

## How can you support your child's development?

### Maths is everywhere

Young children need help to understand what maths is used for and you can do this by talking about maths in your daily routine:

- check with your child the bus number as it arrives
- read aloud the quantities printed on boxes, packets and tins of food
- point out the numbers on clocks and watches
- read price labels in shops and count out money at the till
- find the TV channel on the remote control together
- talk about how things fit when tidying away toys into boxes
- sort out clothes to see which are too big or too small
- count how many toys make the boat sink in the bath
- make birthday cards and write age numbers on them
- find and cut out numbers in magazines and catalogues



Children may not understand all the maths you use but they can get to know words and numbers. If your family speaks several languages, encourage children to learn to count to ten in all those languages. Children who are confident with counting get off to a good start in maths.

### The road to reading

To become expert readers, children need to be good at having conversations. Simply talking with children plays a vital role in getting them ready for reading. As they try out new words they build up a store of vocabulary which prepares them for many words they will meet later in print. Children are great imitators. Seeing adults read for a purpose makes children want to read too. You might be reading labels in shops, looking up a phone number or address online, checking the bus timetable, reading an email or text message from a friend. Talk with your children about everyday activities:

- Use lots of describing words as you explore together
- Tell them the words for interesting and unfamiliar objects
- Leave an old telephone directory out by the phone, look at recipe books in the kitchen, read a magazine in the bath, encourage children to pretend to read bedtime stories to their toys
- Share books and talk about the pictures
- Join a local library
- Buy books in charity shops or car boot sales and swap books with friends
- Borrow/buy non-fiction books based on your child's interests e.g. football, wild animals etc.

Whatever stage of reading a child is at, they all benefit greatly from having exciting books read to them. The most important thing is that they should find reading fun!



## **Making their mark – children’s early writing**

Being able to write is something that most of us take for granted. Even if we’re not keen writers we may still write a shopping list or write ourselves a reminder note. For children, writing is a skill they have to learn and it develops gradually. They begin their journey by making marks. They often draw lines and circles and scribbles. Scribbles are a very important step in learning to write because children are trying out new things to see what happens.

After a while, marks begin to have meaning for children. They may copy you and pretend to write their own shopping list. Even if it’s just marks and not letters or words yet, they may ‘read’ the items on their shopping list to you.

For happy early mark making:

- be ready to join in drawing and painting
- look out for cheap washable paints and felt tip pens
- show children how you write (copy down a friend’s address, write a list, write an appointment on the calendar, write a reminder note for yourself or someone else)
- write notes and letters to your child!
- avoid ‘teaching’ and ‘correcting’ children early on

Try not to worry if:

- children write letters back to front. Nearly all children do this and they will learn to correct this later on
- their pencil grip is weak or incorrect. Their grip will improve as they grow and their muscles strengthen. Help them by encouraging them to do their own buttons and zips, peg washing on the line, using jigsaw puzzles, play throwing and catching games, use climbing frames in the park
- children switch hands when they write. Look out for the hand they use when doing regular activities such as eating, brushing their teeth, reaching for a toy. This is probably the dominant hand and they will write with this hand later on.
- children make spelling mistakes. Spelling usually becomes more accurate as children begin to read. If children become anxious about how to spell a word, they may develop a habit of only writing words they can spell. This limits their writing and they may become less imaginative writers.
- your child is not very interested in writing. Mark making must be made fun for children. Try putting out ‘real’ or ‘grown up’ paper and pens or using a bucket of water and a paintbrush outside for mark making. Use something interesting such as finger paint, shaving foam, chalk, white boards and wipe off pens.

Let us know how you get on, we would love to see photos of your children in action!

If you want more ideas or advice, please speak to your child’s teacher.

Most importantly - have fun!

