

A Parent's Guide to Developing and Teaching Early Reading and Writing Skills

We are often asked when children should start to read and write and we have, therefore, put together this Parent Guide, which we hope will give some clarification.

How do children learn to read?

The first and most important step when starting to read is that your child is ready!

The early phase of reading is characterised by children's growing awareness of the way in which print conveys meaning, and their increasing ability to understand the links between spoken and written language. Initially, context is a major support for deducing meaning from print, so very young children recognise familiar words and well-known names on cartoons or on other packaging.

Later, children become able to recognise words in the context of a well-known book or song. Books with memorable language help them with this, and children will begin to isolate individual words within these familiar texts. At first, children identify whole words through particular features – their length, their visual pattern, the fact they begin with the first letter of somebody's name, rather than recognising them by the individual letters. At a later stage, children become more familiar with the alphabet and begin to show awareness of phonic sounds. A phonic is the sound that each letter makes, for example, Bb is 'buh' not bee'.

As parents and practitioners, we promote children's awareness of print and their ability to notice and recognise sounds in many ways.

- ★ **Books and stories** – this is probably the most important way for children to learn what readers do. As children hear stories, talk about the pictures and re-tell stories themselves, they will gradually match what they are hearing and seeing. In this way, they will come to an enjoyable appreciation of what reading is all about. Books also encourage concentration as well as visual discrimination of symbols.

How do children learn to write?

Before formal writing even begins, children require the following important skills:

- ★ **Hand-eye co-ordination** – this is developed through puzzles, use of scissors, making marks on paper, cutters and using beads and boards.
- ★ **Pincer grasp** – this is developed through threading beads, holding paintbrushes, pencils, chalks and other small items, as well as practical life experiences.
- ★ **Wrist flexibility** – this is developed by painting and painting activities, use of construction materials, making patterns in sand, finger rhymes and practical life activities.
- ★ **Self-esteem and confidence** – this is probably the most important aspect of all. Children who are praised and acknowledged for their individual achievements are more likely to learn. Therefore, we believe that encouraging them and allowing them to achieve things at their own pace is the most effective way of teaching children.



Within our Nursery, we incorporate all of these things into our daily activities, and many more, to help children develop the necessary skills for reading and writing.

- ★ General discussions – questioning and problem solving, which also encourages vocabulary.
- ★ Stories (knowing that books are fun and informative).
- ★ Songs and rhymes (identifying rhyming words).
- ★ Circle time activities – re-telling experiences.
- ★ Language games – sound distinguishing games, lotto, matching games, etc.

As children develop and become confident in using everyday language in a variety of situations, we introduce phonic sounds. There is no particular age at which we do this as children develop at different rates.

It is our aim to form a link from home to Nursery so that we share this very important part of your child's learning. Therefore, if you have any questions concerning your child, please do not hesitate to speak to your child's Key Person.