

## Helping your child with literacy (Primary 1)

This leaflet is to give you some ideas about how you can support your child's learning in literacy in small, fun, practical ways at home this year.

The most important message to give your child is that learning is fun. Most of the learning you can do with your child at this stage in their development is through talking and playing games together. We need to develop a positive mind-set to our learning. Provide lots of praise.

### **Language games to play**

- Find poems and rhymes that play with language, like Michael Rosen's 'There's mustard in the custard'.

- Make up guessing games during meal times, e.g. I'm thinking of an animal. It can gallop. You can ride it. What is it? Take it in turns.

Put some objects on a tray, talk about them with your child, then cover them up and see how many he or she can remember: Kim's Game or Yo Ho Ho! (Orchard Toys).

- Write and read out a list of rhyming words that have the same sounds e.g. rain, brain, main and another word that is different, such as 'the'. Ask which is the odd one out.

- Play 'Simon says' with slightly more complicated instructions than 'Stand up/Sit down'. Try and jiggle on one leg, flap your arms and hop, rub your tummy and smile!

- Play yes/no games. Your child chooses an object/person and answers yes/no to your questions until you guess what/who they are thinking of.

There are many websites but the ones we recommend for this booklet are

[www.readwritecount.scot](http://www.readwritecount.scot)

<https://education.gov.scot/parentzone/>

<https://www.teachyourmonstertoread.com/>

The Jolly Phonics app is very good also Mr Thorne's Phonics app.

## **General advice/Supporting your children**

### **Please don't**

- Criticise your child if they find it difficult.
- Worry about a lack of progress – some children take longer than others on certain stages but may well easily catch up further down the line.
- Feel frustrated if your child finds a word difficult that they have previously read correctly.
- Make your child feel that they are in competition with anyone else.

### **Avoid saying:**

- No! That was wrong! That's an easy word!
- You should know that Try and remember
- You've already had it. Think!
- You know this word. What do you mean, you're tired?
- Come on you're not concentrating We did that yesterday!

### **Try to say:**

- I like the way you worked that out
- Get your mouth ready to say the word.
- What can you hear at the beginning/ the end?
- Does that make sense? Does it look right? Try that again.
- Do you know a word like that? Look at the picture and see if it helps

### 50 Common sight words in Active Literacy

a at the I in it an is and am me my  
did as he can we into go got get if for  
on be but you was went his have just to  
your by only are dad not she come from  
this that then with us so much of or

**Listening and talking** are at the heart of children's learning. Children need to be confident communicators and active listeners in order to learn about the world they live in. Language skills are crucial, and children begin to develop these skills from birth. Their play sessions are seeking to develop communication skills. Listening and talking are the roots of reading and writing'

Here are some ways to develop your child's listening skills:

- Story CDs, songs and rhymes in the car and elsewhere
- Ask them to follow clear simple instructions
- Set aside time for talking – without being interrupted by phones, TV, radio, computer etc!
- Tell them about your day and encourage them to tell you about theirs.
- Take turns in conversations with them and encourage them to listen to your contribution. Actively encourage longer conversations.
- Play language games – like 'I-Spy', '20 questions', 'What am I?', 'Continue the story' – you start a story, the children carry on.
- Enjoy telling jokes and encourage the telling of them.
- Take time to answer your child's questions – model being a good listener!
- Listen patiently
- Ask questions at appropriate times.

**It is really important to talk to your child and listen to them. Ask your child for their opinions and value what they say. Listen to your child. Encourage them to ask questions. If you do not have the answer, why not find out together?**

## Reading

As a parent, you are your child's first and most important teacher. Reading aloud to children is the best way to get them interested in reading.

Spending time with word games, stories, and books will help your child.

## Supporting Reading at Home

1. Find a place to sit together that suits you both
2. Try to read for at least 5 to 10 minutes a day and once over the weekend. Encourage it as a pleasurable experience.

Start with the title, look at the cover and briefly chat about what you might find inside. You can do this with fiction and non fiction texts. Remember to use non fiction texts.

At the bottom of each page, encourage your child to predict what might happen next.

If your child gets stuck, ask what word would fit best, ask them to sound it out (if appropriate), or simply supply the word yourself.

What happened in the story? Does this remind them of anything in their lives or anything they have read before? Did they think the book was funny? Did they spot any interesting words and phrases? Did they enjoy the book?

3. Read to your child. You can help your child to understand the emphasis of particular parts of the story.
4. Encourage your child to retell the story you have just shared. This will give you an idea of how much they have understood. Try reading to your child a story which is perhaps more challenging than one they would be able to read to you. Ask them to listen to the details of the story carefully. Once you have finished, ask them to retell the story to you, in their own words.

During the early stages of reading there is a lot of emphasis on learning the sounds and this is completed through our Active Literacy and Jolly Phonics schemes. BUT the reading and sharing of books and generating a love of books is the most important aspect and this is an ongoing journey.

## Writing

Learning to write well is an important communication skill. Children learn about writing from watching others and from the writing they see around them – things like adverts, notes, papers and letters. One of the most important ways to encourage your child to write is by providing them with a model of a writer – you!

- Cut up letters from magazines for children to make their names and short sentences.
- Let your child write their own Christmas cards, thank you letters, cards or emails to friends or relatives, invitations to a party, or a list of things they need to take on holiday.
- Buy stickers of a favourite TV programme or book. Make your own little book about it.
- Make up a story together about one of their toys. You write the story as they say the words. Make up a little booklet. Take photos and use the pictures in the book.
- Use magnetic letters and make small words together. Leave a message on the fridge door and encourage your child to reply.
- Always praise your child to develop their confidence as a writer. Even if their writing is not entirely recognisable.
- Choose a time when your child wants to write and when you are able to help. However, if your child is reluctant, don't insist.
- Talk with your child before they begin to write. This will help them clarify their ideas.
- Encourage your child to try to write for themselves, even if they make mistakes.
- Suggest they have a go with words that they don't know how to spell. They need to say the word slowly and write down the sounds they hear. If they really don't want to, just spell out the word for them.
- As your child begins to write at home, do not over-emphasise neatness in their writing attempts. When children write they need to get their ideas down first.
- Ask your child to read their writing to you as they write and when they have finished. This will help them understand the importance of the reader.
- Children need to feel that they are writing for a purpose. This can be in the form of letters to friends, stories, shopping lists, making and writing greeting cards, plans for a party, postcards and diaries.
- Children can often be encouraged to write if they have nice notebooks or mini whiteboards to use

## Handwriting - how to help.

By the time some children come to school pupils have developed bad habits in holding the pencil and how to write some letters. By working together we can ensure that their handwriting is legible and fluent.

If children are to develop a fluent and fast handwriting style, they must learn to hold a pencil with a grip that is relaxed but allows for efficient control of the pencil. If children grip a pencil too tightly, they won't develop a free-flowing movement and they will tire very quickly. Experts agree that children should be encouraged to hold the pencil between the thumb and forefinger with the pencil resting on the third finger. The thumb and forefinger should also be able to move slightly so that very fine movements required for writing are possible.

Commercial pencil grips, or triangular pencils, can be used to encourage this pencil hold but their use must be monitored as they can be misapplied. Care should be taken that children do not grip the pencil too tightly, as this produces tenseness in the arm and shoulder and also increases pressure on the paper.

**WE NEED TO BE OBSERVANT OF A CHILD'S GRIP. TRY AND CORRECT IF YOU SEE THEM HOLDING A PENCIL INCORRECTLY.**

### **Developing gross and fine motor skills. – large and small movements.**

#### **Gross motor skills**

Encourage children to skywrite with both hands. Ask another adult or a confident child to model the movement with her/his back to the rest of the children. Stand behind the children to check they are all following the movement correctly.

Let children make patterns in the air or on each other's backs.

Make a letter shape in the damp sand tray. Invite each child in the group to trace over the shape, going a little deeper each time. The object is to get down to the base of the sand tray without the sides falling in.

Make handwriting interesting – practise drawing letters in sand, water, or paint, use white boards, playdough, pastry or shaving foam.

## Fine motor skills

- Let the children make patterns using pegboards.
- Provide sewing and weaving activities.
- Involve the children in chopping and peeling in cooking activities.
- Use finger rhymes, counting fingers, playing with words and sounds, etc.
- Provide small construction toys.
- Structure sand and water play to include sieving, pouring, picking up toys using tools, etc.
- Develop the pincer movement: show the children how to use tweezers to pick up and sort sequins, small beads, etc., sprinkle coloured sand, glitter, salt, etc. on pictures.
- Try fun activities that strengthen your child's hand e.g. cutting, painting, squeezing playdough, picking up small things with tweezers and pegs.
- Encourage the children to strengthen their fingers by using clay, play dough,
- Old plasticine is particularly useful for developing the hand muscles required for writing. Children can make letter shapes and patterns using the modelling media.
- It is important that the foundation of the letters are repeated again and again in the correct way.

a b c d e f g h i

j k l m n o p q r

s t u v w x y z

**Curriculum for Excellence** –These are the early level outcomes for children, which we aim to achieve by the end of primary one.

## Listening and talking

- ✓ say why they like or dislike different books
- ✓ talk about events and characters in real life and in stories in different ways
- ✓ take it in turns to speak, at an appropriate volume, some of the time
- ✓ listen some of the time when others are talking
- ✓ retell some pieces of useful and interesting information they have learned
- ✓ recognise and understand the difference between different types of text e.g. stories, information, instructions, poems (rhymes), songs
- ✓ share some experiences and feelings when listening and talking to others
- ✓ share thoughts about characters and events

## Writing

- ✓ choose to write/create text for pleasure
- ✓ create words using knowledge of phonics/phonemes
- ✓ write sentences using capital letters and full stops and use spaces to separate words
- ✓ write for a variety of purposes
- ✓ communicate who, where, when and what in a text
- ✓ share feelings and ideas in text
- ✓ sequence sentences to make sense.

## Reading

- ✓ Recognise and play with rhyme, rhythm and repetition
- ✓ Read simple text features to find useful and interesting information
- ✓ Answer simple questions about the text
- ✓ Identify letters by name and sound
- ✓ Read 50 common words
- ✓ Retell the main events in sequence