

Home Learning Ideas and Suggestions

As a parent, you are your child's first teacher. You make them feel loved and secure, respond to them and know them better than anyone else. This is why what you do with your child at home has such a powerful effect on their learning and development. There are already so many things that you do with your child to support them in developing skills for the next chapter of their learning journey.

We are often asked for ideas on how best you can enrich your child's home life to ensure that your child has a successful start to school. Therefore, we have developed a leaflet that we hope will help you and your child during their pre-school years. In each area of learning there is a list of attributes and skills that we believe children should be working towards, followed by ideas on how to develop these skills in everyday home life.

It is very important to remember that not all children develop at the same rate. There is a very wide range of what is considered 'normal development' in young children, where some will catch up a little later than others. If you are concerned about your child's development in any of these areas, please speak with your child's key teacher or any of the staff.

Above all try not to make too much of your child going to school as often children can become unnecessarily unsettled and worried about the fear of the unknown.

Self-care:

Children should be working towards independently being able to;

- look after themselves in the toilet, including wiping their own bottom (NB this is not done by teachers at primary school).
- eat and drink on their own, this includes being independent with their lunchbox (savoury before sweet!), water bottle and using cutlery.
- carry and store equipment safely
- rub in their own sun-cream
- manage their allergies safely (within reason)
- dress themselves (shoes, coat, PE kit, uniform)
- wipe and blow their nose
- risk assess if what they are doing is safe for them.

Home –enrichment ideas:

Eat together at a table and model table manners.

Encourage your child to help with packing their own lunchbox.

Encourage your child to practise fastening/ unfastening buttons, velcro, zips and buckles.

Practise putting shoes on the right feet.

Emotionally:

Children need to be emotionally stable themselves before being able to confidently and independently show empathy for others. They should be working towards emotional resilience by being able to;

- deal with new situations such as starting school and separating from their parents
- bounce back after experiencing difficulties
- identify and regulate their own emotions and behaviour
- correctly interpret others behaviours and emotions
- feel good about themselves and others.

Home –enrichment ideas:

Value and respect your child's views and opinions.

*Give your child your undivided attention at times. It is important that you put your **own phone away** and focus on your child. Perhaps also make time for children individually without their siblings.*

Encourage your child to accept responsibility and build competence through simple tasks such as putting away toys, helping with the washing (sorting clothes), dusting and sweeping.

Play simple board or card games together but ensure that there are times when your child does not always win.

Perhaps think about congratulating your child and praising them when absolutely deserved and not as a matter of routine.

Behaviour:

Children should be working towards positive behaviour by being able to;

- do what they are told by an adult
- understanding the rules of a school
- understand the word “No”
- say “Please” and “Thank you”
- choose activities by themselves
- interrupt a conversation courteously
- negotiate and solve problems without aggression – being able to find a compromise

Home –enrichment ideas:

Have rules and routines that encourage self-discipline, respect and courtesy – perhaps involve your child in making some of the rules.

As adults - model the behaviour that you wish to see in your child.

Develop good sleep routines.

NB – Studies show that irregular bedtimes disrupt natural body rhythms and cause sleep deprivation, which in turn undermine brain maturation and the ability to regulate certain behaviours. So good sleep routines help to train behaviours and a good night-time routine helps your child to learn to feel sleepy

Socially:

Children should be working towards developing social skills by being able to;

- get on, join in and relate to other children and teachers
- make friends
- take turns, share and play nicely
- think of appropriate solutions to conflict
- know when to ask for help from a teacher

Home –enrichment ideas:

Encourage your child to be aware of the needs of others - perhaps serving others at mealtimes, or looking after any pets at home.

Give your child time with other children to play and understand social situations.

Attention and Concentration:

Children should be working towards developing listening, attention and concentration skills by being able to;

- follow instructions and directions
- take in information and learn
- work on their own (some of the time)
- maintain focus on an activity for some time
- persevere with a task despite experiencing difficulties

Home –enrichment ideas:

Cook together – this is a great opportunity for conversation; instructions, discussions about where ingredients come from, counting and measuring, as well as a fun way to introduce new foods into your child's diet.

Encourage your child to do jigsaws on their own but help them if they start to find it too tricky.

Spoken Language:

Children should be working towards being able to;

- communicate with and understand what other people are saying
- follow a story without pictures
- make believe and chatter to themselves in role play and small world play

Home –enrichment ideas:

Talk together – engaging your child in conversation.

Encourage and answer questions from your child.

Read, sing and chant nursery rhymes with your child - nursery rhymes are important for young children because they help develop an ear for our language. Both rhyme and rhythm help children hear the sounds and syllables in words, which in turn helps them to learn to read.

Ditch the dummy! - it's important to wean your child off a dummy as soon as possible so that they can develop their muscles for chewing and talking.

NB Dummies can be very effective for small babies. They help to keep them calm, soothe them to sleep, reduce pain and provide comfort. As babies mature their muscles in their mouth start to strengthen and move in different ways. Having a dummy in the mouth can reduce this muscle development. For example sucking a dummy narrows the palate which can cause snoring and sleep apnoea, or that it can mean the tongue is forward in the mouth increasing the risk of middle ear problems or swallowing problems. Research shows that for children over the age of one, dummies are no longer useful. That said, some children seem to manage just fine with a dummy, but it is important to remember that dummies can cause hearing difficulties, articulation problems, dental malformations, dribbling and language delay. If your child has any of these difficulties then it is vital that you stop the dummy as soon as possible. There are all sorts of 'ditch the dummy' ideas and helpful hints on-line.

Reading:

Children should be working towards developing pre-reading skills by being able to;

- understand that print carries meaning
- know that print (in the UK) is read from left to right and from the top to the bottom of the page
- handle books carefully
- possibly recognise some letters
- hear and practise phonic sounds.

NB - Children learn the alphabet phonically at school; that is what the letter sounds like when used, rather than the name of the letter ie 'ssss' for 'S' not 'es' for 'S'. Therefore you as parents need to be familiar with the phonic sounds of the alphabet. There are numerous websites and apps available on-line for teaching phonic letter sounds – please try to use UK ones instead of ones with American sounds!

Home –enrichment ideas:

Read with your child – both fiction and non-fiction (fact) books. Then ask your child questions about the book to further develop their understanding

Visit the library together – there are great resources available for free including; borrowing 20 books and a story sack (the sack includes a game, props and fact books based on a fictional story)

Numeracy:

Children should be working towards understanding the background to formal number work by being able to;

- recognise and name colours, shapes and sizes
- count in order and/or count the number of object.
- perhaps recognise some numbers

Home –enrichment ideas:

Play counting games and undertake number activities.

Sing number rhymes, action rhymes and clapping songs.

Count up and down the stairs and when out in the car or on walks.

Count objects when out shopping or sorting things at home.

Name colours and shapes in the environment and try using in a game of 'I-spy' instead of letters.

Writing:

Children should be developing pre-writing skills by being able to;

- hold a pencil correctly to enable them to use it with good control. It is important that you correct a poor pencil grip as early as you can as it becomes more difficult to change over time.
- draw and paint.

NB Most children will not be able to read and write but some children may be interested in doing so before they go to school. If your child shows interest it is imperative that you teach them the correct writing direction for both letters and numbers as it is very difficult to change this once a child has learnt the wrong way. Also only teach lower case letters other than the first letter of your child's name and surname to begin with. There are numerous worksheets and apps available on-line for teaching both letter and number writing directionality.

Home –enrichment ideas:

Encourage your child to make marks/draw and to colour in.

Play 'I-spy' and other word games together as it is great for underpinning phonic knowledge.

Physically:

Children should be developing their fine motor and gross motor (big muscle) skills by being able to;

- run, jump, climb, roll, skip and spend time outside every day
- ride a trike or bike (with or without stabilisers)
- swim
- pick up and grip things in different ways such as picking up small things or pegging out clothes in order to strengthen their pincer grip.
- cut using scissors - this skill is essential for school.

NB - Children's core body strength is important for many other reasons than just physical development. In order to be able to write children need to be able to lift their body weight through their arms – such as when doing the monkey bars at the park. Similarly children are not able to be potty trained if they cannot walk up and down the stairs using alternate feet on alternate stairs.

Home –enrichment ideas:

Get cutting anything up such as grass, paper, newspapers, magazines etc.

Visit the park (when open) and encourage your child to use the appropriately aged apparatus on their own.

Make your own obstacle course or circuit training course at home or in the garden.

Let your child roll around in the garden or down a hill as this is great for core body strength.

Let your child run around outside in the rain!

Kick a football- catch a ball or any other balls games are all great fun.

Put a tennis ball in the foot of a pair of tights then hang the tights over a tree branch securely. Give your child a bat to hit the ball with – this is a fun way to help to strengthen their shoulder, arm and hand muscles together with their hand eye coordination.

Thread beads or transfer dried peas pasta from one bowl to another using tweezers or salad tongs.

At bath-time pour water from jug to jug or use different containers.

Nature and World aware:

Children should be developing an interest in the World around them including learning about (and through) food.

NB - Learning to grow food, shop for food, prepare food and cook it develops children's skills in all areas of learning. It also helps with children's wellbeing and nutrition including obesity and malnutrition.

Home –enrichment ideas:

If watching the TV consider watching nature programmes – children are fascinated by them.

Encourage your child to sort the rubbish with you so that they can sort the recyclables from general rubbish

Go for walks outside and talk together about all that you can see. Count how many different trees or flowers you can name or see.

Grow some vegetables together – sow seeds in a pot, your garden or an allotment. Later harvest the fruits of your labour and eat them!

Spot birds in the garden together and see if you can identify them (the RSPB have great resources on-line for children).

Go on a bug hunt, or find worms, or butterflies or frogs!

Show your child how to make mud pies or magic potions!

Creatively:

Children should be developing creativity and an interest in technology.

Home –enrichment ideas:

There are some great Montessori free apps for all areas of development including creativity.

Have fun – build dens – inside and out; under a table, next to a tree, behind the sofa!

Let your child dress up in your clothes and shoes – they love it!

Let your child play the drums using a wooden spoon and upturned pots, pans and buckets.

Have fun listening to your favourite songs together whilst practising your groovy dance moves.

General Health Reviews:

All children have a joint two year old assessment with their Health Visitor and their Educational Setting.

We would also recommend that you

- check your child's pre-school immunisations are up to date
- take your child to the opticians for an eye test before school (this is free at any opticians)
- take your child to the dentist for regular dental checkups
- arrange a hearing test (through your GP) if you have any concerns about your child's hearing.