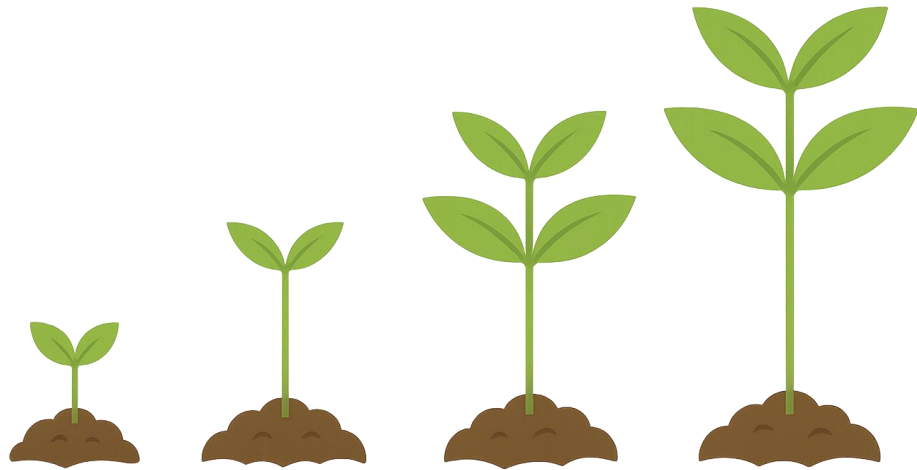




HELPING YOUR CHILD TO



Get to know
Relationships
Offer
Wider
Work
together

Parents are a child's first and most enduring educators. Parents and families are the most important people in children's lives. They have the greatest influence over them, particularly in their early years. What parents do at home with their very young children has a major impact on social, emotional and intellectual development.

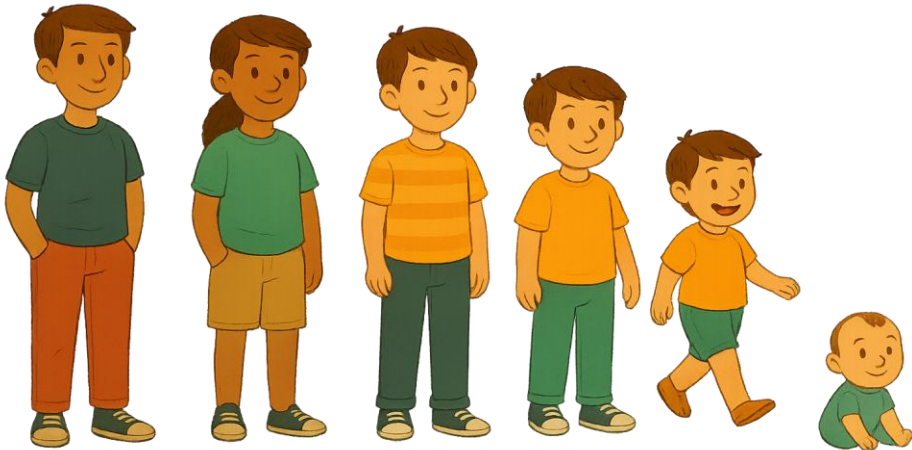
National



Aims of the workshop

To welcome you into our school community and start to develop our relationships with you as partners in your child's learning.

To recognise and celebrate what you as parents/carer already do and to build your knowledge of how you can further support your child's early literacy skills before they start their school journey.





Oral Language



Environmental Print

Early Literacy is...



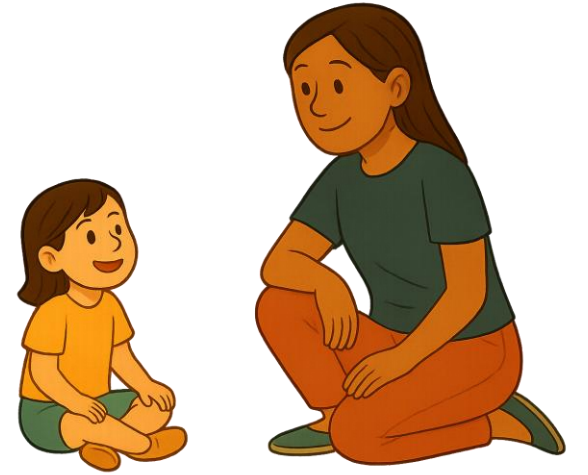
Books and Early Reading



Early Writing



Oral Language



Research tells us that the way we talk to young children shapes their brains.

Oral language is the foundation for written language, and three aspects of oral language are particularly important for early literacy development.

- **Phonological awareness** is the ability to recognise and manipulate the spoken parts of sentences and words, such as syllables, rhymes, and individual sounds (phonemes).
- **Storytelling** is listening to stories that are read and told aloud, helping children to develop story language and their understanding of story structure. Engaging in story telling conversations with adults increases and extends children's thinking and vocabulary.
- **Talk about literacy** is the foundational ability that enables children to learn new words often at a rapid rate. These words help children to understand and communicate within the world around them.

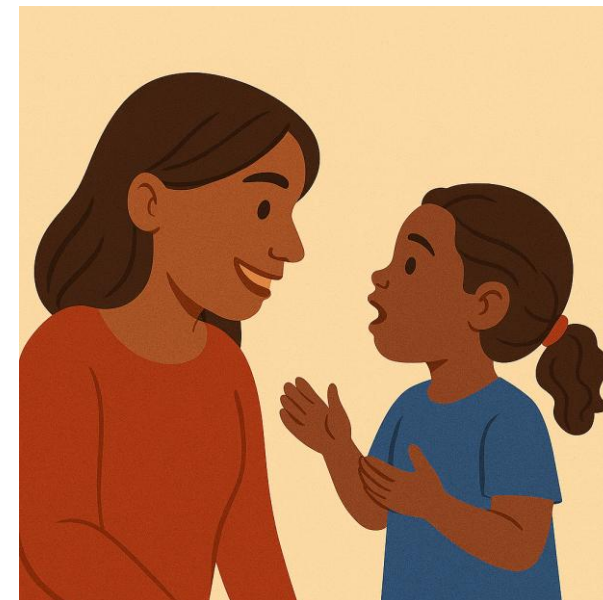
What does this look like?

Conversations and interactions

Children learn language best through everyday conversation. Adults can support this by modelling good language, using accurate vocabulary, and allowing time for children to think and respond.

Getting down to your child's level, making eye contact and giving them your full attention, helps them learn important non-verbal cues like facial expressions and gestures.

Repeating and gently expanding what your child says builds language - for example, responding to "a bus" with "Yes, a red bus" or "a big red bus" helps introduce new words and longer sentences.



Questioning

Asking questions helps children learn turn-taking and to share their ideas.

Open-ended questions like "Tell me about your picture" or "What might happen next?" encourage longer responses and imagination.

Offering choices instead of yes/no questions - for example, "Would you like crunchy carrots or cool cucumber?" - also supports sentence building and confidence in speaking.



Games and play

Playing with your child is a powerful way to develop oral language. Through relaxed, enjoyable play, children practise talking and listening.

Imaginative and role-play activities help them create stories, explore characters, and experiment with vocabulary, tone, and expression.

Narrating play supports sentence structure and storytelling, for example "The troll is stomping over the bridge".

Board games, memory games and activities like "*I Spy*" encourage turn-taking, listening, describing, and giving clues. Talking about environmental sounds when out and about builds listening and discussions skills.

Using props, toys and puppets helps children retell familiar stories and invent new ones, boosting confidence and oral language skills.



Songs and rhymes

Help children hear patterns in words and sounds, building listening skills, memory, and confidence with language. Nursery rhymes and action songs also support early sound awareness, which is important for later reading. Singing together regularly, even for a short time, is a fun and effective way to strengthen oral language.





Environmental Print



Environmental print is the print children see in their everyday lives, such as shop signs, logos, road signs, and labels at home. Recognising this familiar print helps children understand that written words carry meaning and serve a purpose. It supports early literacy by encouraging children to notice letters and words in real-life, meaningful contexts, laying the foundations for reading.

Environmental print is:

- Shop signs (Tesco, Sainsbury's)
- Logos and packing (cereal boxes, milk cartons)
- Menus, road signs, labels.

Children often recognise these **before** they can read books. Environmental print helps children learn that:

- Print carries meaning
- Words stay the same every time we see them
- Reading connects to real life.

Research shows that a child's understanding of environmental print develops when adults talk with them about what they see.

What does this look like?

The foundation of literacy starts with environment print. Environmental print surrounds young children - in the home, at nursery, on the streets and in the wider community.

Children use the context of colour, shape, size and pictures to support their recognition. For example, they may recognise the Weetabix packet but not the word Weetabix when it is taken out of context.

This helps them become aware that print and words carry meaning.

Children gradually focus more on the letters and words that interest them - The letters in their name and then they begin to read whole words - for example, STOP on street signs or NO in NO PARKING.



In the Community - children learn to recognise print by noticing street signs, shop signs, logos, road names, and menus. You can support this by:

- Playing logo-spotting games,
- Writing simple shopping lists with pictures and letting your child "read" the list whilst shopping.
- Pointing out familiar signs, such as your street name, school, nursery, and symbols in the park.
- In restaurants or cafes, look at menus and pictures together and talk about different foods.



At home - children can notice words, letters, and logos on clothing labels, household appliances, food packaging, toy logos, magazines, leaflets, and newspapers. These everyday items help build early awareness of print and symbols.





Books and Early Reading

Sharing books, story talk and exposure to books in a child's early years are crucial for later reading success. Children who enjoy books are more likely to practice reading later, creating a positive cycle and hopefully a lifelong love of reading.



A study by Ohio State University in 2019 found that children who were read **five books a day** entered school having heard around **1.4 million more words** than children who were never read to. Even reading **one book a day** exposed children to nearly **300,000 additional words** by the time they started kindergarten. The study emphasised that book reading exposes children **to richer and more varied vocabulary** than everyday conversation alone. The 'million-word gap' helps explain why children who are read to regularly often start school with stronger vocabularies, better listening skills and more confidence with books. It also showed that small, consistent actions, such as sharing one book a day, can make a meaningful difference.

Children also learn about how books work, such as how to hold them, turn the pages and handling them with care.

What does this look like?

Stories at home

Make time for stories and keep them fun. Reading can happen at any time of day with any adult who can spare ten minutes to enjoy a story together. Create a cozy, comfortable space and explore a range of fiction and non-fiction books. Reading with different family members and using varied voices and tones helps bring stories to life.

Book Talk

Introduce 'book talk' by showing your child how to hold books, turn pages carefully, follow the text with a finger, and talk about the pictures. Don't worry if your child chooses the same book repeatedly - this builds confidence, helps them learn patterns, and supports favourite stories they may retell from memory.

Digging Deeper

Ask open-ended questions such as *why*, *I wonder why*, or *tell me what you notice*. These encourage children to respond in sentences, reflect on events, explore characters' feelings, and understand that there are no right or wrong answers.



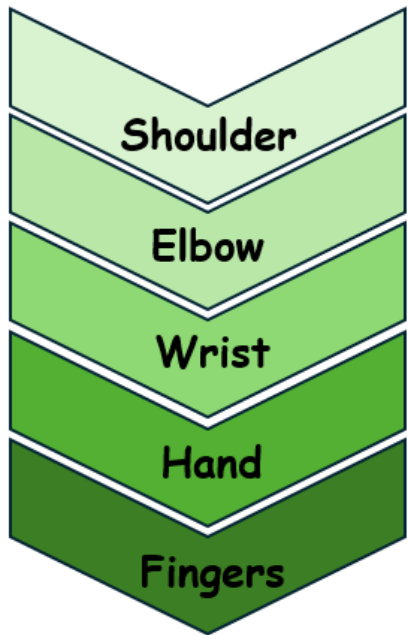


Early Writing

Gross motor skills and fine motor skills are both important parts of children's physical development.

Gross motor skills involve the large muscles of the body and big movements, such as running, climbing, crawling, balancing, and using the arms from the shoulder.

Fine motor skills involve smaller movements using the hands and fingers, such as holding a pencil, using scissors, or fastening buttons.



Children develop control of their movements in a particular order, starting with the larger muscles and moving gradually to the smaller ones. This development moves from the **shoulder to the elbow, then the wrist, hand, and finally the fingers.**

This means that before children can make small, controlled movements with their fingers for writing, they need strength and stability in their bodies and shoulders. Activities like climbing, pushing, pulling, and playing outdoors help build this foundation, making it easier for children to later develop the fine motor control needed for writing and other detailed tasks.

What does this look like?

Gross motor – This Comes First

Make time to be active outdoors at the park or in the garden. Encourage your child to-

- Climb and balance
- Run and jump
- Slide and swing
- Ride and scoot
- Hop and skip
- Go for a walk
- You can also support development by joining clubs such as gymnastics, dance, rugby, football or swimming.

These activities help build core strength, strong muscles, co-ordination and overall body control.



What does this look like?

Mark Making

Children make marks in lots of different ways and ascribe meaning to them. This may look to us like a 'scribble' but this is the development of their co-ordination, motor control and concentration. Recognising and celebrating these marks promotes a positive attitude and enjoyment towards mark making.

Not always pencil and paper!

It can be inside or outside with a variety of media e.g. chalk on the ground, sticks in the mud or a paintbrush on paper. The importance is that children are developing their motor control and movement as the foundations of emergent writing.



1-2 years



2-3 years



3 years



3 years



4 years



4 years
4 months



4 years
6 months



4 years
7 months



4 years
11 months



5 years
3 months

Before children attempt writing we need to give them opportunities to strength their hand muscles. This can involve squeezing using playdough, threading household items such as pasta, beads, Cheerios and pinching - using clothes pegs to pick up small items.

Learning to write is a physical milestone

This isn't an empty space it's filled with soft, flexible cartilage and therefore isn't the stable base that's required for writing. It results in hand 'wobbles', quicker fatigue and whole arm movements.



A three year old child

A five year old child

In summary

We wanted to share with you how we can all work together to give your child the very best start we can. By working as a team, we can build strong links between home and school, so that what your child experiences in school is supported at home and we don't need to wait until September. Over the summer is a great opportunity to start sewing some early literacy seeds.

We hope this session has helped you feel confident that you are already doing many wonderful things to support your child, and that you feel encouraged and empowered with ideas to help them even further.



Finally, thank you for coming - we're excited to begin this journey with you and support your child's growth. We hope you've found today's sessions helpful. Please feel free to ask any questions. We have created some handouts on each of the aspects for you, so don't forget to pick one up on your way out.

