

Helping your child to get the best start in all the areas of learning

Are they ready to start school?

1. Self-help/independence skills are crucial- including going to the toilet independently and washing their hands, blowing their own nose, dressing and undressing, looking after their own clothes and using a knife and fork. If they are not worried about any of these as they are independent, they will be ready to listen and learn.
2. They are already used to settling happily without their parents nearby.
3. They can play, take turns fairly and share toys cooperatively with other children.
4. They are physically active so have core strength and coordination developed.
5. They can hold conversations with children and adults, knowing to listen and be able to respond appropriately. The amount of words known and understood at 4 years old can make a big difference to children's readiness for learning to read and write.

Personal, Social and Emotional Development



For four and five year olds this is one of the most important areas of learning as it permeates all other areas. It focuses on children learning how to work, play and co-operate with others in groups beyond the family. There are three strands- 'Self-Confidence and Self-Awareness', 'Managing Feelings and Behaviour' and 'Making Relationships.'

You can help by-

- Providing opportunities for your child to develop early social skills by mixing with others within and outside of the family group. Encourage sharing and taking turns as well as learning respect for others.
- Talk and listen to your child, practising taking turns in conversation and encouraging them to make observations and discuss experiences.

- Help your child to become increasingly independent by learning to dress and undress themselves and hang up and fetch their own coat.
- Have clear home rules and routines with an expectation that if your child is asked to do something, it is done first time. Reasons for a rule should be explained to the child.
- Play with your child.

Communication, Language and Literacy



This covers the prime area of listening and attention, understanding and speaking and the specific areas of reading and writing.

Learning how to communicate with other people means learning how to listen at the right time, as well as developing confidence in speaking to others in differing circumstances and with a widening range of vocabulary. Children need to understand what is being asked of them and learn to follow instructions – skills which are very important in the classroom. They also need to be able to explain their views and wishes, to give directions to other people and be able to work as part of a group.

You can help by-

- Encouraging and taking part in their make-believe games to support and extend their imagination and use of language.
- Providing props such as dressing-up clothes and small items for playing shop.
- Playing games that encourage listening and memory skills.
- Watch a television programme together and talk about it afterwards. (Did you enjoy that? Which bit did you like the best? Why do you think Sam bought the mouse instead of the cat?)
- Talking with them as they paint or draw.
- Give an errand with one then two instructions to follow (Will you get my bag and put it in the kitchen, please?)
- As you read stories, stop occasionally and ask questions (Why do you think he said that? What do you think Sarah will do next?)



Reading and sharing stories together is very important, as parental interest and encouragement help in the acquisition of reading skills.

The first stages of learning to read are children understanding that print carries meaning and having an interest in pictures and stories in books. They will develop skills in retelling a story and predicting what will happen next. They will also begin to recognise letters and words that appear often.

In school, reading is taught through phonics (the sounds that letters make in words), which are then blended to make words as well as words being segmented into separate sounds. Words that do not sound out are then taught, with an emphasis on high frequency words particular to the age group. Letter names are taught after the second set of sounds are known.

You can help by –

- Let the child see you reading for different purposes.
- Put up the child's name in brightly coloured letters (lower case, not capitals except for the start of the name).
- Point out signs when out walking or shopping.
- Point out printed labels on containers and jars.
- Ask them to choose a book for bedtime.
- Encourage handling books correctly and saying what will happen next in a story.
- Having an accessible and wide range of books that interest your child.
- Sharing reading work sent home for about 10 minutes of individual quality time each night, at a time that best suits your child.

Children initially learn to record ideas through pictures and then by using letters and finally strings of words. Your child will be taught correct letter formations while they are learning their sounds. It is very important that correct formation is learnt from the beginning, as it is very hard to unlearn bad habits! Lower case is always used except for the first letter of a name.

It is also very important that the child holds a pencil correctly.

Learning to write requires the use of fine motor skills so there are activities that you can provide before coming to school.



You can help by –

- Providing lots of opportunities to make marks using different medium and tools – paint, chalk, pencils, crayons, felt pens, sand, large and small brushes, cutting and sticking activities.
- Bead threading and modelling with play dough.
- Small world play and construction toys.
- Making patterns from left to right and top to bottom of a page.
- Letting your child see you writing in different ways for different purposes – shopping lists, notes, e-mails, letters and birthday cards.

Mathematics



Young children are developing an understanding and recognition of shape, space and position, patterns, comparisons of weight, length and capacity, and numbers. To understand mathematical ideas they need to develop the right vocabulary and engage in structured practical activities, exploring everyday materials and equipment.

In school they are encouraged to talk about their work using mathematical vocabulary e.g. first, second, heavier, lighter and to solve simple problems, having opportunities to choose methods and equipment which will encourage confidence in their own skills. Some simple ways of recording are shown and practised.



You can help by –

- Letting your child help with cooking – using weights and measures.
- Make collections from nature in the garden and compare size, shape and colour. Make collage patterns with them.
- Set the table together, talking and counting sets of knives, forks and spoons to match the number of people.
- Make games out of counting items-socks, toys, sweets, apples, windows and bounces of the ball.
- Play dice and domino games together.
- Talk about full, empty and half full at bath time asking how many cupfuls of water fill the jug?
- Play games of guessing which is heavier and which is lighter then use a balance to prove it.

Understanding the world



This area of learning focuses on the child's developing knowledge and understanding of their environment, other people and features of the natural and man-made world. It provides a foundation for historical, geographical, scientific and technological learning.

In school we provide a range of opportunities for children to explore the outside environment with chances to ask questions, observe and make collections from the world around them. This is then further developed in the classroom activities through talking, drawing, painting or modelling what they saw or found, using a range of materials, artefacts, objects and equipment, including computers.

ICT is part of every learning area – programmable toys, electric tills, musical keyboard, radio controlled toys, CD players, i-Pads and the interactive whiteboard are all used, as well as going to the computer suite twice a week.

You can help by –

- Do some cooking together and talk about the changes.
- Do some gardening together. Let your child grow some seeds or plant bulbs and talk about what is happening. Observe any wildlife in your garden.
- Let your child help with housework and talk about the machines used.
- Take notice of the weather and seasons together and talk about suitable clothing for the day.
- Discuss past and present events in their lives using photographs of family gatherings, baby pictures and grandparents, noting changes and discussing why.
- Make ice-lollies together and discuss how and why changes take place.
- Use the computer together. Please note that in school our computers have a mouse and not a keypad so it would be very helpful if your child could practise using a mouse at home too. However we do have touch-screens on the i-Pads.



Physical Development

This area has two areas- 'moving and handling' and 'health and self-care.' It focuses on your child developing physical control, mobility, awareness of space and manipulative skills in indoor and outdoor environments, through developing their fine and gross motor skills. For example, children who can climb to the top of the climbing frame are developing their concepts of height and space as well as their strength, balance and agility. It also includes the need to lead an active and healthy lifestyle and rules for safety.



You can help by –

- Going to the park and letting your child climb, run and use large play equipment.
- Play ball games together and practise good throwing and catching skills.
- Provide small play equipment such as Lego.
- Encourage your child to use scissors correctly and safely.
- Providing space and time for your child to play, indoors and outdoors.
- Use gardening tools together.
- Encourage your child to ride a bike and scooter.
- Sing and dance to action rhymes and songs.
- Let your child help to make sandwiches and slice fruit and vegetables with you, showing them how to use tools safely.
- It would be really helpful if you could show your child their PE clothes and the bag they are kept in, so they know exactly what belongs to them, then they will be better able to take care of it.

Expressive Arts and Design

This area of learning has two areas-‘exploring and using media and materials’ and ‘being imaginative.’ There will be a wide range of experiences in art, craft, music, dance, drama, storytelling, representing and making, and imaginative play to develop children’s ability to express ideas and explore their own feelings in creative ways. It is the process and not the end product, which is important.



You can help by –

- Encouraging decision making, exploration and problem solving.
- Providing lots of opportunities to paint, draw, colour and cut and stick pictures.
- Sing and listen to nursery rhymes and different types of music.
- Have a dressing-up box and materials for building dens.
- Encourage modelling with play dough using different modelling tools.

