



National Day Nurseries Association

★Brighter thinking
for early years

Factsheet

Supporting Your Child's Learning Journey (3 to 5)

Parent Guidance

Parent guide: Supporting your child's learning journey (3-5 years old)

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. Becoming involved in your child's learning enables your child to build and improve their learning experiences which will lead to:

- Better outcomes that will be carried on into adult life
- Strong bonds between your family and the setting your child attends
- Being a good role model to your child through cooperation and sharing and showing your child that what they do is cherished and important.

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

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 a child's 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 all the knowledge you have about your child and their experiences to help them to plan individual learning activities to support your child's individual needs. This can only be achieved with help and support from you through sharing the vast amount of information you have about your child. The key person will create a 'learning journey' for your child to record all of their progress and development. The learning journey belongs to you and your child and it is a living diary of this important stage of your child's life. Your child's key person will share what your child is doing in the nursery/pre-school with images and information and will ask you to also share information about your child, this could include 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. first words or other milestones or special events such as a family day out at the zoo.

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)

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 the child's parents to learn about a child's home routines
- The key person will wish to hear about a child's daily routines, 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 activities within the nursery and to support your child's development.

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) is the early years curriculum framework used in all early years settings and school reception classes in England. Learning and development is recorded under seven areas of learning. There are three prime areas of learning and four specific areas of learning. Although separated into separate areas they are all interconnected.

Prime areas of learning:

- Physical development
- Communication and language development
- Personal, social and emotional development.

These 3 prime areas are recognised as the skills that underpin all other areas of learning and provide the foundation for the specific areas.

Specific areas of learning:

- Literacy
- Mathematics
- Expressive arts and design
- Understanding the world.

In this factsheet we are going to share with you some ideas and activities to enable you to support the three prime areas of learning with your child. These ideas can be changed or adapted to meet the specific needs and interests of your child.

1. Supporting personal, social and emotional development

Personal, social and emotional development are 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 now and in the future.

Support for dealing with a range of their feelings

Strong, warm and supportive relationships with adults enable children to learn how to understand their own feelings and those of others.

- 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 talk about your own feelings: 'Mummy/Daddy feels very happy today or 'I am feeling a little bit sad today'
- 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.

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 nutritious 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 or 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 be confident with the thought process.

Support good hygiene routines showing your child how to keep clean and healthy:

- Always wash your hands before eating, cooking, after changing a nappy, after using the bathroom and wiping noses
- Children may develop hand washing routines at nursery by singing a favourite nursery rhyme whilst washing their 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 build on the discussions your child may have with the nursery staff.

2. Communication and language

Language development supports all areas of learning and is an invaluable tool for life. The most important and simple way you can support your child's language development is to talk, talk, talk to them.

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 own 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.

When out in your local community, point out the things that you can see and talk to your child about them, i.e. local shops, birds or transport, numbers and shapes that you see. This will widen your child's vocabulary as well as giving them a sense of their community

Give your child the time they need to answer questions and express their thoughts. It can take a child up to ten seconds to hear what is being said, process their own response and to share their reply. Try not to jump in fill in the gaps, wait patiently for your child to respond.

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.

Listening activities

- 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 closer or further away? Do they like the sound? Ask them to describe the sounds they are hearing and ask where else they may 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 etc) 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
- Television can be a fantastic tool for parents when you are busy and need to complete jobs, such as making dinner. Watching TV can be a passive activity so where possible watch the television together and make it active, e.g. watch children's shows and join in with any physical actions together. Have quiet times at home by turning off the TV and minimising background noise and distractions whenever possible so that your child can concentrate on the task at hand and develop their concentration and listening skills.

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, to enjoying a range of stories and rhymes and that reading 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
- Talk about what is happening in the pictures, what do they think will happen next?
- Visit your local library and choose books together
- Never worry about reading a story perfectly
- After the story look at the pictures again and ask your child to tell you what happened
- Look at the front cover and talk about what you can see.

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 everyday use.

Writing activities

- Writing shopping lists
- Providing pens and paper in your home for your child to practice with
- Sending letters, labelling packages and parcels
- Use your journeys to look at a range of road and shop signs
- Pour rice, flour, sand or lentils onto a tray and use your fingers to demonstrate forming individual letters or writing the child's name when no writing equipment is available
- Whenever you have to write something down, you should ensure your child is involved too
- Sending text messages and emails
- Writing out menus
- Play with magnetic letters on the fridge or foam letters in the bath
- Pointing out letters in your environment.

3. Supporting physical development

Concerns around children's safety have led to a decrease in the time children spend playing outdoors and fewer are walking to school and 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. During their play experiences children decide 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 supports their lifelong 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 large muscle development

To support the development of your child's larger muscles, e.g. legs and arms, you can encourage activities like:

- Riding bikes and scooters
- Running, skipping, jumping, hopping and allow your child opportunities to run around outdoors everyday
- Playing football/ball games
- Play throwing and catching games to support hand/eye co-ordination (you can roll up a pair of socks to create a soft ball to throw indoors)
- Climbing on large apparatus
- Put on some music and encourage your child to move along to the music
- Move around the house like animals, i.e. stomp like an elephant, creep like a mouse
- Let your child help with cooking by mixing and measuring ingredients
- 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

- Provide play kitchen equipment, play dough and rolling pins to encourage muscle development
- Provide a range of pouring jugs or cups at bath time.

Supporting small muscle development

- Provide opportunities for your child to write with pencils and crayons
- Play with dough
- Painting
- Screwing and unscrewing lids/objects
- Writing in sand/lentils
- Cutting with scissors
- Fasten buttons/zips on clothing
- Typing up shoes and fasteners
- Jigsaw puzzles
- Dressing dolls and teddies
- Tearing pieces of paper
- Sorting objects such as buttons or other small items.

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

- Literacy Trust: www.literacytrust.org.uk
- Change 4 Life: www.nhs.uk/Change4life
- What to expect in the EYFS: <https://bit.ly/3TRMIhc>

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Factsheet

Our factsheets are written by early years experts for the early years workforce. Most NDNA factsheets are free to our members.

NDNA is the national charity and membership association representing children's nurseries across the UK. We are a charity that believes in quality and sustainability, so we put our members' businesses at the very heart of ours.

We are the voice of the 21,000-strong nursery sector, an integral part of the lives of more than a million young children and their families. We provide information, training and advice to support nurseries and the 250,000 people who work in them to deliver world-class early learning and childcare.

See the full range of NDNA factsheets at www.ndna.org.uk/factsheets

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National Early Years Enterprise Centre, Longbow Close, Huddersfield HD2 1GQ
tel: 01484 407070 info@ndna.org.uk www.ndna.org.uk