



## Expectations of responsibility

*Accumulated wisdom from parents of young children in the Parents for Education Schools*

### Foundation

#### **Care of own belongings**

Children should know what possessions they have, where in a general sense those things are and be responsible for them.

##### *Clothing*

- A good rule to help children avoid habits of leaving clothes around is 'always do something with it when it is taken off' ... putting it into the drawer, into the washing basket, etc. Children should know to fold their clothes. Own laundry control is reasonable.

##### *Room*

- Fold PJs and shuffle bed in the morning. Put toys away.

##### *School belongings*

- Children should be responsible for their important things such as school bag, shoes, uniform, and lunchbox. Unpack bag on arriving home, hand over any notes.

#### **Jobs**

Continue to praise what you want to see. Children do not want to be difficult. Be very clear about what you want and reinforce it at every opportunity. Give jobs they find appealing - do not push difficult jobs at this age. Find jobs which can be presented in a playful way.

##### *Inside*

- Help Mum. Help Dad 'at work'.
- One or two simple clearly identified tasks to be done regularly: 'shake and make' the bed (a fitted sheet and doona works best), sorting the washing, clearing plates, keeping toys tidy.
- Some five year olds are well capable of doing the bathroom, washing up, and collecting the household wastepaper baskets.
- Have house rules: Clear up one set of toys before playing with others. Switching off lights.
- First child looks after third, second looks after fourth, etc.

##### *Outside*

- Specific outside jobs such as taking the garbage out, pulling out weeds, cleaning windows with a squeegee, raking leaves, watering garden.

#### **Timetable and homework**

Educate children to get used to routine and not to waste time. Use routines as much as possible in order to build up good habits. Children of this age are just beginning to learn routine. Timetable need not be totally rigid. Teach child to make decisions varying routine for a good reason. Allow some free rein. Teach a concept of time. Toddlers can learn time by the length of a TV show (but remember less TV rather than more).

- Hang other activities off meal times. Have two or three times that establish the routine each evening: meal time, going to bed time, homework time. Don't vary these times too readily.
- Put a child's timetable in big letters at the end of his or her bed.

- Learn to do things 'WBA' (without being asked).

### **Honesty and Openness**

There is a general view that children of kindergarten age have a natural honesty, but that they can regress with time i.e. acquire some bad habits! Do not confront child with choice of telling you a lie or not. Try not to back them into a corner. Rather let the child know you know they performed a misdemeanour and you will not allow that misbehaviour.

### **Participation when guests are visiting**

- Children should be encouraged to introduce themselves and say goodbye when they leave.
- Teach to stop and look at guests when they are talking.
- Find small ways for them to serve guests.
- Children should look after their own guests, other visiting children.

## Year 2

### **Care of own belongings**

#### *Clothing*

- Things should not be allowed to get lost.
- Hanging up one's coat.
- Polish own shoes.
- Placing dirty clothes into the washing basket.

#### *Room*

- Bed to be made before school.
- Tidy room - no mother should have to tidy a room - perhaps an older child can sponsor a younger child and the two children can keep two rooms tidy.
- Toys put away. Care of one's own belongings. Try using 'organiser' boxes.

#### *School belongings*

- Pack own bag and remember which day it is, i.e. sport/library/music. Make a list for each day of the week.
- Make own lunch. Put lunch in their bag themselves. Unpack lunch box when they come home.
- Hand over any notes from school on arrival home.

### **Jobs**

Raise the expectation that jobs will be done: insist on the more routine jobs. Regular jobs should be done without being asked. Raise the expectations that jobs will be done for others. Expect a consciousness of time. Insist even on some jobs the child may not like. Teach and encourage jobs but be prepared to put up with mistakes and/or messes while the child learns. Take the time to show them how to do jobs and make allowances for the fact that it may take time for them to learn.

#### *Inside*

- Get up when first called. Answer telephone courteously.
- Encourage the taking of responsibility for younger brothers and sisters. For example, changing the baby's nappy. Bath a younger child. One parent has his Year 2 child teaching the preschooler the alphabet. The Year 2 is earning a reward - membership of the school computer club.
- Dining room: setting table, cleaning away. Kitchen/table setting. Some Year 2 children "cook" one night per week. Find recipes that Year 2's can cook: eg simple breakfast. Sweep the kitchen floor.
- Vacuuming the bedrooms. One family uses a "garbage bag" approach... if the room is not cleaned up, out comes the garbage bag and toys go in the ceiling indefinitely.
- Generally, teach consideration of hygiene and for others.
- Clean skirting boards. Give a spray bottle and have clean windows. Put washing/ironing away.
- Unpack part of the dishwasher. Clean wash basin. Take out garbage at the end of the day.
- Lucky dip Job Jar. Help when anyone needs a hand. Feed animals clean the bowls.
- Write own party invitations.

## *Outside*

- Gardening - specific task before play, clean lawn before mowing.
- Pick up sticks, help with weeding.
- Wash car. Clean the car. Vacuum the car.
- Simple shopping. Check the change.
- Empty bins. Bring in the bins.
- Take leaves out of the pool.

## **Timetable and homework**

Try to establish a standard routine. Vary it rarely. Beware of 'The Return of the Feral Child' in holidays. Find the appropriate level of supervision for the child and consistently keep to it. Younger ones will follow older ones.

- Keep to schedule on a whiteboard. There needs to be a personal timetable for the child as well as a parent's timetable.
- Require simple and reasonable goals on holidays/weekends.
- Homework needs to be tidy and 'up to scratch'. Get it done and then reading time is on.
- Have a nightly routine of learning spelling, reading, and learning tables for a few minutes, several nights each week. This is a foundation for good study habits in later years.
- If an instrument is being learned, a routine of nightly music practice develops responsibility to make good use of the expense and opportunity.
- Try homework 'contract' in return for extra sport involvement.

## **Honesty and Openness**

Don't let habits of not telling the truth develop. Some mothers notice that many children seem to go through a stage where they lie. We should understand this but insist on telling the truth. Remind your child that you were 7 once... you know a story when you hear one. Make eye contact - it makes it more difficult for a child to lie. Be sensitive to the *possibility* that your child's suspected lying is really a product of forgetfulness or dreaming.

- Ensure there is reward as well as punishment. Show that honesty will be treated with love and respect.
- To help children never be afraid of telling the truth because of the punishment, ask 'What do you think is a fair punishment?'
- Explain the consequences of telling lies
- Forgiveness – don't punish for telling the truth about a wrongdoing and give praise for courage of telling the truth/give child a way out.
- Teach the importance of saying sorry to God through prayer.

## **Participation when guests are visiting**

- Have children all come to greet guests when they arrive, even adult guests; and also farewell them. If child has some habit of monopolising the attention of guests think about some rules: maximum of four questions per guest, stay with guests for the first five minutes only.
- Learn to speak to visitors confidently and welcomingly. Say 'hello' nicely.
- Learn not to interrupt.
- Look after other kids and stay away from the adults.
- Expect good table manners when adults and children eat together at same table.
- Children should be aware of eating at correct times and the right amount. Encourage the children to have three meals a day plus afternoon tea to try everything on the plate and to eat the right proportions.
- Bringing money to school is not necessary – do not encourage them to have money with them.