

PARRACOMBE C OF E PRIMARY SCHOOL

Part of the West Exmoor Federation



Foundation Stage Play Area



PRE-SCHOOL HANDBOOK

CONTENTS

- 1 INTRODUCTION
2. PLAY/PLAYING
3. TOYS, GAMES, BOOKS
4. HELP WITH READING
5. HELP WITH SPEAKING AND LISTENING
6. HELP WITH WRITING
7. HELP WITH MATHEMATICS
8. COMPUTERS AND ICT
9. PREPARING YOUR CHILD FOR SCHOOL
10. MESSY ACTIVITIES
11. ADDITIONAL NOTES
12. NATIONAL CURRICULUM

1. INTRODUCTION

We have produced this booklet in response to many enquiries from parents about the range of pre school activities which could be undertaken with their children.

The most important years of a child's learning life are those before school. In the first five years your child will learn more and faster than at any other time in their life.

Children learn by **DOING** - to them it is play. You, the parents, who love, comfort, talk and play with your child start the process of infant learning.

They need to be able to do simple things, to talk about how they did them and to tell you why and sometimes to ask for help. **Sharing** their 'play' is important and fun!

Remember to **praise** your child for **trying** as well as for achievement. Success and praise will encourage them to try something else.

When dealing with young children it is essential to recognise:

- ☺ That childhood is not merely a means of preparing children for future stages of their lives. It is a unique and precious time, to be experienced and valued for itself.
- ☺ That the prime motivation for children's early learning is their own joy in life and the pleasure they gain from the experiences offered to them.

2. PLAY/PLAYING

The value of play in the early years cannot be overstated. It is through all aspects of play that the young child comes to terms with and makes sense of the world.

Playing can be divided into the areas of individual play and shared play. Each area is, in its own way, important and relevant.

Children need their own time to discover and consolidate ideas; but equally their discoveries need to be shared with and valued by their parents or other children.

Never laugh at, or make fun of your child's ideas; this will only discourage. A warm, lively interest and interaction will nurture a child's progress.

3. TOYS, GAMES AND BOOKS

We are often asked for advice on what a child should be experiencing at different ages/stages. This is such a vast area to cover, particularly as each child's interests and abilities are so varied.

The following advice is very generalised.

It is important that the toys, books and games provided are appropriate to the age and ability of the child. Toys provided for one child may be totally unsuitable for another child of the same age.

There is nothing to be gained by giving a child a toy which is too advanced for its current level of understanding. Frustration and boredom will surely follow and when the child encounters the toy on the next occasion it will remember the previous failure and probably not want to play with it.

Usually the suggested age ranges displayed on toys and books are a good guide. You are not saving money buying a toy too advanced for your child; they could be missing out on the experience of a toy more suitable for their current ability or interest.

Simple, colourful, well made plastic toys will probably have more child appeal and play value than the plain wooden toys that adults find so aesthetically pleasing. Remember who the toy is for! The less complicated the toy the more beneficial it is to the child, as it allows them to use **their** imagination and creativity. Children will often create/make their own toys from every day articles - e.g. boxes and other junk items. Once again this encourages imaginative play.

One exception to the 'plastic toy rule' would be to purchase a good set of smooth beech wood building blocks in various shapes and sizes (they could be coloured). These are heavier and have a greater stability than plastic bricks. Building blocks would be one toy to which we hope every child should have access.

4. HELPING TO DEVELOP AN INTEREST IN READING

We do not expect your child to be a "reader" when they first enter school. If he or she can read then they will be encouraged to progress further. However, we hope that all children would have experienced some of the following activities:-

Encourage an interest in books from as early an age as possible. Let your baby see you reading newspapers and books or writing letters and lists. Even tiny babies are fascinated by the contrast of black print on white paper or the rustling sound of paper being turned or crumpled! Rag and board books have their own useful place in the early years, but the crackle of paper has an attraction of its own.

Yes, your child will probably bite, tear or suck paper at first so give them magazines, envelopes, catalogues, old greetings cards (be careful of news print ink). The destructive stage soon passes.

Use any books that appeal to your child - novelty books, 'pop-up' books, 'lift the flap' books, 'search for' books and picture books.

Look for good, clear illustrations that really look like the objects they portray. As adults we have grown used to cartoon and stylised illustration but if a picture does not clearly illustrate what an object is supposed to be then the young child will not recognise it.

Look for simple clearly printed words in lower case letters *not capital letters*.

Discuss the picture in the following terms: - What is happening? What colours? How many people/objects can you see? Hunt for objects, i.e. where is the cat? Show me. You might point to the word cat and say, "This word says cat." Later you might say, "Show me the word cat."

Read to your child as soon as they are happy to settle and listen. Make this a secure, loving time with your child cuddled on your knee or in bed.

Encourage them when they pretend to 'read' to their baby or their toys.

You will probably have to look at the same books time and time again and read the same stories every day. Repetition is a basic and important part of learning.

If you are looking at alphabet books try not to use the names of the letters to identify the objects. Use the letter sounds.

- i.e. a (as in bag) for apple
 - o (as in dog) for ostrich
 - b (as in box) for brick - Try not to put too much emphasis on the 'uh' sound (this also applies to other letters such as: c, d, f, g, h, k, l, m, n, p, r, s, t, v, w, and z)
- For instance don't say 'p-uh' for p - put lips together and pretend to blow out a candle gently. Too much use of the 'uh' sound causes confusion later when the child tries to build words phonically.

Look at the wealth of words that surround them at home or when out shopping. Point them out. Talk about them. Why are they there? What do they mean? Sing songs and nursery rhymes. Play finger games. Listen for rhyming, silly or funny words. Make up nonsense words.

Activities such as these lead on to the next most important aspect of:

5. SPEAKING/LISTENING

Extend and encourage conversation in as many ways as you can.

Look for the opportunities for interactive discussion. Try not to talk *at* the child, give them chances to make their own responses and convey their own ideas.

If your child uses baby words or has made up words of their own do not make fun of them but, as they begin to approach school age, **gently** encourage them to use the correct words.

Listening to others is just as important as speaking, so encourage your child to listen to what others say.

6. HELP WITH WRITING

We hope that your child will have experienced many ways of mark making with pencils, pens, crayons, chalk and paint.

It is probably best to use pencils, crayons, etc., in a fairly controlled situation at first to prevent the marking of walls, furnishings and clothes.

The first marks made are usually random lines with the pencil held in either hand.

These will develop into circular scribbling movements. At this stage you will probably be able to tell whether your child is showing a left or right handed preference.

Soon your child will be telling you what their drawing represents.

The next stage will often be a circle described as a person. It may be given eyes and at a later stage limbs.

Your child will want to tell you who it is and will want the name written down. Often they will scribble on top of your writing to denote 'their writing'.

Your child has realised that marks are not only used for drawing pictures but that Mummy or Daddy makes marks and that those marks actually mean words.

When your child asks for help with writing show him or her how to hold the pencil correctly. That is; pinched lightly between the first finger and thumb, balanced against the second finger and held approximately an inch or 2 cms. from the point. Try to encourage the correct grip in whichever is the dominant hand. Bad holding habits are formed early and are very difficult to change at school. However, do not force the issue and upset your child. Try again another day.

If you are showing your child how to write words only use capital letters at the beginning of names. Use lower case letters thereafter.

As the schools writing policy is to 'join up' as soon as possible we encourage the use of the joining hooks on lower case letters as shown on the next page.



7. HELPING YOUR CHILD WITH MATHEMATICAL ACTIVITIES

There are many pre-school activities that will help you prepare your child for school. The study of mathematics does not involve just working with number, so please do not start by getting your child to do sums!

Listed below are some of the activities which are easily undertaken at home and form the basis of mathematical work at school.

Start with talk and language. Every day words, such as the following, play a very important part in the earliest stages of mathematical learning.

Colour

Black, blue, brown, green, grey, orange, pink, red, white, yellow, purple.

Number

Zero, one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten.

Operation

Add, take away.

Position

Above, behind, below, beside, between, bottom, higher, in front of, inside, lower than, outside, over, top, under.

Quantity

As many as, empty, fewer, fewer than, full, less than, more, more than, not as many.

Shape

Circle, rectangle, square, triangle.

Size

Large, larger, larger than, largest, long, longer, longer than, longest, short, shorter, shorter than, shortest, small, smaller, smaller than, smallest, tall, taller, taller than, tallest.

Every day experiences such as the following are ideal opportunities to make use of mathematical language in a natural way.

Shopping

Counting objects bought, paying for small items, comparing sizes, looking at shapes, playing shops, handling coins.

Walking or Driving

Counting animals in a field, windows in a house, cars, etc. Describe the shapes, colours and size of objects. Look for numbers on shops, houses and cars.

Cooking

Count out ingredients (e.g. how many eggs) and cutlery. Try weighing biscuit shapes and considering the time food takes to cook.

Playing

All of the following will help with the development of mathematical ideas: snakes and ladders, dominoes, snap type card games, dice games, Duplo, Lego, construction toys, matching and posting shapes, puzzles, graded size containers, building bricks, clay, plasticine, play dough, dry and wet sand and water.

Reading

Use pictures in books to discuss colour, shape, size, numbers, etc. Many nursery rhymes include numbers and counting.

Mathematical ideas can be related to life in so many ways:-

Colour

Talk about colours whenever they occur.

Counting

Introduce and practise this when climbing stairs, doing up buttons, handling sweets or by matching sweets to a given number of people i.e. one sweet for Mummy, one sweet for Daddy, one sweet for me.

Distance

Talk about how far away things are (a long way, not far, etc.), who can throw the furthest.

Pattern

Make patterns with bricks, toys, gummed paper shapes.

Shape

Look for patterns all around such as circles, squares, triangles.

Sorting

Sort objects according to colour, size, shape.

Time

Talk about the time things happen, how long things take and the order of events such as getting up and having breakfast.

Estimation

Guess number, size, weight and distance.

Size and Length

A *large* doll or *small* teddy, a *long* snake, a *short* rope.

TRY NOT TO COUNT NUMBERS IN ISOLATION. A CHILD WHO CAN RECITE NUMBERS FROM 1 - 10 HAS A GOOD MEMORY BUT THERE IS NO REAL VALUE UNLESS HE OR SHE HAS FIRST LEARNED TO RELATE NUMBERS TO OBJECTS.

8. COMPUTERS AND ICT

You shouldn't worry too much about computers at this stage. It is our opinion that it is far better for children to spend more time playing with conventional toys rather than computer games at this stage. However, we are living in the computer age and there are some useful commercial programmes available. Try to choose ones that are interactive and will actually help children to learn some useful concepts. Familiarisation with a keyboard would also be useful. Try to encourage children to use both hands on the keys.

9. PREPARING YOUR CHILD FOR SCHOOL

These are the social skills which we hope your child will have acquired by the time he or she comes to school.

- Your child should be able to use the toilet independently and correctly and wash their hands. If you are worried that your child may not always get to the toilet in time then please pack a spare set of clothes in their P.E. bag or hand them to the teacher. Encourage your child to tell the teacher if an 'accident' does occur. Let them know that the teacher will not be cross and that they will be helped.
- Your child should be able to dress/undress, do up buttons, buckles and zips and put shoes on. Lace up boots may be fashionable but are difficult for the child to cope with.
- It is helpful if your child can turn clothes the right way round and can distinguish between left and right footwear.
- School clothing must be named and we would hope that your child can recognise his/her name and that they are able to hang up their coats and bags on an appropriate peg.
- At meal times your child should be able to use a knife, fork and spoon correctly and be able to sit quietly at the table until told that he/she

might leave. We do aim to encourage good manners and polite social behaviour.

- Your child should have met and played with other children. Please insist that they share and take turns and discourage aggressive behaviour towards other children.
- Your child should willingly undertake tidying up activities.

10. MESSY ACTIVITIES

At school your child will be involved in many activities which are considered messy.

Some children do not find this a pleasurable experience. Finger-painting, dough making, wet sand, mud pies and gluing should be encouraged as these will help the child get used to such activities.

11. ADDITIONAL NOTES

Do not discourage your child by teasing or belittling his or her achievements. Do not use school or your child's future teacher as a threat when disciplining your child.

Finally and most importantly we find that where interest, praise and encouragement have been given consistently given to a pre-school child, that child usually enjoys a happy and confident start to their school life.

12. THE NATIONAL CURRICULUM

All the schools in the Federation and its preschools follow the National Curriculum which includes the Foundation Stage. Information regarding this can be obtained from any of the schools. However there are also the following websites which will give you some useful information:

www.parentscentre.gov.uk

www.bbc.co.uk/schools/parents

www.parents.org.uk