

Letters and Sounds

A Guide for Parents and Carers to support your child's learning at home

The first steps to reading and writing

Note: This leaflet is also available in the information section of the Parent App.

This information booklet should be read in conjunction with the Parent Handbook which contains further information on how we teach children to read and write. Please note that there are many skills which the child needs to develop to be in the right place to do this. Please do not rush your child to read and write, the stronger their foundations are, the easier their literacy skills will develop in a natural, enjoyable and meaningful way. Think of it as having the right building blocks in place and being able to walk before you can run.

This booklet aims to give you some ideas as to how you can help your child to develop these foundation skills at home.

Introduction

Children learn a great deal from other people. As parents and carers you are your child's first and foremost educators. You have a powerful influence on your child's learning. Your engagement makes a massive difference to your child's developmental progress.

From an early age your child will need to experience a wide range of activities and experiences (for example singing and saying rhymes, making and listening to music, listening to and joining in with conversations, painting and imaginary play) These activities will help your child to take the first important steps towards reading and writing.

There is a National Strategy for the teaching of phonics this is called Letters and sounds and is used to support the teaching of language and literacy in nursery settings and schools.

This booklet will give further information about the letters and sounds programme and the best ways to support learning at home.

Learning to read and write in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Children's spoken language supports reading and writing.

From a very early age, children develop an awareness of the different sounds in our spoken language. They learn to use their voices to make contact with you and let people know what they need and how they are feeling. As parents and carers, you best understand your baby or young child's communications; you are the key people in helping them develop their speaking and listening skills.

Children need lots of opportunities to talk with others as they develop and practise their speaking and listening skills. This helps build their confidence and improves their ability to communicate with other people. This is an important aspect of learning to socialise and will help your child feel confident when the time comes to make friends.

In order to make a good start in reading and writing, children need an adult to consistently talk to them, listen to them and recognise/value all their attempts at communication.

Everyday activities such as preparing meals, tidying up, putting shopping away and getting ready to go out, offer you chances to talk to your child, explaining what you are doing. This way they hear the way language is put together into longer sentences and for a purpose.

Books are a rich source of new words for your child. Here you will find words you would not use in everyday conversations. Children need to have a wide stock of words (vocabulary) to understand the meaning of books, so read aloud and share books as often as you can; they will enjoy it and it will increase their growing bank of vocabulary for when they come across these words in their own reading later on.

Ways to support your child at home: talking and listening

- Make time to listen to your child talking as you meet them from the nursery or school, as you walk or travel home by car, in the supermarket as you shop, at meal times, bath times, bedtimes..... any time !!
- Practice active listening e.g. switch off the television, radio and mobile phones – make eye contact and really listen!
- Show that you understand what they are interested in and what they are talking about- show them you are actively listening – look at your child, smile, nod your head, make eye contact, ask a question or make a response to show that you have heard them.
- Make a collection of different toy creatures (or anything they are interested in that might make noises) – for example a duck, a snake, an alien, say the sound it might make as you play together (for example, quack quack, ssssssss, yuk yuk and encourage your child to make the sounds too)

- Listen at home - switch off the TV and listen to the sounds both inside and outside the house. What can you hear, can your child tell you the sounds they have heard? Can they tell you in what order they have heard them?
- Play- a-tune- and follow me! Make or buy some simple shakers, drums and beaters, then play a simple tune and ask your child to copy. Have fun !
- Use puppets and toys to make up stories or retell known ones. Record your child telling the story and play it back to them.
- Your child should experience lots of environmental, instrumental and body percussion, rhythm and rhyme, alliteration and voice sound activities to tune in their ears.
- The possibilities are endless
- Take a look at this video! The turn taking going on here is an amazing conversation https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tZh1_aaFqTQ

The importance of speech sounds

As children grow older, they begin to understand more about the sounds of our language and become more able to join in with rhymes, songs and stories by clapping, stamping and skipping. This is an important stage as the children's ears are learning to tune into all the different sounds around them. Playing with sounds and tuning your child's ears into sounds that will develop phonological awareness, that is, the ability to discriminate different sounds. Over time, this will help your child develop an understanding that words are made up of different sounds (phonemes) and they will be able to hear the different sounds in a word. Gradually they will learn to match the letters (graphemes). This is phonic knowledge. They use this knowledge when they are reading and writing.

Please note when you are using phonetic sounds you need to use the 'pure' sound and avoid the 'uh' on the end of pronunciations. The pure sounds allow the child to blend sounds into words.

When you are blending sounds together start with phonetically correct CVC word (Consonant, Vowel, Consonant) e.g. c-a-t.

Here is a link that will take you to a video that shows the correct pronunciations of sounds

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TkXcabDUg7Q>

National Strategy Letters and Sounds – Phase 1

In this ongoing phase, your child will be learning to:

- Have fun with sounds
- Listen carefully
- Develop their vocabulary
- Speak confidently to you, other adults and other children
- Tune into sounds
- Listen and remember sounds
- Talk about sounds
- Understand that spoken words are made up of different sounds

Phase 1 consists of several interlocking parts:

Ways to support your child at home: Aspect 1 environmental sounds

- Go for a listening walk. When walking down the road make a point of listening to environmental sounds: car engines, people talking, birds singing, dogs barking. When you get home try to remember all the sounds you heard. You could try recording the sounds, to listen to them again, or try reproducing them yourselves, using your voices or instruments
- Make sounds in the environment, using a range of props, such as running a stick along a fence or tapping a bin lid.
- Invent a special family 'knock' for entering rooms.
- Play sound lotto. A commercial version of this can be purchased from many children's toy shops but making your own from your sound walk, would be far more rewarding.

Ways to support your child at home – Aspect 2 Instrumental sounds

- Make your own musical instruments, using cardboard rolls, tins, dried beans, stones. Shake these loudly, softly as you are marching skipping or stomping. Play what's inside the instrument
- Sing known songs loudly and then softly, stretch words in known songs and add new words or sounds
- Listen to a range of music with your child, from rap to classical. Encourage your child to move in response to the variety of musical styles and moods.

Ways to support your child at home – Aspect 3 Body percussion

- Body percussion Ways to support your child at home.
- Learn some action rhymes together such as wind the bobbin up.
- Play some commercially produced sounds. Clap along with familiar rhymes and learn new ones
- Listen to the sounds your feet make when walking, running or skipping; slowly, softly, fast. Stomping hard, in flip flops, boots, high heels
- Try different types of clapping; clap your hands softly, quickly and make a pattern for your child to follow. Do the same clapping your thighs or stamping your feet. Tap your fingers, click your tongue
- Invent a special family clap routine for when someone does something really well.

Ways to support your child at home – Aspect 4 Rhythm and rhyme

- Rhythm and rhyme
- Get into the rhythm of language; bounce your child on your knee to the rhythm of a song or nursery rhyme; march or clap to a chant or poem
- Help your child move to the rhythm of a song or a rhyme
- Read or say poems, songs, nursery songs and rhyming stories as often as you can. Try to use gestures, tap regular beats and pause to emphasise the rhythm of the piece
- Add percussion to mark the beats using your hands, feet or instruments. Try out some rhythmic chanting such as 'two four six eight hurry up are we will be late or 'bip, bop, boo who are you.

Ways to support your child at home – Aspect 5 Alliteration

- Alliteration is a lot of fun to play around with. Your child's name is a good place to start.
- Alliteration (words that begin with the same sounds with a sh sh here and a sh sh there to emphasise alliteration.
- t, for example say 'gergeet get the giggles' 'carl caught a cat, jolly Jessie jumped',. Encourage other family members to have a go for example mummy munches muffins, daddy does the dishes.
- Emphasise alliteration in songs and stories, for example 'Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers.
- Play around with familiar songs such as 'old McDonald had some sheep, shoes, shorts with a sh sh here and a sh sh there to emphasise alliteration.
- Identify the odd one out for example cat, cup boy, car.
- Make up little nonsense stories together using lots of alliteration.
- Collect items that start with the same sound from the park, the garden and around the house.
- When shopping think about the items you are buying and say ' a tall tin of tomatoes, a lovely little lemon etc. encourage your child to do the same.

Ways to support your child at home – Aspect 6 Voice Sounds

- Repeat your babies vocalisations, take turns
- Make fun noises and nonsense words
- Say words in different ways (fast, slowly, high, low, using a funny voice.
- 'sing' known songs using only sounds (for example, la,la,la) and ask your child to guess the song
- Vary your tempo and pitch when reading stories, develop different voices for different characters.

Ways to support your child at home – Aspect 7 Oral blending and segmenting

- This is all spoken, Your child will not be expected to match the letter to the sound at this stage. The emphasis is on helping children to hear the separate sounds in the words and to create spoken sounds.
- Oral blending and segmenting is a later skill that will be important when the time comes for your child to read and write, Being able to hear the separate sounds within a word and then blend them together to understand that word is really important.
- Blending is a vital skill for reading. The separate sound (phonemes) of the word are spoken aloud, in order all through the word and then are merged together into the whole word. The merging is called blending.
- For example the adult would say c=a=t= cat
- Segmenting is a vital skill for spelling. The whole word is spoken aloud, then broken up into its separate sounds (phonemes) in order all through the word. For example the adult would say cat c-a-t-

You can help your child develop in each of these stages by trying some of the ideas. Remember that all of these activities should be fun and interactive. Give your child lots of encouragement and cuddles as you play together. Smiles and praise will help develop a sense of achievement and build confidence.

Note: This is all spoken (oral) and works on the development of listening skills and the ability to distinguish between and create sounds,

The importance of Mark Making

Your child will notice adults around them reading and writing and they will want to copy them. Mark-Making is the first step towards writing. Mark making in the early stages is closely linked to physical development. The more opportunities your child has to develop large and small movement in their arms, hands and fingers, the easier it will be to make marks with a variety of tools and eventually to grip a pencil.

Activities such as digging, painting outdoor surfaces with water and a large brush, sweeping and swishing a scarf through the air in different shapes will help develop large motor movement. Small or fine motor movement will be needed to hold pencils and pens correctly. Hanging out the washing and playing with pegs using a peg

boards and picking up grains of rice with fingers and tweezers will help develop the pincer grip needed for writing.

In the early stages of starting to write your child will like to experiment making marks on paper with a variety of writing tools such as brushes, pens, pencils and felt tip markers. They will often include drawings with their writing. Sometimes you will write for them. It is a good idea at this stage to use lower case letters when you write for a child, Introducing capitals only for names.

Other things you could try

- Turn off the television and put your phone aside so you can fully listen to and talk with your child.
- Read to your child everyday
- Set up a place where your child can experiment with mark making both outside and inside, using gloop, paint, pens, stamps, etc on a variety of surfaces such as paper, cardboard and material.
- Collect a variety of pencils and pens and keep them handy for the child,
- Create a special writing bag to keep little writing tools in, for travelling in the car or visiting doctors. Change the content regularly

Ways to support your child at home what to do if you child is reluctant to read or write

Reading

- Make sure your child sees you reading
- Enjoy and be animated reading books with them
- Leave books around the house for your child to dip into
- Let your child choose whatever it is they want to read books, comics, catalogues
- Read favourite books over and over again enjoy.

Writing

- Make sure your child sees you writing
- Make an invitation together to invite someone to tea or too your garden
- Make words together using magnetic letters
- Make a story together about one of their toys. You write for them, repeating sentences as you write. When it is complete, they can draw pictures to go with it.
- Buy stickers for a favourite film or TV programme and make your own book about it

The most important thing that you can do to support your child's literacy skills is to help them develop a love of books and experience the enjoyment of mark making with no expectations.

Their early experiences are crucial to their relationship with these skills. If they are surrounded by love, pleasure and enjoyment shared with a loved carer they are halfway there already.

The physical skills (and they are considerable) for writing will come, never force these, never make it a chore always follow your child's lead and interests. Pushing these skills too early when they are not ready will switch your child off.

Hard as it is as a parent never compare your child with others. They are unique and individual. With the encouragement, opportunities, support and a loving environment progress will happen at their own rate.

Note:

Remember if we are ever concerned about where your child is at with their developmental levels we will always discuss this with you and make a plan as to how we can remove, lesson or work with any barriers to learning that might be there for them.

If you ever have concerns about your child please discuss them with your child's Key Person so that we can work together.

When partnerships work together we achieve the best outcomes for the children in our care.