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Is your child ready for Gr. 1?

According to the Department of Education your child may go to Gr. 1 in the year that he turns 6 (before 30 June).

This is not a good idea according to many therapists as children are not school-ready by this young age. By law a child should start school the year they turn 7.

When deciding to send your child to school it is important to look at the following factors:

- Emotional readiness
- Social readiness
- Academic readiness
- Physical readiness/gross-motor development
- Fine-motor readiness



Emotional readiness

- Is your child able to regulate his emotions? (Know how he is feeling and why he is feeling a certain way)
- Is your child able to respond appropriately to situations that anger/frustrate/irritate him?
- Does your child still have tantrums?
- Does your child find it difficult to separate from mom/dad?
- Is your child able to confidently deal with different situations?
- Can your child ask for help?
- Is your child able to work independently?
- Can your child handle postponing gratification?
- Can your child make choices and know the consequence of his choices?

Sending a child who is too young to Grade 1 may cause emotional damage as the child will not be able to cope with the demands set in the class situation/on the playground. The child will now start to experience failure and will not be emotionally mature to cope with this. A poor self-esteem may be the result.

Social readiness

- Can your child play easily with others?
- Can your child play independently?
- Is your child able to make friends?
- Can your child work in a group?
- Can your child share?
- Can your child relate with adults and peers?



Academic/intellectual readiness

- Can your child carry out tasks when directed?
- Is your child able to count to 20?
- Is your child able to recognize and write numbers 1 – 10?
- Does your child know the basic shapes?
- Does your child know the basic colours?

- Is your child able to build a 50 piece puzzle?
- Is your child able to concentrate for 15 minutes?
- Is your child able to distinguish between letters and numbers?
- Is your child visual perceptual skills intact? (these are the building blocks for numeracy and literacy)
 - Discrimination
 - Memory
 - Spatial orientation
 - Sequential memory
 - Foreground-background
 - Form constancy
 - Closure
- Does your child know all the body parts and their functions?
- Can your child recall 5 numbers in a specific sequence?
- Language development:
 - Is your child's expressive (talking) and receptive (understanding) communication intact?
 - Can your child follow instructions?
 - Can your child speak sentences and make himself understood?
 - Does he part-take in conversations?



Fine-motor development

- Does your child have a dynamic tripod grasp?
- Can your child cut a 9cm square accurately on the line?
- Can your child draw a circle, square, triangle, rectangle, oval, cross and diamond
- Can your child write his name?
- Can your child draw a detailed picture of a man?



Physical readiness / Motor development

These skills are important as a child should be able to remain seated for 15 minutes at a time. A child should have sufficient postural control to be able to do this. The proprioceptive and vestibular systems underwrite postural control. Children whose postural control isn't intact appear restless and fidgety and cannot concentrate on the current task. They tend to change their position frequently, get up to walk around, talk with friends and get tired more easily than the other children.

The following motor tasks can help to identify kids who struggle with postural control:

- Is your child sit still for 15 minutes at a time?
- Can your child skip?
- Can your child catch a 20cm ball with his hands in front of his body?
- Can your child catch a 20cm ball when it was bounced towards him in front of his body?
- Is your child able to stand on one leg for more than 10 seconds?
- Is your child able to jump on one leg for 5 meters?
- Can your child hold the flexion posture for 20 seconds?
- Can your child hold the extension posture for 20 seconds?
- Does your child play confidently on different jungle gyms?
- Can your child jump on a trampoline with confidence?
- Can your child walk on a balance beam?
- Can your child walk heel-toe for 5 meters?



Flexion posture



Extension posture

If you are concerned about any of the above mentioned areas please don't hesitate to contact me or any occupational therapist or a full assessment to determine school readiness.