

Supporting your child's learning journey (3-5 yrs old)

Introduction

Parents are their child's first and most important teacher. Research shows that being involved in your child's learning has a significant impact on their educational achievement. Children whose parents are involved in their learning achieve significantly better outcomes during their school journey. The benefits of becoming involved in your child's learning are: enabling your child to build and improve their learning experiences which lead to better outcomes that will be carried on into adult life; it will support strong bonds between your family and the setting your child attends; it will provide a good role model to your child through cooperation and sharing and show your child that what they do is cherished and important.

We understand that as parents you have many demands on your time so the aim of this factsheet is to offer a range of activities to support three important areas of your child's development using the resources that you have in the home or your local community and that can be done as part of your usual daily routines.

what is a key person?

- A member of the nursery/pre-school staff team with responsibility for settling your child into the setting
- A key person is chosen to match your child's attendance pattern to provide continuity of care and development
- They will develop an individual learning plan for your child and record their progress
- They will work with parents to learn about a child's home routines
- The key person will wish to hear about a child's routine, their likes and dislikes, their achievements, see photographs and hear news from home, so that this can be put into their personal learning journey and they can plan further learning opportunities within the nursery and suggest ideas for at home.

Working with your child's key person

When your child enters nursery or pre-school you will be allocated a key contact, this person is referred to as their key person. The key person will want to work with you to gain first hand knowledge of your child to ensure that they are able to build on your child's home experiences to plan an individual learning journey together that meets your child's needs. This can only be achieved with the help and support from you through sharing information, photographs and achievements your child has made. The learning journey belongs to you and your child and it is a living diary of this important stage of your child's life - it is very important to capture all of the developments to create a complete picture. You can do this by sharing pictures of family events, things your child may have said or done at home, new interests and informing your child's key person of all their special accomplishments and experiences, e.g. a family day out at the zoo.

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)

EYFS is the learning framework used in all early years settings and school reception classes in England:

- The EYFS supports your child's learning and development
- Your child's key person will plan an individual learning experience for your child
- There are three prime areas of learning: Personal, Social and Emotional Development, Communication and Language, and Physical Development
- Four further specific areas of learning through which the three prime areas are applied; Literacy, Mathematics, Understanding the World and Expressive Arts and Design.

In this factsheet we are going to give you ideas and activities to help to support the three prime areas of learning for your child. In each of the following sections we will give you simple activities that you can do with your child to support each of these areas in your everyday activities at home.

The indoor and outdoor environments

- Get down on to your knees so you are at eye level with your child, to see what they are seeing and what they can access
- Have quiet times at home by turning off the TV and minimising distractions and noise, where possible, so that your child can concentrate on the task at hand and develop their concentration and listening skills
- Have toys and books accessible to your child
- Create baskets/boxes of interest for your child, old mobiles, cameras, different sized buttons; these are particularly useful when you need to make important calls
- Both the indoor and outdoor environments are important for your child's development so try to ensure you and your child spend time outdoors every day
- When out in your community point out the things that you can see and talk to your child about them, i.e. local shops, birds or transport. This will widen your child's vocabulary as well as giving them a sense of their community
- When friends and family visit don't be tempted to put the children in front of the television or in another area to play. Include them in the chats or encourage them to play nearby and involve the visitors in their play. This will enable you to provide a good role model for developing social skills, e.g. interaction with adults and/or different ages of children. It will also build your child's vocabulary with a range of new words that they can experiment with later.

Supporting personal, social and emotional development

Personal, social and emotional development is all the skills you give your child to support them to be part of the world we live in, function successfully in later life and interact and play with other children and adults. As a parent you are a role model to your child and can give them the skills to socialise and mix successfully in later life.

Making healthy choices should be introduced to young children to build good habits for the future, encouraging your child to be active will help them to stay healthy and avoid childhood obesity and heart disease.

- Talk to your child about the meals you are making and about the healthy ingredients
- Discuss why you should not have too much sugar (as this may affect their teeth and health) and why vegetables are good for a healthy heart
- Get your child to feel their heart whilst sitting down and then do a quick run, hop or jump and then feel the heart again. You should notice a difference in the rate of the heartbeat and you can talk to your child about why it is good to exercise and make your heart work
- Identify with them which activities make your heart go slow (watching TV, reading, puzzles) and

which ones make it go fast (riding a bike, running, jumping, playing football) and how it is good to do some of both types to keep a healthy heart. This will help children to stay healthy and develop good habits for future health

- Try to grow vegetables (in window boxes or the garden) to use in your cooking. This will teach children about where food comes from, how it reaches the plate and the changes it may go through, i.e. a tomato pulled off a tomato plant will look very different in a tomato soup. It will also give children the chance to understand what vegetables need to grow and thrive. Once children have been personally involved with the growing process they are much keener to try eating new things
- Talk to your child about their favourite foods and what they like and dislike and what your likes are too. This demonstrates to children that it is okay to dislike some things in life and that they are able to make choices and decisions about their preferences
- Sit together as a family when eating meals. You will be a role model for your child by demonstrating good choices, manners and healthy eating habits. Sitting together at meal times is a good social occasion and gives you time to share news and ideas over an enjoyable meal
- Keep mealtimes relaxed and allow plenty of time for eating
- Decision making and choices are an important life skill and it is good to support this process from an early age. When offering your child choices, i.e. what they would like to wear today, which story they want to choose, it is important to allow them time to think through their choice before making a decision. Start with a couple of choices as children will be daunted if you offer them too many options. You want your child to be able to make a decision they are sure about and are confident with the thought process.

Support **good hygiene routines** through showing your child how to keep clean and healthy.

- Always wash your hands before eating/cooking and after changing a nappy or after using the bathroom and wiping noses
- Children may develop hand washing routines at nursery by singing a favourite nursery rhyme twice whilst washing your hands, you can also do this at home
- Talk to your child about washing away the germs so they don't become ill because this will reinforce the discussions your child may have with the nursery staff
- Download this free handwashing leaflet providing practical advice and tips for parents to help teach children to wash their hands correctly by visiting www.ndna.org.uk/parents-factsheets

Support for dealing with a range of their feelings

- Offer time for your child to talk about their feelings. Ask them, how do you feel today? How does that make you feel? Why are you sad? And explain your own feelings: 'Mummy feels very happy'
- It is important for children to be able to verbalise their feelings as this will help them to resolve conflicts and understand the way they feel and why
- If siblings/friends are having a disagreement over a toy ask them, 'how can we solve this?' Once given this responsibility, children are very creative in giving ideas. Once you have a decision ask again, is that fair? Is everybody happy with that? This will teach children important problem solving and negotiating skills that will hopefully help them to avoid physical disagreements in the future
- During games and activities introduce game rules and talk about sharing and taking turns, discuss how to be kind to others and explain how some actions can hurt others
- Look at signs around your community and ask, why does it say stop? What might happen if we don't listen or follow what it says? This will help your child to identify the place of rules and their purpose.

Communication and language

Language development supports all areas of learning and is an invaluable tool for life. In some areas of the UK up to 40 – 50% of children enter school with 'delayed language'. The most important and

simple way you can support your child's language development is to talk, talk, talk to your child. This will help them to identify actions to words. Do this as you are carrying out your household tasks, while you are out and about in your local area and whilst you are in the garden or walking to the park. Wherever you are and whatever you are doing you can share language with your child and doing this will help to support your child to develop their language and communication skills. It will also introduce them to a wide range of vocabulary, stimulate their curiosity and make them aware of the world around them.

Listening

Listening is an essential life skill and it is very important for children to practice and develop their listening at home as well as in nursery. When you are out and about in your community you can play listening games with your child.

- You can go on 'listening walks'. Ask your child, what can you hear? Can you hear a bus/bird/ alarm etc? Ask them to tell you what they hear. Are the sounds loud sounds or quiet sounds? Are they getting nearer or further away? Do they like the sound? Ask them to describe the sounds they are hearing, where else do you hear that sound?
- You can play listening games with your child at home. Use a cardboard box to hide a range of objects (keys, pan and spoon, newspaper, wind chime, bells) and ask your child to close their eyes and to tell you what each 'noise' you make is. Then let your child choose objects for you to guess too, which support turn taking and game playing. Use sound effects from your mobile phone to encourage children to guess the sound, e.g. dog barking, cockerel, bells, cats, elephants. This will not only encourage them to listen but will also develop their IT skills from an early age.

Reading

Reading stories is important to develop a child's vocabulary, their listening skills, their understanding that print has meaning, how to turn pages, that reading is something to do for pleasure, enjoying a range of stories and rhymes and it is a fun way to spend quality time with you enjoying a story together.

reading activities

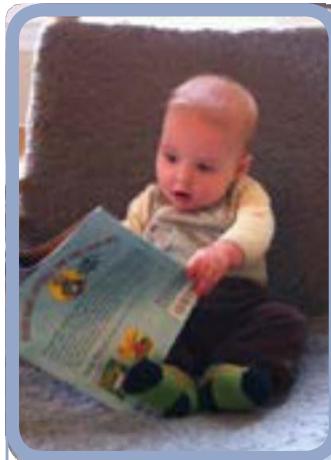
Use your child's favourite toys to make a story up

Encourage your child to tell you a story using props from around the home

Look at the front cover and talk about what you can see

Talk about what is happening in the pictures, what do they think will happen next?

After the story look at the pictures again and ask your child to tell you what happened



Visit your local library and choose books together

Never worry about reading a story perfectly

Writing

Writing is an important communication tool. You can be a good role model for your child by highlighting writing activities that you do. This will enable your child to see the wide range of purposes writing is used for and its importance in every day use.

Writing activities

Writing shopping lists

Providing pens and paper at all times for your child to practice with

Sending letters, labeling packages and parcels

Writing out menus

Sending text messages and emails



Use your journeys to look at a range of road/shop signs

Whenever you have to write something down you should ensure your child is involved too

Pour rice/flour/sand/lentils onto a tray and use your fingers to demonstrate forming individual letters or writing the child's name when no writing equipment available

Supporting Physical Development

Parents' worries around children's safety have led to a decrease in the time children spend playing outdoors and in the numbers of children that walk to school/nursery.

The importance of physical activity

- Keeps children healthy
- Can prevent obesity and heart disease
- Builds strong muscles and bones
- Supports and improves a child's coordination, control and movement
- Develops healthier habits that can continue into adulthood
- Allows children to identify and manage risks.

Learning to take risks is a crucial life skill that we all use each day to decide a certain course of action and it is essential that we give our young children the opportunity to take manageable risks and learn the consequences from these choices. Throughout their play experiences children are deciding on the risks they want to take, i.e. whether to climb up to the first or second level of the climbing frame, and each of these risk experiences will then be stored towards future experiences. Supporting your child's risk taking is supporting their life long learning. There are lots of ways you can support a child's physical development even if you do not have access to an outdoor space or local park.

Supporting development of your child's larger muscles, e.g. legs and arms, you can think about activities like:

Riding bikes, scooters

Running, skipping, jumping, hopping

Allow your child opportunities to run around outdoors every day

Playing football/ball games

Climbing on large apparatus

Put on some music and encourage your child to move along to the music

Play throwing and catching games to support their hand/eye coordination

Take them to a park or into the garden to have the space to move around freely

Use boxes/storage tubs to create an obstacle course that you and your child can complete

Use musical instruments to make up moves and dances



Swimming

Move around the house like animals, i.e. stomp like a elephant, creep like a mouse

Let your child help with cooking by mixing and measuring ingredients

Provide play kitchen equipment and play dough and rolling pins to encourage muscle development

Supporting small muscle development

Provide opportunities for your child to write with pencils and crayons

Cutting with scissors

Tying up shoes and fasteners

Play with dough

Painting

Fasten buttons/zips on clothes

Jigsaw puzzles

Dressing dolls, teddies

Screwing and unscrewing lids/objects

Tearing pieces of paper

Writing in sand/lentils

Sorting objects, buttons, money etc



All of these activities will help your child's coordination and support their writing skills at school.

The most important thing with all of the above activities is to have fun and enjoy spending time supporting your child. Your child's key person will be happy to give you further ideas to support your child's learning as and when you need them.

further information

www.bigeyedowl.co.uk/science
www.parentcentre.gov.uk
www.bhf.org.uk/healthychildren
www.literacytrust.org.uk
www.education.gov.uk/childrenandyoungpeople
www.preschoolrainbow.org/preschool-outdoor
www.nhs.uk/Change4life Outdoor game ideas for parents

about NDNA

National Day Nurseries Association (NDNA) is the national charity and membership association for children's nurseries across the UK.

NDNA's vision is a society where all children and families receive the best-quality care and learning that enable them to reach their full potential. **Our mission** is to support the delivery of best-quality care and early learning for children across the UK

NDNA offers a range of expert advice and information for parents who are looking for childcare. Information includes: tips on choosing a nursery, information on early education and advice on affordable childcare.

NDNA's parent panel

NDNA would like to hear your views as a parent on the education and childcare issues that are close to your heart. Join NDNA's parent panel by visiting www.ndna.org.uk/panel and filling out the form.

National Day Nurseries Association

National Early Years Enterprise Centre, Longbow Close, Huddersfield, HD2 1GQ
Tel: 01484 40 70 70 Fax: 01484 40 70 60 email: info@ndna.org.uk twitter: @NDNAtalk www.ndna.org.uk
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