

Dear Parents/Carers,

Some information for you to help with reading, writing and mathematical skills at home.

Reading Together

Whether you are at home, on the bus, in the shops or at the doctor's surgery, there are countless opportunities to help your child to learn. You can do this by talking with them and reading together, plus there are fun ways to develop their writing skills too.

Reading stories with your child, if only for 10 minutes a day, helps build important skills as well as capturing your child's interest in books.

To help your child become interested in books:

- Spend a few minutes a day telling stories and reading together and make it fun by choosing books you both enjoy. The library is a great place to explore books and choose some to read together.
- Talk about the pictures and characters in the books and make up your own stories.
- Read as you walk down the street and round the shops, pointing out signs and words and talking about them.

Learning about Letters

As children grow older they begin to understand more about the sounds of our language and can join in with rhymes, songs and stories. Soon they will be able to hear these different sounds in words. Gradually they will learn to match sounds to letters. They use this knowledge when they are reading and writing.

To help this learning process you can:

- Sing nursery rhymes and songs together, sometimes pointing to the words in a book.
- Play games with sounds, making up silly words that all begin with the same sound (for example, the first sound in their name).
- Get your child to spot letters they recognise in words (for example, the letters in their name).
- Look at the sounds they have learnt during the week (in their homework book) and encourage them to tell you what they have learnt.
- Use a whiteboard marker/pen to write on a whiteboard/window/glass sliding door to practise writing the letters they have learnt. They will learn only lower case letter formation in the beginning.
- Play 'I spy', as children get older, to help them listen to the sounds different words begin with.

Weekly Reading

This is a key year for building upon the knowledge of phonics your child already has. The expectation is that your child should read at home at least three times a week. Share the story and discuss the pictures with them. Once they start reading words encourage them to “sound talk” each word and then blend it to read the word. **Don't forget to sign their Reading Record book.** Every day that a child has a record of home reading they will get a reading raffle ticket and this will enter them into a prize – every week! To win their own book from a choice in the classroom. Please remember to return their book to school every day so that their teacher can read with them at school.

Developing Early Writing Skills

Your child will notice adults around them reading and writing and they will want to copy them. From a young age, children enjoy experimenting with making marks. The more opportunities your child has to develop large and small movement in their arms, hands and fingers, the better. This will make it easier to make marks with a variety of tools.

You can help your child by:

- Encouraging cutting using scissors. Cutting play dough or thin cardboard is a good place to start. Paper is more difficult to cut so only introduce this once they have good cutting control and co-ordination.
- Throwing and catching balls, filling and pouring water using different sized containers, climbing and drawing on an upright surface (like a wall/easel) will help to develop their shoulder and arm muscles which are also important for writing.
- Doing activities like digging, stirring, ‘painting’ outdoor surfaces with water and a large brush, sweeping and swishing a scarf through the air in different shapes.
- Hanging out the washing, using a peg board and picking up grains of rice/peas with fingers, which all help develop the grip needed for writing.
- Helping them to make marks on paper with their fingers, brushes and crayons.
- Helping them write labels, birthday cards and invitations.

Recognising Shapes and Numbers

Your child will start to take an interest in and notice shapes and numbers around them, concentrating on a few shapes and numbers will help your child recognise the differences between them. They will become accustomed to looking around particularly during car journeys, for shapes and numbers within the environment around us.

You can help your child by:

- Talking about simple shapes, such as circles, squares, triangles.
- Helping them to complete simple jigsaws and recognising shapes which go together.
- Work with the first few numbers 1-5, sing songs with numbers and count regular items, such as going up or down stairs.
- Use the environment to spot numbers on road signs, or play games like counting specific coloured cars.

We hope these are a few ideas which will encourage your child to develop their early reading, writing and mathematical skills.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to ask.

The Early Years Team