

School's up!

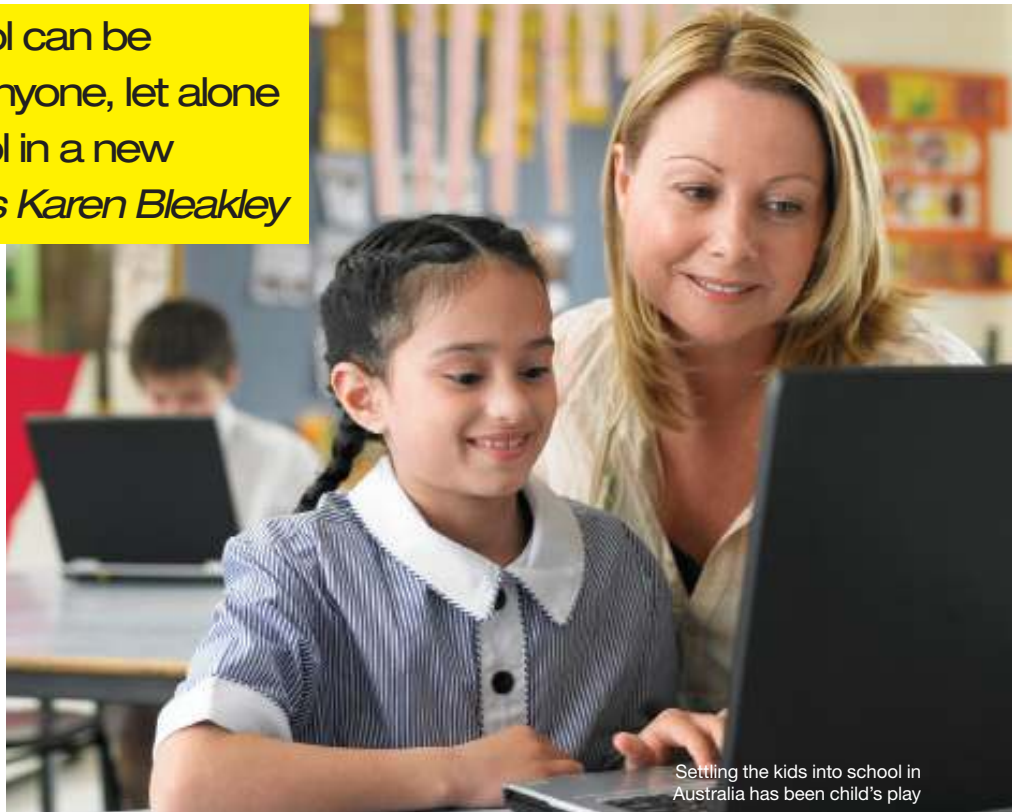


Starting school can be daunting for anyone, let alone starting school in a new country, writes Karen Bleakley

Thankfully, this time we knew what to expect. Our daughter has just started prep in Queensland. She follows three years behind her big twin brothers who started prep at the same school a few weeks after we arrived in Brisbane back in 2015.

It was seamless this time. There was none of that worry about what being an Aussie school mum would mean or how things work. I'd been through it so knew the drill and I was there to help the new mums along who were waving goodbye to their first borns with tissues in hand.

I had a fleeting moment of sadness that time is passing so fast and eight years of



Settling the kids into school in Australia has been child's play

“Our daughter's eagerness to run into class and see her friends and her new teacher made it all so much easier”

dropping kids off in daycare/pre-school/kindy was over with for good, but her eagerness to run into class and see her friends and her new teacher made it all so much easier.

We chose our school for so many reasons. It had a great community atmosphere, even though it's a huge campus with around 1,400 pupils. There is air conditioning in all of the classrooms (something we felt was important with us being based in Queensland), and it has lots of amazing facilities. These include a school café where the high schoolers learn catering and retail skills, a huge auditorium where the kids learn stage management, and an aviation department where kids can take part in all kinds of STEM projects, and they can even go on to take pilot lessons.

Our daughter has been going to the daycare centre there part-time for almost two years, first to the toddler rooms and then building up to the kindy room. She has walked her brothers to their classrooms since they started. She has stopped with me to look at the koalas in the trees in the school grounds more times than I can count. She has spent many hours drinking babycinos and eating cake with me in the school café with our friends. She knows her way around the campus already. Her prep teacher was actually her brother's grade two teacher last year, so we know her well already. The whole thing was just so easy.

As I sneaked out of the door with my bar of chocolate in hand (our school dishes out tea bags and chocolate on the first day to parents, to remind us that it's all going

to be okay!), I didn't cry. I just felt proud at how my three little babies have coped and settled during the last three years. They've taken everything in their strides – new childcare arrangements (from pre-school to kindy), new friends, new words (I still laugh that when the boys' prep teacher told them to remember their togs for the swimming lesson the next day they just stared at her blankly and had no idea what she was talking about).

Kids are amazing creatures – we worry like crazy about how they will cope with such a big change, but in reality they often find the whole thing a lot easier than the grown ups. 🇺🇸

■ **Karen Bleakley helps families take the stress out of moving to Australia at www.SmartStepstoAustralia.com.**