**Project Information**

**Will your child be starting school soon?**

The University of Reading’s ‘Watch them Grow’ project will track the journey of local children through their primary school years focusing at first on children’s anxiety and worries as they begin school.  We are looking for 180 families who have a child starting reception year in September 2017 or 2018 to join this exciting project.    
  
The first stage of the project looks at children’s anxiety before they start school. It will involve a half-day visit to the University during your child’s preschool year (when they are 3 or 4 years old), to be arranged at a time that works for you. During this visit you and your child will meet the project team and play a range of different games, tasks and quizzes, which are all designed for preschool-aged children. You will also complete some simple questionnaires.   
  
At the second stage we will contact you to find out how your child is feeling as they start their first school term.  
  
At the third stage, we will be in contact again to see how your child is feeling at the end of their first term.  
  
As a thank you for their time and support families will be paid £75 in total for taking part in all three of these stages of the project.  
  
At the moment, we are focusing on the starting school period but we are looking for families who would like to continue to be involved in the project as their children make their way through primary school.  
  
We would particularly like to hear from families whose children have a few worries and fears or who are a bit nervous about their child starting school. The project is open to everyone though so please register your interest either way.    
  
This is a unique opportunity to help increase understanding of children’s emotions at this vital stage in their development.   
  
On the next few pages we answer frequently asked questions about the project. Please get in touch if you have any other questions or would like to discuss any aspect of the project, we’d love to hear from you.  
  
If you are happy to take part in the research you can register your interest by completing the contact form at the end of the FAQs.

Thank you for your time and interest in our project - we hope to see you soon!

Helen Dodd

**Contact info:**  
h.f.dodd@reading.ac.uk  
phone: 0118378 5285

**What’s the point of the project?**

On average one child in every UK classroom experiences anxiety that significantly affects their daily life. Our research focuses on working out why some children develop these difficulties with anxiety so that we can develop ways to prevent and treat anxiety in young children. This project focuses on anxiety over the transition to school and things that might predict which children find the transition most difficult. The aim is that then we can use the information from the ‘Watch them Grow’ project to work out which children are most likely to have difficulties when they start school and to help them with the transition.  
  
We are interested in how the whole group of 200 children cope with the transition to school and will only be looking at overall patterns for the group, not individuals in detail.

**Does my child need to anxious/not anxious to take part?**

We are interested in how children in cope with starting school so would like to hear from families who have confident, relaxed children as well as those whose children have more worries and fears. However, we would particularly like to hear from families whose children are a little shy/worriers/don't like new situations.  
  
**What exactly will happen during our visit to the University?**  
  
At a time during your child’s preschool year that is convenient for you we will invite you to come to the university and spend half a day with us. We have a range of activities for you and your child to complete and have decided to spread them out over a half day so that there is plenty of time for breaks and play in between tasks.  If you’d prefer to do 2 shorter sessions that should be possible.  
  
Your child will complete:  
  
- some computer and ipad games, which measure their attention, and language skills  
  
- an observed play session where they are exposed to some new situations such as a play room with unfamiliar toys and equipment  
  
- two games with cartoon animals and faces showing emotions such as happy and angry. One of these tasks will use a computer that is able to record what they look at. During the other task, we will ask your child to wear a special cap that allows us to record what their brain is doing when they see the faces.  
  
- a task together with you which involves looking at and discussing ‘where’s wally’ type scenes.  
  
You will complete a series of questionnaires which measure your child’s emotions and behaviour, their attention, their beliefs and worries and your own anxiety.  
  
You will be given £35 at the end of this session in recognition of your time and the contribution you have made.  
  
**What exactly will happen when we’re contacted as they start school?**  
  
We will ask you to provide the date that your child will start school and will then send you a text message at the end of each day for the week before and after they start – so 14 days in total. The message will ask you to reply (for free) with a number to rate how anxious you and your child felt that day overall.  
  
We will also ask you to complete some questionnaires online at the end of their second week of school and to provide details of your child’s teacher. These questionnaires should take around 30 minutes to complete.  
  
You will be given a £20 voucher once these measures are completed in recognition of your time and the contribution you have made.  
  
**What exactly will happen at the end of their first school term?**  
  
Toward the end of your child’s first term at school we will ask you to complete some online questionnaires again. These questionnaires should take around 30 minutes to complete.

You will be given a £20 voucher once these measures are completed in recognition of the time and contribution you have made.

**What will happen to the information about me and my child?**  
  
We appreciate the importance of keeping your information safe. All the information we collect and that you share with us will be kept confidential. We will use a unique code known only to the project team to identify any information relating to you and your child. That way, all of the information is anonymous. We have to keep the form you sign to say that you are happy to take part and this will be stored in a locked filing cabinet in the University for at least 5 years. Electronic data including any videos will be stored on secure servers and password protected. Only the researchers working on this project will have access to this data. De-identified electronic data for the whole group will be deposited to the UK Data Service; no personal or identifiable information will be included.

**Will you want to see my child again when they are older?**  
  
This stage of the research will run until the end of 2018. We will contact you then to let you know that this stage is complete and to explain what we found. We hope to be able to invite you to help us again in the future so that we can continue to see how children’s emotions are developing. You will not be obliged to take part in any further research.

**What if my child gets upset or doesn’t want to do some of the tasks at the University?**  
  
We of course hope that the tasks are not upsetting and that your child enjoys visiting us. We have designed the tasks so that they are all suitable for young children and we have done lots of work with young children in the past, including those with anxiety. However, if your child does show any signs of getting upset, says that they don’t want to take part, or if you don’t feel comfortable at any stage, we will stop the task or game that they are completing. Taking part is voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the research at any point. Withdrawing won’t affect the compensation given for your time.  
  
**I’m worried about anxiety – where can I go for more information?**  
  
Our questionnaires ask about worries and fears you and your child might have.  
  
If these raise any concerns you can contact any member of the research team or see https://helendodd.wordpress.com/where-to-find-help/   
  
**Who is doing the research?**

The project is managed by Dr Helen Dodd from the University of Reading and is funded by the Economic and Social Research Council. All researchers working on the project have enhanced DBS checks. Helen’s contact details are: h.f.dodd@reading.ac.uk; phone: 0118378 5285.



**Consent form: Watch Them Grow Project**

I, ……………………………………….…………….agree to myself and my child ……………………………………………… participating in the study, Watch Them Grow Project, being conducted by Dr Helen Dodd and Zoe Ryan at The University of Reading. I have seen and read a copy of the Parent Information Sheet and have been given the opportunity to ask questions about the study and these have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand that all personal information will remain confidential to the project team and arrangements for the storage of any identifiable material have been made clear to me. I understand that participation in this study is voluntary and that I can withdraw at any time without having to give an explanation.

*This application has been reviewed by the University Research Ethics Committee and has been given a favourable ethical opinion for conduct*

I am happy to proceed with my participation.

Signature

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Name (in capitals)

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Date

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