

Guide to Navigating KHDA School Assessments

For Dubai Families (FS1 / KG1 Admissions)

By Small Steps Learning Difficulties Center

What This Guide Helps You Do

- ✓ Understand what schools typically assess
- ✓ Prepare your child in a low-pressure way
- ✓ Avoid common challenges during assessments
- ✓ Approach the process with clarity and confidence

1. What School Assessments Typically Measure

School assessments at this stage focus on overall development rather than academic performance. Areas commonly observed include:

- Communication (verbal and non-verbal)
- Social interaction (e.g., eye contact, engagement)
- Ability to follow simple instructions
- Attention and participation
- Play skills (functional and early imaginative play)
- Emotional regulation

💡 These observations relate to school readiness, not intelligence or long-term ability.

2. Before the Assessment: Parent Preparation

✓ Understand Your Child

- What skills does your child use independently?
- What situations may cause frustration or overwhelm?
- How does your child communicate needs and preferences?

✓ Prepare Relevant Information

- Nursery or preschool feedback (if available)
- Developmental or therapy reports (if applicable)
- Medical information relevant to learning or development

✓ Communicate with the School

- Share relevant developmental information where appropriate
 - Ask about available support (e.g., inclusion team, learning support)
- 👉 Open communication supports appropriate planning and provision.

3. What May Happen During the Assessment

Your child may be invited to:

- Follow simple instructions (e.g., “come here”, “give me the ball”)
- Identify familiar objects or pictures
- Engage in play-based activities
- Interact with the assessor
- Participate in a short-structured task

💡 Some schools may observe informally rather than conduct direct tasks.

4. Common Reasons Children May Find Assessments Challenging

- Unfamiliar environment or separation from caregivers
- Difficulty with transitions or changes in routine
- Limited exposure to structured or group settings
- Communication differences or delays
- Sensory sensitivities
- Limited experience with peer interaction

👉 Difficulty during assessment does not reflect overall ability. It may indicate a need for support or adjustment.

5. Inclusion Lens: What Schools Are Expected to Do

In line with KHDA's inclusive education framework:

- Schools are expected to follow inclusive practices and support students of determination wherever possible
- Admission decisions should be based on the school's ability to meet a child's needs, not on a diagnosis alone
- Schools are encouraged to make reasonable adjustments to support learning, within their available resources
- Schools should have a clear inclusion policy available to parents
- Assessments are used to understand a child's needs and inform appropriate support and placement

 **You have the right to ask questions, understand available support, and make informed decisions about your child's education.**

6. Questions to Ask the School

- Is there a designated Inclusion Lead or SENDCO?
- What support is available for children with additional needs?
- Are learning support assistants (LSAs) available if required?
- How are individual education plans (IEPs) developed and reviewed?
- How is social integration supported (e.g., peer support, buddy systems)?

7. Simple Home Preparation (2–3 Weeks Before)

Communication

- Practice simple, everyday instructions
- Encourage requesting, pointing, and naming

✓ Play Skills

- Provide opportunities for puzzle and problem-solving play
- Encourage simple pretend play
- Practice turn-taking activities

✓ Social Readiness

- Encourage short periods of seated activity (5–10 minutes)
- Support eye contact and shared attention
- Provide opportunities for small group interaction (e.g., playdates)

✓ Routine Familiarity

- Practice simple routines (e.g., tidy-up transitions)
- Introduce short, structured activities at home

8. What to Avoid

- Avoid placing pressure on your child to perform
- Avoid direct comparison with other children
- Avoid withholding relevant developmental information from the school
- Avoid assuming a single assessment reflects your child's full abilities

9. After the Assessment: Next Steps

- Request feedback from the school
- Ask whether any support is recommended
- Clarify whether an individual support plan may be needed
- Discuss potential learning support requirements (if applicable)
- Consider further assessment or therapy support if advised

10. Parent Perspective

- ✓ School assessments at this stage are not pass/fail
- ✓ They are used to understand how best to support your child
- ✓ The goal is appropriate placement and support, not perfection

Final Note

This process is intended to support your child's transition into school. Seeking clarity and guidance is a proactive step toward ensuring the right environment and support.

Need Help Preparing?

Small Steps Big Dreams – Dubai

We help parents:

- ✓ Prepare for school assessments
- ✓ Build communication & social readiness
- ✓ Bridge therapy and classroom success

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