



Welcome

Welcome to your **Smallest Things Prem Aware school guidance pack**.

Evidence tells us that children born preterm are at higher risk of Special Educational Needs (SEN) than children born at term. As 2 or 3 children in every average size primary school class may have been born preterm, being Prem Aware is important for all teachers.

This pack will help you to understand the importance of being Prem Aware, family's experiences of SEN support and the ways in which you can support pupils and their families on their education journey.

We hope you will be inspired to sign up to become a **Prem Aware School**, supporting the needs and long-term outcomes of pupils born preterm.



Your Smallest Things Prem Aware school pack includes:

- The Smallest Things - premature baby charity
- What families tell us about children born preterm and their education
- How to become a Prem Aware School
- Why you should become a Prem Aware School
- Supporting The Smallest Things

The Smallest Things

Registered charity 1171631

[@_smallestthings](#) | premaware@thesmallestthings.org | www.thesmallestthings.org

The Smallest Things

Premature baby charity

The Smallest Things is a registered charity supporting the needs of premature babies and their families following neonatal intensive care.

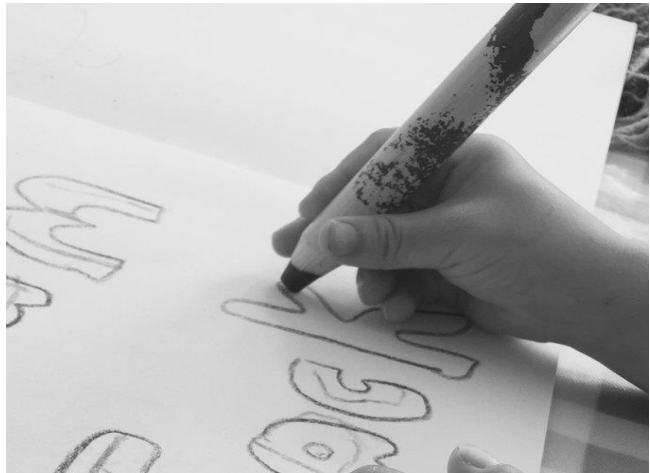
The charity, run entirely by volunteers who have had premature babies themselves, is dedicated to making the world a better place for premature babies and their families.

The World Health Organisation categorises pre-term birth as;

- Extremely preterm (less than 28 weeks' gestation)
- Very preterm (28 to 32 weeks' gestation)
- Moderate to late preterm (32 to 36 weeks' gestation)
- As might be expected those born the more preterm require the greatest level of support, have a greater risk of co-morbidities and spend longer periods of time in hospital before coming home.

Every year **60,000** babies in the UK are born premature (prior to 37 weeks' gestation) and make up 46 per cent of babies requiring admission to specialist Neonatal Intensive Care Units¹. This is around **7% of births**².

The charity introduced the **Prem Aware School** award in 2020 believing all children born premature must have the opportunity to achieve their best possible long-term outcomes and that the needs of premature children must be met when they start their school journey.



"As a teacher, I had no awareness that difficulties could arise for premies until I had three."

Teacher and parent to children born premature responding to our SEN survey

¹ IDAU. (2016) Neonatal Data Analysis Unit 2015 Report

² Office for National Statistics. (2013) Pregnancy and ethnic factors influencing births and infant mortality.

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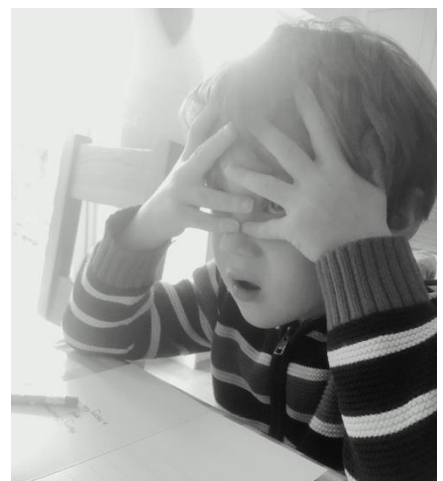
What families tell us

We know that the journey is different for every child and every family and while a child born preterm has an increased risk of displaying Special Educational Needs (SEN), not all children born preterm will have Special Educational Needs.

In early 2020 we asked 426 families about their experiences of SEN support for their children born preterm.

- **More than 90%** of parents told us they think there should be more awareness and understanding of the educational needs of children born preterm.
- **Less than half** of parents (43%) felt that school staff understood their child's learning needs, with 29% of parents unsure. 28% of parents said that school staff did not understand their child's learning needs.
- **Just over a third** of parents felt their child's educational needs were being met in school.

"We feel this has never been taken into account. Although our son had a developmental check in hospital which was correct alongside his actual due date, no further assessments have taken place. Training is needed for school staff so they are fully knowledgeable and have an understanding of the impact that being born prematurely can have. This knowledge will ensure that children have the necessary support and interventions needed to bridge gaps in learning and development."



Parent responding to our SEN support survey

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How to become a Prem Aware School



To apply for the award, your school are asked to complete three simple steps:

1. Training:

- **Senior members of your staff team to complete the free training** [“Preterm Birth Information for Educational Professionals”](#) prepared by the PRISM study team and funded by the charity Action Medical Research.
- Training will then be cascaded to all school teaching staff.



PRISM
*Premature Infants' Skills
in Mathematics*

2. Awareness:

- Parents will be encouraged to share details of their child's birth history, including specific questions relating to neonatal stays and preterm birth, through your school's admission procedure for new pupils.
- Where information is made available from families and carers, teachers are to be aware of which children in their class were born preterm.
- [PRISM poster](#) will be displayed in the school.

3. Feedback:

- **Your school will seek the views of parents and carers** to review and inform the Special Educational Needs support provided.

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Signing up to be a Prem Aware School is as easy as 1, 2, 3....

- 1.** Discuss and agree with your headteacher and/or governors that you will **make the three changes** (previous page) needed to become a Prem Aware School.
- 2.** Once the changes have been made, email **premaware@thesmallestthings.org** with your school information, completed PDF of strategies reviewed as part of the PRISM training and updated pupil registration forms.
- 3.** We will send you **The Smallest Things Prem Aware School logo**, which we hope you will proudly display on your website and other communication channels.



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Why should we become a Prem Aware School?

- To improve awareness and understanding of the lasting effects preterm birth can have on education and learning.
- To reassure parents that schools are aware of and compassionate to the potential needs of children born preterm.
- To enable teachers to have the skills and knowledge to best support children in their class who were born preterm.
- To support early identification and timely support, improving the long-term outcomes for children born preterm.



"As a mother of a 23-week preterm child, I feel a huge sense of relief that there is finally a resource that will help educators understand the social, emotional and academic needs of my school-age child. This resource is long overdue and rightly focuses on the lifelong needs of those who experience daily the challenges that preterm birth may bring."

Gill, a parent and teacher

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Supporting The Smallest Things

The Smallest Things is a tiny charity making a big impact.

Run entirely by volunteers we rely on the support and generosity of others. To find out more about our work and plans for the future, please read our [Strategy 2020-2023](#).

There is no fee attached to becoming a Prem Aware School. However, we would love you to consider us for any fundraising events you might have planned. You can [donate proceeds via our website](#). Alternatively you might like to join in with our annual [Smallest Things Picnic](#) event in June. See our website for full details.

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