_____ Starts School

For the grown-up — the page from the back of the book

How to use this book

Read it before the day, not just on it. Two or three times in the week before works better than once on the morning — though the morning read is worth doing as well.

Read it the same way each time. Same voice, same pace, same words. The point of this book is that it does not change.

Let them stop you. Questions are the book working, not an interruption. You do not have to read it all; if one page is the page that matters, read that page.

The raised hand. Somewhere in this book your child is shown that putting a hand up means “stop for a moment” or “I do not understand”. It means the same thing in every StoriesAhead book. It only works if the adults honour it, which is what the card on the next page is for.

If it does not land. Some children want the book every night for a fortnight. Some look at it once and never again. Some push it away. None of those is a failure, and a book that is refused is telling you something as well. Put it away and try again in a week.

Where you keep it. Keep it where your child can reach it without asking. A book on a high shelf is a book you control, not one they do. The same goes for anything the story mentions: if the book says they can put ear defenders on, the ear defenders need to be within reach rather than in a cupboard.

Where you are. These notes describe how things work in the United Kingdom. The principles hold anywhere, but services, what they are called and who provides them differ from country to country — so where we suggest asking for something, ask locally.

What this book is not. It is not therapy, and it is not a promise that the day will go well. It describes what usually happens, including the parts that are not pleasant — because a book that only describes the good parts stops being believed the first time it is wrong.

Before the first day

— Walk to the gate at least once beforehand, at the same time of day it will really happen.

— Find out which peg is theirs and practise looking for the name.

— Agree the goodbye, and keep it identical every single day — same words, same place, same length. A goodbye that varies is harder than a long one.

— Tell them in the morning if a different grown-up is collecting. The book says somebody they know will come; it is you who makes that true.

— Ask what happens at lunch, and whether they can see the hall before the first day.

— Ask who your child should go to if they need help, and tell them that person’s name.

— Please do not tear the card out. This page is printed on the back of it, and you will want it again next time. There is a free copy of the card to print at storiesaheadbooks.com/printables.