

There are many different options for putting together your transition booklet. The option your school picks will depend largely on the resources you have access to. Below are step-by-step instructions for one possible way of collating your booklet.

### Step 1: Collect children's artwork

- Children complete their artwork on blank paper.
- Artwork is collected, scanned and saved as images on to a computer.

### Step 2: Import images into the booklet template

- Open the [\*Wondering about school: Children's investigations\*](#) booklet template in Microsoft Word.
- Select the page you would like to place each individual image.
- Insert the image onto the page and position as desired.
- Resize, move or rotate each image as desired. Be careful cropping or stretching images as you may compromise the integrity of children's original artwork.

### Step 3: Review and print

- Ensure all stakeholders are happy with the final copy.
- Print and collate the booklet.
- Consider how you will bind the booklet to ensure it is strong and durable.

### Step 4: Distribute

- Distribute to all children who have contributed to the development of the booklet, including Prep children enrolled for the following year.

## Further considerations

### Collecting parent tips

Tips from current Prep parents about their experiences with the transition to school could be collected in various ways.

- Your Prep contact parent (or similar, if you have one) might contact parents asking for their feedback via email. This could be done in Term 1 or 2 while these experiences are still fresh in parents' minds.
- Send a note home from the contact parent, Prep teacher or principal asking parents to share any tips that helped their family prepare for school.
- Make time at parent-teacher evenings or during informal chats at pick up and drop off to gather parent feedback.
- You may wish to broaden your search to include helpful hints from all parents/carers at the school, many of whom will have experienced several 'first days' with more than one child.

## Consent and attributions

The following points should be considered when developing the booklet to ensure all those involved are appropriately acknowledged.

- Ensure all children have up-to-date consent forms. Parents/carers will need to give permission via a consent form if you wish to make children's artworks and words available on the school website or on an alternative online platform.
- If you include photos of children at ECEC services, parents must provide consent for their use in this project. Check with your project partners.
- Attribute images of children's artwork correctly with their first name and their own words to describe what their artwork means.
- List all partnering schools and ECEC services correctly in your 'Thank you' message, along with the project leaders, teachers, educators and principals as necessary.

## Frameworks and curriculum links

This resource links with quality frameworks and key curriculum documents currently implemented in early years education. A separate [resource](#) is available which demonstrates the specific links between this resource and each individual framework.

Key documents include:

- *National Quality Standards* (NQS) for:
  - Early Childhood Education and Care service providers
  - Outside School Hours Care (OSHC) services.
- *Early Years Learning Framework* (EYLF)
- *Early Years Curriculum Guidelines* (EYCG)
- Australian Curriculum – English, The Arts.

## More information

For the full suite of documents associated with the *Wondering about school: Children's investigations booklet*, or for more information and resources about the *Supporting successful transitions* initiative, please visit <https://earlychildhood.qld.gov.au/early-years/transition-to-school>.

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**Queensland**  
Government