

# English in the Early Years

Learning in English is key and in the Early Years Framework features as a Prime Area in the form of **Communication and Language** and also as a Specific Area in the form of **Literacy**.

**Communication and Language** is divided into 2 key areas:

**Listening, Attention and Understanding and Speaking.**

In the Reception setting, we work hard to create an environment that is communication friendly. Children are encouraged to use language in a range of contexts both formally and informally. Communication friendly spaces allow the children to speak with their friends by sharing books, role playing and using puppets. Children are also led in guided work with adults to encourage their skills by listening to friends and responding appropriately, asking and answering questions, problem solving and using talk to communicate needs, feelings and opinions. Guided collaborative activities also allow the children to learn to use talk to communicate ideas effectively and to respond to instructions and ideas given by others.

Adults also provide opportunities to model language for the children and in this way, help move children forward with their thinking. These 'in the moment' language 'scaffolding' opportunities allow adults to support children's learning at a pace and level that is right for them. As a school, we use scaffolding and modelling techniques from Barak Rosenshine's 'Principles of Instruction' as an effective way to guide and teach the children in small steps, moving their learning forward at a level appropriate to their needs.

The importance of sharing books in developing communication skills can never be under-estimated and so we invest in high-quality literature for the children to ensure that as well as developing a love of books and reading, the children also learn to talk freely about books, explore storylines, including predicting events, learn about characters and learn to recite key phrases and repeated vocabulary. The word play in some books also helps the children develop their understanding of particular language techniques such as rhyming and alliteration.

Time to talk is paramount and so we prioritise conversational opportunities and focus on ad hoc explorations of concepts, events, words and stories-particularly during unstructured moments in the day. Following up the child's questions and comments often leads to the richest conversations.

**Literacy** is divided into 3 key areas:

**Comprehension** The language rich environment together with adult guided activities allow the children to develop their overall comprehension. Through all this intervention, our aim for the children is that they can then demonstrate understanding of what has been read to them by retelling stories and narratives using their own words and recently introduced vocabulary, anticipate key events in stories and understand recently introduced vocabulary during discussions about stories, non-fiction, rhymes and poems and during role-play.

**Word Reading** With our focus on phonics, following on from the practise of our pre-school practitioners, we use our structured phonics scheme to ensure that the children are given the opportunity to decode and recognise words in a progressive way throughout the Reception year. With the introduction of sight words early on in the reception year, that slowly build up during the year, our systematic approach to teaching reading ensures that by the end of the reception year, the children are taught to say a sound for each letter in the alphabet and at learn digraphs and trigraphs, read words consistent with their phonic knowledge by sound-blending and read aloud simple sentences and books that are consistent with their phonic knowledge, including some common exception words. As well as learning to read in adult led sessions, the children are supported through child led activities to apply and develop their skills in the enabling environment.

**Writing** Mark making is a natural and developmental process that we use to communicate meaning from the earliest age. In reception, we encourage all forms of mark making using different tools and implements and through child initiated work, skills in holding pencils, crayons and paintbrushes are introduced together with finger strengthening opportunities such as by stretching elastic bands, using scissors and tweezers and manipulating small world toys and construction toys.

With the purpose for mark making established, we work with our children on teaching them to write words and letters of significance such as their names and letters we have learned in our phonics work. By establishing this connection between communication and writing very early on, we find that the children naturally start to spell words in the course of their work and play and so resources that enable them to write are always readily available.

In conjunction with our phonics teaching, we teach our children to form the letters we have taught and in working in this way though guided activities, the children see themselves as writers and learn to develop their skills in a progressive way. By the end of the Reception year children will have been taught to write recognisable letters, spell words by identifying sounds in them and represent the sounds with a letter or letters and to write simple phrases and sentences that can be read by others.



Tracing letter shapes in sand.



Working as a team to develop speaking and listening skills when role playing.

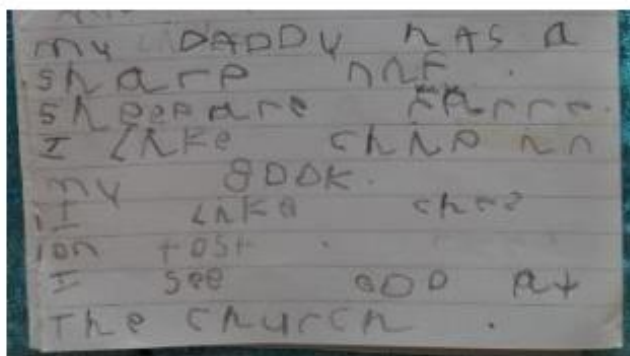


Using a keyboard to find letters in a name.

Taking part in a phonics hunt.



Independent sentence writing.



Reading a book with a friend.

