

How can I support my child and get them ready to start school?

Physical development

Gross motor activities

Gross motor (physical) skills are those which require whole body movement, and which involve the large (core stabilising) muscles of the body to perform everyday functions, such as standing and walking, running and jumping, and sitting upright at the table.

They also include eye-hand coordination skills such as ball skills (throwing, catching, kicking) as well as riding a bike or a scooter and swimming.

Outdoor gross motor activities

- Ride a tricycle/bike.
- Play hopscotch.
- Go on an outdoor hunt.
- Play hide and seek.
- Explore and find 5 green objects.



Indoor gross motor activities

- Make an indoor obstacle course.
- Create a dance and teach it to someone else.
- Cosmic Yoga (YouTube).
- Jump over paper cups.



Fine motor activities

Fine motor skills involve the use of the smaller muscle of the hands, commonly in activities like using pencils, scissors, construction with Lego or Duplo, doing up buttons and opening lunch boxes.

- Threading, posting and slotting toys for babies and toddlers.
- Poking straws into holes.
- Pasta necklaces.
- Pipe cleaners and colanders.
- Beads on spaghetti.



Physical development: Managing Self

Self-care skills are the everyday tasks undertaken so children are ready to participate in life activities (including dressing, eating, cleaning teeth). They are often referred to as the activities of daily living. While these are typically supported by adults in young children, it is expected that children develop independence in these as they mature.

- Turn your coat sleeves the correct way, from inside out.
- Dress/undress on your own – fold your clothes neatly.
- Carry a tray with objects on without them falling off or falling over.
- Tidy up and put away your toys neatly – putting books away.
- Work on being fully toilet trained and can provide own intimate care (wiping themselves).
- Is able to wash their hands independently with soap and water.
- Use a knife and fork to eat.



Try the hand washing song!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S9VjeIWLnEg>

Communication & Language: Speaking, Listening and Understanding

By five years...

By the age of five, almost all children will be in school.

At this stage, they need to learn how to listen, understand and share their ideas within the classroom. They also need to understand words and phrases used in school that they may not have heard at home – things like 'line up', 'packed lunch' and 'talk to your partner' etc.

They also still need to have conversations – to share information, to make friends and explain how they are feeling.

By five years, children will usually:

- take turns in much longer conversations
- use sentences that are well formed, for example, "I had spaghetti for tea at Jamilia's house"
- be learning more words all the time as well as thinking more about the meanings of words, such as describing the meaning of simple words or asking what a new word means
- be able to re-tell short stories they have heard in roughly the right order and using language that makes it sound like a story
- use most speech sounds. However, they may have some difficulties with more difficult words such as 'scribble' or 'elephant' and some speech sounds such as 'r' and 'th' may still be difficult
- enjoy listening to stories, songs and rhymes and will start to make up their own



Check out how the child can talk

By five years, children can have conversations; they know lots of words and can use longer sentences, though they still might make some little mistakes, which is fine.

- Can they organise their thoughts and put longer sentences together?
- Can you usually understand what they are saying?
- Do they regularly get frustrated or give up trying to tell you something?
- Do they regularly forget the words or miss out important pieces of information?
- Do they sound muddled and disorganised in their talking? If so, they may be struggling.

Check out how the child can listen

Check out children's understanding.

- Can they listen for instructions while they are busy with something else? E.g. Ask them to get their coat and shoes while they are playing (not TV or computer, they are too absorbing).
- Are they beginning to get the idea of time? E.g. "Mummy will be here after lunch."
- Do they understand a longer list of instructions? E.g. "First get your lunchbox, then sit at the red table." Note if they have to watch another child in order to know what to do, rather than understanding it themselves. This might indicate difficulties in hearing or understanding.

Check out how the child can take part

There will be times when five year olds will be happy to play alone, with adults, or with other children.

- Do they talk with other children and join in with group conversations and games?
- Are there any children who seem isolated? Check it out further.
- Talk to children about what they enjoyed most in a day – these conversations often include different games or activities they play with friends.

Some lovely things to do to encourage child talk:

- Playing board games that involve taking turns helps children to listen.
- different words that mean a similar thing – E.g. words that mean 'big'.
- Children may need time to think before responding to questions and instructions.
- Introduce new words and phrases to help them continue learning. Think of lots of
- Play around with rhyme, E.g. "cat, fat, hat, spat... any more?" it's an important skill for reading.

If you are worried that a child in your care is not doing these things there is more information on www.talkingpoint.org.uk. Or, using your setting's procedure, talk to the parents about your concerns. A referral to speech and language therapy may be needed.

https://www.thecommunicationtrust.org.uk/media/363847/tct_univspeak_0-5.pdf

Speech sounds programme

This programme is used to help support children with using their mouth to make the shapes needed to pronounce sounds correctly. This programme helps them to gain pre-phonics skills.

<https://www.wchc.nhs.uk/services/childrens-speech-language-therapy/self-care-resources-and-support/>

The link explains the programme and how you can use it at home to help support your child in the next stages of their development.

Personal, Social and Emotional development: Social skills

- Taking turns in games/activities.
- Learning to be patient.
- Learn about new feelings, grumpy, embarrassed.
- Learn how to ask for things correctly
"Please can have a turn after you?"
- Use gestures when talking to add meaning.
- Not always winning a game.



Personal, Social and Emotional Development: Emotional skills

- Read books about feelings and talk about why the characters might have a certain expression and what that means.
 - Give your child problem solving activities to work at.
1. Identify the problem. For example, perhaps children building with blocks are interfering with children playing a board game on the floor.
 2. Brainstorm possible solutions.
 3. Agree on a solution. Restate your child's ideas and ask them to think about the best way to solve the problem. Clarify any questions.
 4. Try the solution and see how well it works. Remember to give the solution enough time to work. If the original solution doesn't solve the problem, try another idea.



Literacy activities:

We use the Read, Write, Inc. phonics scheme.

- Read to your child
- Remake a picture book - can you draw your favourite character? Can you draw your favourite part?
- Look at environmental print - can you recognise logos and road signs?
- Play with magnetic letters.
- Make a rhyming box - find things around the house that rhyme - pan, can, man etc. Can you match the rhyming objects together?
- Practise sequencing.
- Tell stories about pictures.
- Name and label common objects.
- Saying and recognising the first letter of their name
- Fred Talk activities:

Fred I spy

1. Say: Fred says 'I spy something r-e-d' Ask children to repeat. Pause to allow children to 'jump-in' with the whole word and point to something red.
2. Say: r-e-d, red. Ask children to repeat.

Repeat with: b-l-oo, g-r-ee-n, b-l-a-k, b-r-ow-n

Sharing a story:

This website has some great tips to help you to share a story with your child.

<https://www.booktrust.org.uk/books-and-reading/tips-and-advice/reading-tips/>

Oxford Owl

<https://home.oxfordowl.co.uk/reading/early-reading-skills-age-3-4/>

This website is linked with Read Write Inc., it has some lovely activities to work through with your child to help them get ready to learn phonics.

How many of these books can you read?



Maths Activities

- **Listen to and sing songs and rhymes**

Sing counting songs, such as '10 Green Bottles', '1, 2, Buckle My Shoe' and '1, 2, 3, 4, 5, Once I Caught a Fish Alive'. Singing songs is a good way for children to become familiar with counting. Don't worry if they choose the same songs again and again!

- **Talk about numbers around you**

Numbers are all around us, from calendars to the remote control, the telephone to car registration plates.

Try pointing out numbers when you are out and about – on front doors, signs, the front of buses and train platforms. Talking about numbers around you early and often will show your child that numbers are part of everyday life. Choose a 'Number of the Week' and see how many times you can spot this number, around the house, out in the street or in the supermarket.

- **Read together**

Share a book with your child. There are many fantastic books based around numbers, but any book can be used to help children develop early counting and number recognition skills. Take time to talk about what your child can see on each page. Count objects on the page and compare the number of objects from page to page. Look at the page numbers and say them together.

- **Count as much as you can**

Count whenever you can – count together, as well as letting your child see and hear you counting. Practise chanting numbers and, as your child's confidence grows, start from different numbers – 5, 6, 7, etc. Count real objects – your child's toy cars, pencils, shoes or the number of stairs in your house. Don't worry if your child remembers the answer – they can count to check!



- **Try to stick to a single type of object for each counting activity**
Encourage your child to touch or pick up each object as they count it. Ask your child to help you sort cutlery or laundry, counting as you sort. When you go out for a walk, count your footsteps, the number of cars or houses you see etc.
- **Play maths games**
Try these fun games with your child to practise early maths skills and help to build your child's confidence. Most children love playing games and it's an easy way to support their learning.
<https://www.topmarks.co.uk/learning-to-count/teddy-numbers>

Expressive arts and design activities:

- Put on a puppet show with some of your toys.
- Make some different items out of recycled materials.
- Learn all the colours of the rainbow.
- Make some ice and draw a picture outside.
- Make a den out of boxes and materials.



Understanding the world activities:

- Find out the answers to questions e.g. what melts in the sun?
- Do some floating and sinking with different toys and talk about how/why?
- Go on a minibeast/bird walk.
- Talk about different processes you might come across e.g. compost.
- Talk about different celebrations and festivals that are happening.
- Discuss diversity and celebrate difference.



P.E.:

At St Andrew's Infant School, we use the Real P.E. Scheme to support pupils to develop their multi-abilities and physical skills. The link shows a break-down of the format that is used during P.E. lessons.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BaC3Xwy8Y2U>



Purple Mash:

In the classrooms, the children have access to computers during continuous provision. We also have weekly sessions in the ICT suite and use the Purple Mash platform. When your child starts at school, they will receive a personal log-in and password which can be used in school and at home.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QmJbEJ-dOuE>

Frequently asked questions

I don't know if my child is ready for school yet.

Our provision is based around the fact that all children start school at varying levels of 'readiness'. There can also be a year's difference in age between our September born and August born children. This is why we prioritise gathering information about each child from their families and nurseries. Every child is ready to learn and our job is to tailor our curriculum to meet every child's learning needs and styles.

What if my child makes mistakes and does not follow the class rules?

Personal, Social and Emotional Development forms a large part of the Foundation Stage Curriculum, and it is planned for as much as any other area of learning. Children need to feel secure and happy before effective teaching and learning can take place. Expectations in behaviour are shared with the children using picture prompts and support at an appropriate level for individual children. Very few children start school with the social skills to cope with sharing toys and many children do not have the confidence or the communication skills to ensure that their needs are met in appropriate ways. It is a natural survival technique for a child to snatch something that they want and it is a developmental stage that they need to be supported through to understand the concept of sharing and taking turns. We spend a great deal of time modelling how to 'play fair and share' and how to get help if someone upsets them. When the children consistently do not follow simple instructions and prompts, we support them with more individual picture prompts and lots of praise. We will keep you informed of any intervention and, with your support, we do get there in the end!

What if my child has problems using toilets outside our home?

It is often daunting for children to use different toilets on their own. We understand that this can cause anxiety. This is something that we can discuss with parents on a one to one basis but rest assured that we offer a lot of support to children in the first few weeks at school.

What help are children given at lunchtime?

This is often a vulnerable time for the children because they are away from the security of the classroom, but we prepare them for the experience. They are first into lunch and are settled before other year groups start arriving. We stay with them, encouraging them to eat and helping to cut up food or open packed lunches. The dinner supervisors monitor what the children eat and will let us know if they are not eating enough so that we can inform you.

How can I help my child to become more independent at school?

- Label all items of clothing as this will help them look after their own property.
- Ensure that they have their complete P.E. kit in school every day – including spare underwear/socks.
- Send children with their book bags every day.
- Encourage children to come into the classroom, independently hang their coats up and put their book bags in their drawers.
- Encourage your child to dress and change themselves in the morning and evening.

If you have any queries or questions, please get in touch. We are here to help you in any way we can!