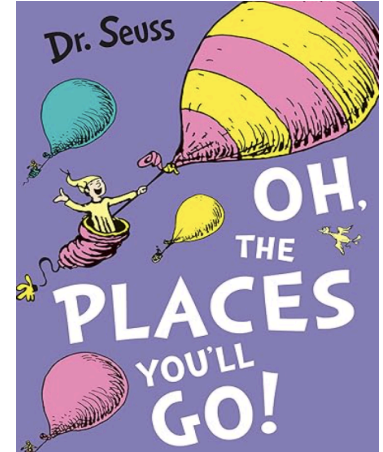


“You’re Off to Great Places!”

Supporting the Journey Ahead

At Goosehill Private Nursery, we see the move from nursery to reception as an exciting journey. *Oh, the Places You'll Go!* by Dr. Seuss can act as a metaphor for our children's transitions from nursery into their reception class in school. The story emphasises that every child is on their own unique path, and with encouragement and support from key adults in their lives, they can successfully navigate changes and confidently move forward to the next stage of their learning journey (DfE, 2021; Birth to 5 Matters, 2021).



Our town-centre nursery in Northumberland caters to 60 children from birth to five, with around 25 moving into reception each year in a variety of schools. Over the years, we have reflected on how best to support this milestone. We see transition as a process, not a one-off event.

Moving from a familiar place to a new environment can feel daunting, so children benefit from a gradual approach that nurtures social, emotional, and practical skills. Each year, we refine our practice to ensure every child's transition meets their individual needs. This journey begins well before their final weeks at nursery, giving them time to explore, ask questions, and grow confident for the next stage ahead (Melhuish et al., 2015; Birth to 5 Matters, 2021).

“You Have Brains in Your Head. You Have Feet in Your Shoes.”

Building Independence and Familiarity

To develop confidence and practical skills, we gradually introduce school routines and resources into the nursery environment.

School uniforms are added to the role-play area, allowing children to practise putting them on and taking them off, developing independence with buttons and fastenings. Pencil cases, registers, gym bags, plimsolls, and other school equipment are also included, helping children become familiar with the everyday items they will encounter in reception.

A large “schoolgirl” puppet named Georgia joins our preschool group. Children can ask her questions and explore their curiosities in a playful, safe way. For example, one boy asked, “What does PE mean?” Georgia explained it is a lesson where children change into shorts and a T-shirt to exercise, dance, or do gymnastics—important for staying healthy.

Another child, who divides her week into “mummy days” and “nursery days,” asked why school is every day. Georgia explained that teachers plan so many exciting activities that children need time to enjoy them all.

These experiences help children develop independence and familiarity, easing anxiety about the unknown (Siraj-Blatchford et al., 2011).

“You Can Steer Yourself Any Direction You Choose.”

Listening to Children’s Voices

Central to our approach is ensuring that children’s voices are heard throughout the transition process.

We gather children’s questions and thoughts during group discussions, often following visits to school. When children return, they reflect on their experiences—what they saw, did, and learned. This helps school leavers process their visit while giving younger children the chance to see friends returning excited and full of stories, gently building their own awareness and understanding of the transition.

Families are closely involved as well. Parents can express concerns and are encouraged to note any questions their children ask at home, helping staff understand children’s thoughts and feelings beyond the nursery environment.

We also consider children who have English as an additional language or who rely on signs to communicate. To support them, we create a book of photographs for easy access to information and use videos of the new environment to familiarise children and families with changes. Photographs of key staff, areas, and favourite activities can ease anxiety and stimulate discussion back at nursery or at home. Parents are encouraged to take these photographs home to continue conversations with their child. Social stories are used to explore change and new beginnings, incorporating home language and role play. For children who use Makaton, we ensure the new school uses the same core signs for daily routines such as toileting, snack time, and arrival/departure, helping maintain continuity and confidence (Birth to 5 Matters, 2021).

“You’ll Be on Your Way Up!”

Building Relationships with Schools

Reception teachers are invited to meet children in their familiar nursery environment. There are no expectations for the children; teachers observe, interact, and join in their play.

As a Nature Kindergarten, we also encourage teachers to see children in different settings—indoors, and either at the beach, allotment or in the forest. Some children feel more confident in certain environments, so observing them across contexts gives teachers a more holistic understanding of each child.

After these initial visits, we ask schools to facilitate additional short visits, with nursery educators accompanying small groups to provide familiar support. These repeated experiences help children begin to feel known and comfortable in their new environment, reducing anxiety and building confidence.

During some visits, children take disposable cameras into school. The photographs are developed and displayed at child height back at nursery, becoming part of ongoing documentation of the transition process. Children proudly reflect on their experiences and share them with friends: “That’s my new teacher!”

“Step with Care and Great Tact, and Remember That Life’s a Great Balancing Act”

Sharing Developmental Milestones and Transition Documents

We share a child’s developmental milestones with schools through the online digital passport, a system devised by Northumberland County Council to support each child’s school readiness journey (Northumberland County Council, 2022).

In addition, our teachers prepare a detailed transition document for every child. This document captures the child as an individual and provides a richer picture of who they are as a learner. It includes their current interests, favourite activities at nursery, and what they are most looking forward to in their new class. The document also summarises any worries or uncertainties the child may have expressed about moving on.

By sharing these insights, reception teachers gain a deeper understanding of each child before they arrive. This enables them to plan a more responsive and supportive start to school, ensuring that children feel recognised, valued, and understood as they begin the next stage of their learning journey (DfE, 2021; Northumberland County Council, 2022).

“Sometimes You’ll Be in a Slump.”

Acknowledging Worries and Uncertainties

Starting school is exciting, but it can also bring moments of uncertainty. As Dr. Seuss reminds us, “sometimes you’ll be in a slump,” and we recognise that transitions can bring mixed emotions for children. While many approach the move to school with

excitement, others may feel unsure about leaving a familiar environment where they feel known and secure.

To support children in expressing their questions and worries, we introduced a “school bear” who accompanies children on their visits to reception classes. The bear carries a small satchel into which children place letters (scribed by their educators) containing questions for their new teacher.

These questions often reflect practical and emotional concerns, such as:

- “Where are the toilets?”
- “Will Mummy come to collect me?”
- “Where will I sit?”

Teachers respond to these questions and often pop a reply into the bag to send back to nursery. Discussing responses together reassures children that their questions and feelings are understood, while also helping them build confidence about the new experiences ahead (Melhuish et al., 2015).

“Oh, the Places You’ll Go!”

A Journey That Continues to Evolve

Our approach to transition continues to evolve as we reflect on our practice and respond to the needs of each new group of children.

For example, we now offer an online library of resources for families, including suggested books to read together and links to helpful articles, such as guidance around school readiness. We also organise joint forest and beach days with our sister nursery, giving children who will be attending the same school opportunities to spend time together and begin forming friendships before they start reception.

We create opportunities for children to practise managing a packed lunch, particularly for those who may choose this option at school and may not yet be

confident opening containers, organising their food, or managing lunchtime routines independently.

“And Will You Succeed? Yes! You Will Indeed!”

Feedback from one of the local primary schools

The care, thought and professionalism that went into supporting the children’s move to First School made such a difference and helped ensure every child had the best possible start to Reception. The sessions where our Reception teacher was able to visit and play with the children in their nursery setting were so valuable. These visits really helped to build early relationships and gave the children confidence before starting school. We were particularly impressed by how carefully each visit was planned to suit individual children – for example, arranging to meet a quieter child

during a forest school session, where they felt most comfortable and could really shine.

We were able to welcome the children already knowing them well, and continue supporting them seamlessly from day one. The whole process reflected an outstanding level of teamwork and a genuine commitment to putting the needs of each child at the centre.

Tritlington Church of England First School November 2025

Parent Comment:

“Honestly, it was so great for Tabitha—the familiarity that stemmed from getting to know staff across both nursery and school environments, as well as the shorter, frequent visits to the classroom, really set her up to start the school year feeling confident. She felt 'at home' on the first day of term—a real accomplishment!”

“Your mountain is waiting. So ... get on your way”

Closing reflection

In the spirit of Dr. Seuss, our goal is that children leave nursery believing that exciting new experiences lie ahead. By fostering independence, listening to children’s voices, and building strong relationships with schools and families, we help each child feel confident and prepared for all the places they will go. At Goosehill, we are proud that our approach ensures every child begins the next stage of their learning journey secure, happy, and ready to thrive.

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