



Close partnership between parents and preschool educators can help children develop the skills needed for a smooth P1 transition

MAKE THE GRADE

GETTING PRESCHOOLERS READY FOR PRIMARY 1.

The transition from preschool to Primary 1 is a big milestone for children. Some may find it difficult to adjust to a different environment, new faces or new routines.

"Change can be stressful and uncomfortable," notes Ms Wong Wei Sum, Principal of Little Seeds Preschool (Church of the Ascension). "However, we can reduce stress by better preparing children and their parents."

LEVEL UP

Focusing on children's holistic development, rather than prioritising academic skills, is the linchpin to a successful transition to primary school. To that end, Little Seeds emphasises fostering children's love for reading, instilling values, as well as developing social-emotional skills and learning dispositions, among other aspects outlined in the Nurturing Early Learners (NEL) Framework.

These skills are cultivated through the preschool's 'Values Matter!' core programme. Teachers use songs, stories and activities to instil and reinforce values such as respect and perseverance. For example, children are taught to deal with challenging situations by using positive self-talk statements like "It's okay to make mistakes" or "I can do things that are hard".



Little Seeds children visiting SAJS's Eco Garden during their induction tour

Twice-yearly parent-teacher conferences allow both parties to collaboratively set goals for the children. Ms Wong gives a case study of a child who had trouble making friends. At their meeting, the teacher and parents mutually set goals to improve the child's social skills. They worked together over time to guide her to see things from another's perspective, develop self-awareness, and be more confident in approaching others. By the end of the school year, she had learned to make some good friends.

PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT

As Little Seeds is located in Saint Andrew's Village, the same premises as St Andrew's Junior School (SAJS), the K2-to-P1 move may be less challenging. The preschool partners SAJS to hold induction tours for K2 children and parent orientation sessions. Little Seeds alumni — who went through the transition themselves — usually participate in these events.

TIPS FROM A PRINCIPAL

Mrs Elsie Poey, Principal of SAJS, shares ways to prepare preschoolers for primary school.



- **Teach social skills explicitly.** Remind them to say "please", "hello" and "thank you" with a smile, ask for permission, and take turns. Reiterate the importance of controlling their emotions and not throwing a tantrum when they do not get their way.
- **Teach simple coping phrases** when faced with an issue, such as "Teacher, I need help" or "Sam, can you help me, please?".
- **Let them know what to expect** such as a bigger class size, longer hours, and new routines and people.
- **Impart life skills.** Examples include how to use the toilet properly and buy food in the canteen.

Milan Tiwari, now in Primary 3 at SAJS, is one of them. He recalls how his preschool teachers prepared him for primary school. "We played pretend games. My teacher set up food stalls in the classroom and I used my pocket money to buy chicken rice. She showed us how to make friends and respect classmates. She also taught us about bullying and dealing with it by walking away and informing a teacher," he says. SAJS's buddy programme, which paired Milan with an upper primary student, also helped him settle in quickly.

The eight-year-old has this advice for his juniors: "Make friends, ask questions if you are unsure, and be kind. Primary school is about trying awesome and fun things!" ●



Practising buying food at the SAJS canteen