

Reading and Writing



A guide for parents and carers of children in Early Years settings

The first steps to reading and writing

Where you see the  symbol you will find some suggested activities that will support your child in their learning.

Introduction

Children learn a great deal from other people. As parents and carers you are your child's first teachers. You have a powerful influence on your child's early learning.

From a very early age your child will need to experience a wide range of activities and experiences with you, for example, singing and saying rhymes, making and listening to music, listening to them and joining in conversations, painting and pretend play, to develop their early reading and writing skills. These activities will help your child take the first important steps towards reading and writing.

At Woodlands and Park lane Nursery children take part in a high-quality communication, language and literacy development programme (CLLD) designed to promote every child's learning through a play-based approach.

A phonics teaching programme called *Letters and Sounds* is used to support the teaching of CLLD in settings and schools. It builds on the activities the children have already experienced in the setting.

The children learn through lots of play and activities and are encouraged to use their increasing phonics knowledge in freely chosen activities.

If you can be involved in helping your child we know it can make a big difference to your child's learning.

This booklet will give further information about the *Letters and Sounds* programme and the best ways to support your child's learning at home. You may wish to ask the management of the setting about their CLLD programme so you can further help your child.

Learning to read and write in the Early Years Foundation Stage

Children's spoken language supports reading and writing

From a very early stage, children develop an awareness of the different sounds in our spoken language. They learn to use their voices to make contact with you and to let people know what they need and how they are feeling. As parents and carers, you best understand your baby or young child's communications; you are key people in helping them develop their speaking and listening skills.

Children need lots of opportunities to talk with others as they develop and practise their speaking and listening skills. This helps to build their confidence and improves their ability to communicate with other people. This is a really important aspect of learning to socialise and will help your child feel confident when the time comes to make friends.

In order to make a good start in reading and writing, children need an adult to talk to and listen to them.

Everyday activities such as preparing meals, tidying up, putting shopping away and getting ready to go out, offer you chances to talk to your child, explaining what you are doing. They hear the way language is put together into sentences for a purpose.

Books are a rich source of new words for your child – words you would not use in everyday conversations appear in books. Children need to have a wide stock of words (*vocabulary*) to understand the meaning of books, so read aloud and share books as often as you can. They will enjoy it and it will be useful to them when they come across these words in their own reading later on.



Ways you can support your children at home: talking and listening

- **Make time to listen to your child talking** – as you meet them from their setting or school, as you walk, or travel home by car, in the supermarket as you shop, at meal times, bath times, bedtimes – any time!
- **Switch off the TV, radio and mobile phones** – and really listen!
- **Show that you are interested in what they are talking about** – look at your child, smile, nod your head, ask a question or make a response to show that you really have been listening.
- **Make a collection of different toy creatures** – for example, a duck, a snake, an alien, say the sound it might make as you play together, for example,, 'quack-quack', 'sssssss', 'yuk-yuk', and encourage your child to copy you.
- **Listen at home** – switch off the TV and listen to the sounds both inside and outside the home. Can your child tell you what sounds they heard, in the order in which they heard them?
- **Play-a-tune** – and follow me! Make or buy some simple shakers, drums and beaters, then play a simple tune and ask your child to copy. Have fun!
- **Use puppets** and toys to make up stories or retell known ones. Record your child telling the story and play it back to them.

The importance of speech sounds

As children grow older they begin to understand more about the sounds of our language and they are able to join in with rhymes, songs and stories by clapping, stamping and skipping. This is an important stage as the children's ears are learning to tune into all the different sounds around them. Playing with sounds and tuning your child's ears into sounds will develop phonological awareness that is the ability to discriminate different sounds. Over time, this will help your child develop an understanding that words are made up of different sounds (*phonemes*) and they will be able to hear the different sounds in a word. Gradually they will learn to match sounds to letters (*graphemes*). This is phonic knowledge. They use this knowledge when they are reading and writing. We use Jolly Phonics to teach children the letter sounds.

What is Jolly Phonics?

Jolly Phonics is a fun and child centred approach to teaching literacy through synthetic phonics. With actions for each of the 42 letter sounds, the multi-sensory method is very motivating for children and teachers, who can see their students achieve. The letter sounds are split into seven groups as shown below.

Letter Sound Order

The sounds are taught in a specific order (not alphabetically). This enables children to begin building words as early as possible.

1. s, a, t, i, p, n
2. c k, e, h, r, m, d
3. g, o, u, l, f, b
4. ai, j, oa, ie, ee, or
5. z, w, ng, v, oo, oo
6. y, x, ch, sh, th, th
7. qu, ou, oi, ue, er, ar

How does Jolly Phonics work?

Using a synthetic phonics approach, Jolly Phonics teaches children the five key skills for reading and writing. The programme continues through school enabling the teaching of essential grammar, spelling and punctuation skills.

Learning the letter sounds

Children are taught the 42 main letter sounds. This includes alphabet sounds as well as digraphs such as sh, th, ai and ue. Each sound has an action which helps children remember the letter(s) that represent it and we use these throughout our day with the children. As the children progress we can point to the letters and see how quickly they can do the action and say the sound. We will share with you which new letters we are introducing and the actions that go with the letter.

Children should learn each letter by its sound, not its name. For instance, the letter a should be called a (as in ant) not ai (as in aim). Similarly, the letter n should be nn (as in net), not en. This will help in blending. The names of each letter can follow later.



Ways you can support your children at home: sound talk

This is a very supportive activity to play with your child.

Try breaking down simple words when you are giving instructions or asking questions, such as 'Can you find your h-a-t hat?' 'Where is the c-a-t cat?' 'Sit on the s-ea-t seat' 'Eat your f-oo-d food'. It is really important to say the sounds (*phonemes*) aloud, in order, all through the word.

Prior to this, your child should have experienced lots of the environmental, instrumental and body percussion, rhythm and rhyming, alliteration, and voice sounds activities to tune in their ears.

There are some excellent FREE resources online at <http://jollylearning.co.uk/gallery/> which includes a video clip demonstrating the correct way to sound out the letters.

Speaking and listening are the foundations for reading and writing

At Park lane Nursery and Woodlands we use Letters and Sounds – Phase 1 alongside Jolly Phonics.

In this ongoing phase, your child will be learning to:

- have fun with sounds
- listen carefully
- develop their vocabulary
- speak confidently to you, other adults and other children
- tune into sounds
- listen and remember sounds
- talk about sounds
- understand that spoken words are made up of different sounds.

Phase 1 consists of seven interlinking parts:

- environmental sounds
- instrumental sounds
- body percussion
- rhythm and rhyme
- alliteration (words that begin with the same sound)
- voice sounds
- oral blending and segmenting.

You can help your child develop in each of these by trying some of the ideas below. Remember that all these activities should be fun and interactive. Give your child lots of encouragement and cuddles as you play together. Smiles and praise will help develop a sense of achievement and build confidence.

This is all oral (*spoken*). Your child will not yet be expected to match the letter to the sound. The emphasis is on developing the ability to distinguish sounds and create sounds.



Ways you can support your children at home: environmental sounds

- Go on a listening walk – when walking down the road, make a point of listening to different sounds: cars revving, people talking, birds singing, dogs barking. When you get home, try to remember all the sounds you heard. You could try taping the sounds, to listen to them again, or try reproducing them yourselves, using your voices or instruments.
- Make sounds, using a range of props, such as running a stick along a fence or tapping on the bin lid.
- Invent a secret family ‘knock’ for entering rooms.
- Play ‘Sound lotto’. A commercial version of this can be purchased from many children’s toy stores but making your own, from your sound walk, would be far more rewarding.



Ways you can support your children at home: instrumental sounds

- Make your own musical instruments, using cardboard rolls, tins, dried peas, beans, stones. Shake these loudly, softly, as you are marching, skipping or stomping. Play ‘Guess what’s inside the instrument’.
- Sing known songs loudly and then softly, stretch words in known songs and add new words or sounds.
- Listen to a range of music with your child, from rap to classical. Encourage your child to move in response to the variety of musical styles and moods.



Ways you can support your children at home: body percussion

- Learn some action rhymes, such as ‘Wind the bobbin up’.
- Play some commercially produced tapes and CD-ROMs. Clap along with familiar rhymes and learn new ones.
- Listen to the sounds your feet make when walking, running or skipping: slowly, softly, fast, stomping hard, in flipflops, boots, high heels.
- Try different types of clapping: clap your hands softly, fast and make a pattern for your child to follow. Do the same, clapping your thighs or stamping your feet. Tap your fingers. Click your tongue.
- Invent a special family clap routine for when someone does something really well.



Ways you can support your children at home: rhythm and rhyme

- Get into the rhythm of language: bounce your child on your knee to the rhythm of a song or nursery rhyme, march or clap to a chant or poem.
- Help your child move to the rhythm of a song or rhyme.
- Read or say poems, songs, nursery songs and rhyming stories as often as you can, try to use gestures, tap regular beats and pause to emphasise the rhythm of the piece.
- Add percussion to mark the beats, using your hands, feet or instruments.
- Try out some rhythmic chanting such as ‘two, four, six, eight, hurry up or we’ll be late’ or ‘bip bop boo, who are you?’



Ways you can support your children at home: alliteration (words that begin with the same sound)

- Alliteration is a lot of fun to play around with. Your child’s name can be a good place to start, for example, say: ‘Gurpreet gets the giggles’, ‘Milo makes music’, ‘Naheema’s nose’, ‘Carl caught a cat’, ‘Jolly Jessie jumped’, ‘Tina is talking’. Encourage other family members to have a go, for example: ‘Mummy munches muffins’, ‘Daddy is doing the dishes’.
- Emphasise alliteration in songs and stories, for example: ‘Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers’.
- Play around with familiar songs, such as ‘Old MacDonald had some sheep, shoes, shorts, with a sh sh here and a sh sh there’, to emphasise alliteration.
- Make up little nonsense stories together, using lots of alliteration.
- Collect items that start with the same sound from the park, the garden and around the house.
- When shopping, think about items you are buying and say: ‘a tall tin of tomatoes’, ‘a lovely little lemon’. Encourage your child to do the same.



Ways you can support your children at home: voice sounds

- Repeat your infant’s vocalisations.
- Say words in different ways (fast, slowly, high, low, using a funny voice).
- ‘Sing’ known songs using only sounds, for example, ‘la, la, la’, and ask your child to guess the song.
- Vary your tempo and pitch when reading stories.
- Make different voices for characters when reading stories.
- Read or tell sound stories. Your local library or bookshop will be able to point out some very good books that encourage sound-making as you read the story. This is huge fun and can involve all the family.



Ways you can support your children at home: oral blending and segmenting

This is all oral (spoken). Your child will not be expected to match the letter to the sound at this stage. The emphasis is on helping children to hear the separate sounds in words and to create spoken sounds.

Oral blending and segmenting is a later skill that will be important when the time comes for your child to read and write. Being able to hear the separate sounds within a word and then blend them together to understand that word is really important.

Blending is a vital skill for reading. The separate sounds (*phonemes*) of the word are spoken aloud, in order, all through the word, and are then merged together into the whole word. This merging together is called *blending*. For example, the adult would say **c-a-t = cat**.

Segmenting is a vital skill for spelling. The whole word is spoken aloud, then broken up into its separate sounds (*phonemes*) in order, all through the word. For example, the adult would say **cat = c-a-t**.

The importance of mark-making

Your child will notice adults around them reading and writing and they will want to copy them. Mark-making is the first step towards writing. Mark-making in the early stages is closely linked to physical development. The more opportunities your child has to develop large and small movement in their arms, hands and fingers, the easier it will be to make marks with a variety of tools.

Activities such as digging, 'painting' outdoor surfaces with water and a large brush, sweeping, and swishing a scarf through the air in different shapes will help develop large motor movement. Small or fine motor movement will be needed to hold pencils and pens correctly. Hanging out the washing and playing with pegs, using a pegboard and picking up grains of rice with fingers and tweezers will help develop the pincer grip needed for writing.

In the early stages of learning to write, your child will like to experiment, making marks on paper with a variety of writing tools such as brushes, pens, pencils and felt-tip markers. They will often include drawings with their writing. Sometimes you will write for them. It is a good idea at this stage to use lower-case letters when you write for your child, introducing capitals only for names.

You may also like to try mark making outdoors by getting out some chalks. Patios, walls, paths in the park and even pavements are fantastic for helping children to learn to control their movements and the chalk won't leave any permanent damage.

Learning letter formation

Using different multi-sensory methods, children learn how to form and write the letters. It is very important that a child holds their pencil in the correct way.

The pencil should be held in the "tripod" grip between the thumb and the first two fingers. The grip is the same for both left and right handed children. If a child's hold starts incorrectly, it is very difficult to correct later on.

A child needs to form each letter the correct way. The letter c is introduced in the early stages as this forms the basic shape of some other letters, such as d. Particular problems to look for are:

- the o (the pencil stroke must be anti-clockwise, not clockwise)
- d (the pencil starts in the middle, not the top)
- m and n (there must be an initial downstroke, or the letter m looks like the McDonald's arches)



Ways you can support your children at home: other things to do at home

- Turn off the TV so you can listen to and talk to your child.
- Read every day to your child.
- Set up a place where your child can experiment with mark-making, both outside and inside, using gloop, paint, pens, stamps and stencils onto a variety of surfaces such as paper, cardboard and material.
- Collect a variety of pencils and pens, and keep them handy for your child.
- Create a special writing bag to keep little writing tools in, for travelling in the car or visiting the doctor's. Change the contents regularly.



Ways you can support your children at home: what to do if your child is reluctant to read or write at home

Relax! It is important not to worry if your child shows no inclination to write at home; the important thing is to keep on sharing books and talking together. There is no need to insist that your child does some writing – more often than not they will choose to do so when they have a real reason to.

Reading

- Make sure your child sees you reading.
- Read **to** your child. Show you like the book. Bring stories to life by using loud, soft, scary voices – let yourself go!
- Leave books around your house for your child to dip into.
- Let your child choose what **they** would like to read – books, comics, catalogues.
- Read favourite books over and over again. Enjoy!

Writing

- Make sure your child sees you writing.
- Compose an email together inviting a friend over to tea.
- Make words together using magnetic letters.
- Make up a story together about one of their toys. You write for them, repeating the sentences as you write. When it is complete, they can draw pictures to go with it.
- Buy stickers of a favourite film or TV programme and make a book about it.

How the setting can further support reading and writing for your child.

Underpinning ethos

The underpinning ethos for children in the Early Years is to reassure them that anything they create will be valued, whatever their level of skill. If children are going to be willing to take risks with their writing, practitioners need to encourage them to 'have a go'. 'Getting it right', i.e. correct spelling, handwriting, the construction of a sentence and most appropriate presentation, is not something which should deter them from writing. These skills will be learned and will improve with focused adult-led activities.

Letters and sounds

Our teaching of letters and sounds is embedded into the planning, environment and daily teaching of the children. We audit our practice to ensure that all children receive the highest level of support and that staff across all rooms follow the document. For information you can download the document.

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/190599/Letters_and_Sounds_-_DFES-00281-2007.pdf

Alphabet table

Every week, we set up a table of objects that begin with a particular letter and use interesting objects, including those from other cultures, and label each one using lower-case letters.

We make the table accessible to several children at once and make it part of daily routine to discuss the objects.

Staff emphasise the letter of the week when words with the same initial sound crop up during daily activities and play simple alliteration games by encouraging the children to think of adjectives for the objects, for example: a purple penguin, a big box.

Name cards

Both settings use children's name cards during daily routines, such as coat pegs, self-registration and lunchtime, and place them in the writing area. Staff encourage children to look at their names around the room.

Writing area

Our writing area looks attractive and orderly. Staff provide a variety of paper, used envelopes, pens and pencils, a stapler, sticky tape, used stamps, glue sticks, paper clips, scissors and paper fasteners. There is an alphabet frieze in lower-case letters on the wall at child height by the writing table.

Staff provide a series of simple picture dictionaries and collect examples of print such as timetables, menus and adverts. And display postcards and hand written and word-processed letters, and examples of other written languages. At times you will see a home-made post box by the writing table.

Supporting children to write their name

We can make a name puzzle by writing your child's name in large letters on a sheet of paper. Cut the letters apart and have your child reassemble the letters of their name in the correct order.

Write the letters of your child's name on a sheet of sandpaper. Allow them to trace the letters with her finger for a tactile name experience!

When they are ready to begin writing their name, we write the letters in large letters on a big sheet of paper. Have your child first trace the letters with her finger several times, then the eraser side of the pencil, and then the pencil. Use a dab of paint on the end of their pointer finger to add a bit of colour and even more multisensory practice tracing over the letters.

The environment

Staff work hard to make sure that the furniture and layout of the room enables all children to learn. Mark making pads and instruments can be found in most areas and children are able to transport writing equipment between areas and from inside to outside. This means that their flow of learning is not interrupted. Staff observe children's interests and make sure that the activities and games are inviting to them.

Book of the week

We will share with parents and carers the book that has been planned around children's interest that will be read throughout the week and used to extend their thinking and learning.

I-pad app from Jolly phonics

This enables the children to play interactive games while learning the letter formations and sounds.

EyLog

Your child's keyworker will help to ensure that your child's care is tailored to meet their individual needs, to help the child become familiar with us and build a good relationship with yourselves. Staff will carry out observations and share them with yourselves using our server system called Eylog. You will have the option to add your own comments and share any 'wow' moments your child has at home.

You can download the EyLog app on your mobile device.

Making My Mark: some ways we teach children to write

- Gloop (cornflour & water) with paint or glitter
- Shaving foam with paint or glitter
- Finger in the air
- Ribbons on sticks
- Scarves
- Chalk on walls, chalkboards, paving slabs, paper
- Glue, dribble it, spread it, cover it with glitter, on paper, on plastic
- Water with brushes on walls, with feet on slabs, on walls and slabs with spray or squirty bottles, decorators brushes and rollers
- Salt dough, bread dough, play dough, (with colour, with smell, with glitter)
- Flour with colour, with glitter. Use fingers with sticks with cars, with brushes
- Custard powder
- Icing sugar on the table top, finger trails, from shakers
- Jelly
- Porridge
- Lentils, pasta shapes, rice (cooked and uncooked)
- Melted chocolate
- With water on bread, then toast
- Icing, dribble it on, spread it on cakes on biscuits
- Toothpaste
- Make shadows
- Sawdust in a tray
- Soapflake gunge
- Feely letters, sandpaper letters
- Spaghetti with washing up liquid
- Alphabet sponges
- Papier mache
- Iron filings with magnets
- Rolling marbles, rolling marbles in tins & trays
- Ink on water
- Torch on the ceiling or wall
- Finger, cut potatoes in the condensation on windows
- Clay
- Mud with sticks, with pencils, with fingers, with feet
- On ice, in frost
- Vegetable printing
- Whiteboards, OHP film, magic boards
- Wax etching
- Wax resist
- Sewing machine
- Tracing
- String in paint, in glue
- Computer mouse
- Etch-a-sketch
- Blow through straws at paint
- Fabric paint on tee shirts etc
- Paint on large plastic screen
- Trundle wheel on chalk patterns
- Bean bags on strings
- Tennis balls in foot of nylon stockings
- In roleplay area (shopping lists, prescriptions, menus)
- Printing with balloons
- Dry powder paint
- Dried tea
- Buttons
- Body painting, face painting
- Snail trails
- Plastic bag or plastic wallet with paint inside, then sealed, write with finger on outside
- Charcoal
- Weaving in fence
- Puppets
- On the bikes and scooters
- Sand, wet, dry, inside, outside, with sticks, with brushes, with natural materials, with fingers, with feet
- Lipstick on a mirror

Useful websites and leaflets for more information

www.parentscentre.gov.uk/foragegroup/3to5years/readandwritetogether

This link to the Parents Centre website gives some really good ideas about how you can enjoy sharing books with your child and tells you a bit more about phonics.

www.parentscentre.gov.uk/foragegroup/5to7years/alittlereadinggoesalongway

This link gives ideas about how to help your child as they are learning to read.

www.read-count.org/index.asp

This is a website for you and your child to explore together. It will give you some ideas about reading with your child and has online games for young children to play, both with you and on their own. It also has ideas for games to play away from the computer.

www.bookstart.co.uk

This website provides information about the national Bookstart scheme and the Bookstart packs that your child will receive as a baby, a toddler and at age three to four. It also gives information about sharing books with your child. You can find out about Bookstart events in your area, which you can attend with your child.

You can get 'Learning Together' leaflets – 'The road to reading' and 'Making their mark – children's early writing' (and other leaflets covering a range of topics) from Early Education, 136 Cavell Street, London, E1 2JA. Telephone 020 7539 5400. You can also download them from the website www.early-education.org.uk.

www.talktoyourbaby.org.uk

This website provides lots of information for parents and carers of babies and young children, and suggestions for activities, features, DVD-ROMs, books and events that are both useful and fun. You can have their free newsletter emailed to you directly.

www.ican.org.uk

This website provides lots of information for parents and teachers on the importance of speaking and listening skills for young children's development. Although it is aimed at early communication development, there is a lot of very useful information and material, such as *Chatter Matters*, that can be downloaded from the website; some free materials can be ordered.

www.jollylearning.co.uk

Learn about the principles of Jolly Phonics, Jolly Grammar and Jolly Music, and how these child-centred, multi-sensory approaches make learning fun and easy for children all over the world. Download the app to support children's learning at home.

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