

EARLY YEARS IN FOCUS

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ACTIVE PLAY - ACTIVE LEARNING
OPEN MORNING
SATURDAY MARCH 26TH

Letters *are* Shapes

Our heading of 'Letters *are* Shapes' must make some of you feel that we have muddled Literacy with Numeracy. We have! The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) has given us the wonderful opportunity to teach children in a cross-curricular way, young children need to make links in their learning. Let us take a minute

to have a look at letters and consider they are shapes. The more opportunities that young children have to identify and explore shapes through puzzles, games, construction blocks and the variety of shapes in our environment, including road signs, labels and packaging, the easier it becomes for your little one to recognise letters.

When out and about it can also be great fun to look for familiar large signs, such as Tesco, Sainsbury's, perhaps even B&Q. It is very exciting when young children can then also recognise the same letters or words on the side of a lorry when travelling.

Let us also begin to think about the skills children need



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to be able to read. Alongside identifying the shape of the letter, children also need to know the sound each letter makes.

Playing games, such as listening out for environmental sounds, can be an fun introduction. It is also a good skill for your child to practise being very quiet and listening with attention. You could go on a 'sound walk' together. Encourage your child to listen out for environmental sounds, such as the ducks quacking on the pond, the birds singing, perhaps even the waves crashing on the shore.

Musical instruments can be introduced to also recognise and differentiate sounds. Pots and pans, together with a wooden spoon make a great introduction to beat and rhythm. There are also some good sound games on the market that can be shared together with all the family.

Looking at books, in English we read from left to right and top to bottom. When turning the page of a book, we need to encourage children to look at the left hand page of the book, before the right hand side. (Children's eyes will automatically go to the right hand page first!). Here are some ideas for supporting and developing your child's skills in becoming a reader; these activities can be shared from birth and adapted as your child matures:

Most importantly talk to your child. Sing songs, rhymes and finger plays together.

Rhymes can help with the flow of language; they strengthen vocabulary and help to develop their memory.

Try to read to, and with, your child every day.

Let your child re-tell their favourite story, using props such as dressing-up

costumes and puppets. This will help them to sequence events of a story and to begin to understand that stories have a beginning, a middle and an end.

Why not make a Story Sack? Simply use a pillow case and place inside a book and some toys/objects that relate to the story. A simple example would be Goldilocks and The Three Bears. Inside the pillow case/ story sack would be:

The story book

3 bears of different sizes

Goldilocks (a small doll with golden hair)

3 bowls and 3 spoons of different sizes

3 chairs and 3 beds of different sizes

These items, together with the book and you as the story teller, will bring the story to life and again, help your child with sequencing. Story sacks can be made for any story; they are fun to make and enjoyable and educational for your child.





Perhaps Grandma or a kind friend could even knit some of the characters!

Another simple strategy for inspiring your child to read can be as simple as joining a Library. Children can be registered at your local library from birth onwards. This is an excellent free resource where children will soon become accustomed to a wide selection of different sized books. As they get older, let them take ownership of their reading by choosing their own books. It is a very exciting thing for a child to own their own library card. You might even enjoy listening to the library storyteller bring a new book to life!

Matching picture/word games and 'I Spy' games are also very important. As children become more interested, why not help them make their own book? By stapling together some blank paper to make a booklet, you can then encourage your child to draw the pictures. Share your newly bound book and chat with your child about their illustrations. You could begin to write their story in simple words. They will start to connect the story to their pictures and your writing. Another good idea along this theme is to make a simple account of a holiday or staying with friends through keeping a diary.

Explore and enjoy these activities, feel free to adapt them as you feel right for your child. Every child is different and they will each enjoy the activities in varying degrees. Most of all, please keep reading to your child, for as long as they want you to. Keep in mind that children love the one to one time and attention. Some children will love the independence of reading on their own, and this is important too, but there are still many others who worry that as soon as they are able to read themselves, it may mean that Mummy and Daddy will not read to them any more and that special one to one time will be lost.

If you would like further ideas regarding how you may further inspire your child's reading, please do not hesitate to contact us. Come to see us 'in action'; you are most welcome to join us with your little one for an activity taster. We will be demonstrating many of the activities introduced in this month's articles on Saturday March 26th 2011 between 09.30 and 12.00 at our open morning. Throughout our themed morning 'Active Play - Active Learning' qualified staff will also be on hand to chat with you and share more ideas right for your child. Please register your interest by clicking on the button 'Active Play - Active Learning Open Morning'.