

Dear Parents, Caregivers and Whanau,

Welcome to Waipara School.

Starting school is an exciting time and an important step in your child's life. We look forward to working with you and your child to make the transition from early childhood to school a positive experience.

Our junior school teacher is Mrs. Jenni Adam, who is an experienced teacher with a passion for making learning fun and exciting. Her class is a colourful celebration of learning where students listen, look and find focus on 'being the best we can be'. We want our students to show respect, empathy by being proud of themselves and kind to each other and our environment.



School Visits

To assist your child to transition to school Mrs. Adam encourages at least 6 visits before they start. These are usually on a Tuesday and Thursday.

Visit 1 and 2 8:55 am to 11:00 am (includes morning tea)

Visit 3 and 4 8:55 am to 1:15 pm (includes morning tea and lunch)

She is happy to adjust days and times to suit, as we believe in the value of home/school partnership. Communication between home and school is an integral part of your child's learning. If you have any questions, concerns or celebrations, please share these with us.

We are looking forward to working with you and your child.

Yours sincerely,

Yvonne Blair (Principal) and Jenni Adam (Junior Teacher)

Top Tips for a Positive Start

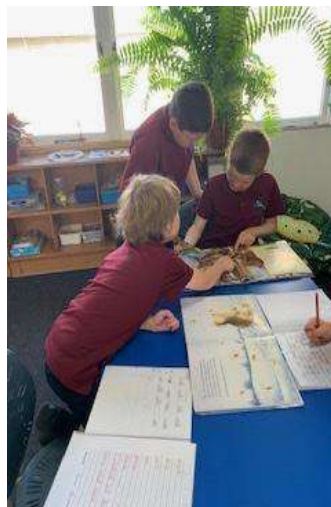
When your child starts school, it can be quite overwhelming for them and for you too. It is important you try to relax and enjoy this time with your child. If you feel calm and show you are comfortable about your child starting school, they will feel happier too. There are a number of things you can do to help your child prepare for school. Here are suggestions:

Help your child prepare for school by:

- Talking positively about going to school and making new friends;
- Talking about some of the experiences your child will have at school;
- Encouraging your child to talk about how they are feeling;
- Visiting Waipara School in the evenings and weekends so your child can play on the playgrounds and know where to go and what to expect.

It is helpful if your child can:

- Get enough sleep – approximately 10 hours each night
- Talk to others and talk about their feelings
- Ask questions and ask for things they need
- Manipulate crayons, pencils, pens and scissors
- Run, jump and swing
- Share and take turns
- Follow simple instructions
- Sit down for a short period of time and listen
- Independently eat, dress and toilet



Help yourself prepare for school by:

- Remembering you may feel unexpected emotions e.g. nervousness, excitement
- Make sure you have your own support in place to help you handle the event. It may help to organize to go to a friend's house for coffee rather than go home and worry all day. Your child will be safe and happy at school.

When you arrive at school:

- On arrival, you will need to sign a Transition to School Form at the office
- Encourage your child to put their bag and jacket on their hook
- Say hello to the teachers and children with your child
- Show and remind your child the places it is important for them to know about
- Spend a short amount of time with your child and, when it is time for you to leave, tell your child you are going and when you will be back. Always be there at the specified time
- Teachers have had a lot of practice helping children to settle and managing an upset child. If you appear upset this may upset your child
- If your child is upset when you leave, we still recommend that you go. In most cases children settle down after 2-3 minutes. If your child does not settle, we will contact you.



After school:

- Expect your child to be very tired for the first few weeks – they will probably be very hungry too
- Let your child adjust to being at home before asking too much about their day
- Have a special time each day to read together the book to your child has brought home



Structured Literacy

At Waipara School, the junior teacher incorporates teaching reading, writing, spelling and handwriting through an approach called Structured Literacy.

Students are being taught phonics skills in a sequential and systematic way so that they can learn the sounds (phonemes) and the letters that represent them (graphemes). During their structured literacy time they are also learning how to hold their pen and how to form their letters correctly.

Before your child will read decodable books, they need to be taught the graphemes and phonemes that they will see in that set of books. Once they know some of these sounds, they will be able to start learning to sound them out and blend them to read and write words.

Where your child starts reading decodable texts it is controlled by and limited to the sounds (phonemes) that they have been taught to that point. For example, the first sounds your child will learn are in Set 1. These are s a t p l n m d. Only words using these sounds are used in the text, with the exception of some sight words that may not be easily decodable at this point.



The Junior teachers at Waipara School will:

- Explicitly teach how words work in both reading and spelling
- Use specific decodable books that support the teaching focus
- Continue to use rich language and texts to develop vocabulary and understand how books work

Some key shared literacy activities that you can do with your child:

- Read picture books and non-fiction books based on your child's interests
- Have fun with the language, especially with rhyming books – e.g., Dr Seuss.
- To support fine motor skills, engage in drawing, baking, Lego and puzzles
- Play word games, such as I Spy with a beginning sound or a word that rhymes with another word.



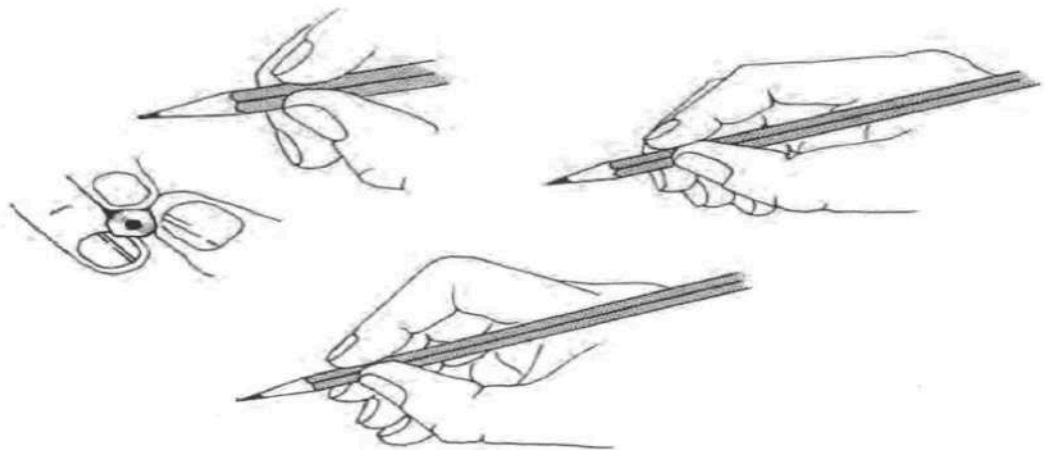
Holding a Pencil Correctly

Holding a Pencil

There are physical differences in children's hands and fingers which cause some variations in the way children hold a pencil. In general, however, they should hold the pencil between their thumb and forefinger with the middle finger supporting the pencil from below. This makes a 'three-point' grip.

The correct method of holding pen or pencil:

The angle of the pencil to the paper should be about forty-five degrees. A steeper angle usually indicates that the pencil is incorrectly held. Left-handed children may need special help to learn an appropriate grip.



Tips For Helping with Learning at Home

(Excerpts adapted from Feed and Mind brochures, Ministry of Education)

Oral Language

Oral language is the foundation of all literacy programmes. In order to learn to read and write, children need to be able to talk about their experiences, develop their vocabulary and learn to ask questions to further their understanding of the world around them. You can help by:

- Providing a wide range of oral language experiences
- Providing opportunities to talk about story books and the characters
- Encouraging your child to be curious about the world around them and to ask questions
- Listening and talking to your child

Reading

- Find a time to read together that is uninterrupted and in a quiet space
- Talk about the book together before reading, then listen to your child read and discuss the story after reading the book
- Help them to learn the 'reading list words' that appear in the story, (the most commonly used words). Your child's teacher will send home a list of words shortly after they start reading at school



Writing

- Help them to learn the letter names and the sounds. Focus on learning lower case letters first
- Help them to write their own name
- Talk about the stories they write at school and share ideas for writing such as a visit to the beach or zoom a birthday party etc.
- Talk about the messages in their writing. Praise their efforts to write
- Help them to learn to write their writing list words carefully and accurately

- Use family opportunities for ‘real writing’ such as writing birthday cards and thank you letters, shopping lists etc.
- Help them to hold the pencil with the correct grip. If you are uncertain what the correct grip is, ask your child’s teacher
- Make writing at home fun

Mathematics

- Use maths in everyday situations, such as shopping etc.
- Sing counting rhymes and counting songs
- Reading counting books together
- Discuss symbols and numerals in your environment
- Let the children help with sorting and categorising
- Talk about mathematics concepts such as big/small, fat/then etc.
- Use maths language such as bigger, smaller, next, after, before etc.
- Praise often and make the learning fun



When your child doesn’t know a word:

- Give them time to think and have a go
- Help them to be ‘right’ by looking at the beginning of the word, encouraging them to ‘get their mouth ready’ by saying the initial sound of the word and checking the picture for clues
- Talk about words that sound right and look right in particular context These are words that start with the right sound and make sense in the context of the story
- Ask them to re-read the sentence and try again. Praise often and make the reading experience fun

To help your child understand the story:

- Talk about any new vocabulary
- Discuss the illustrations in the story
- Ask questions about the story
- Help them to retell the story in the correct sequence
- Help them to connect the story to experience in their own life

With Thanks from Waipara School

If you would like to arrange a school visit contact:

Principal: Yvonne Blair- 0278488857

Junior Room Teacher - Tarata: Jenni Adam 033146814