

Whitecross Nursery School
Literacy Information For Parents
Thursday 14th October 2021



At Whitecross we follow the national EYFS curriculum. The statutory guidance and development matters documents are on the school website.

We are a **'teacher-led'** nursery, which means highly qualified teachers lead our sessions. Literacy is split into three areas, but all three areas overlap and if children are not secure in the prime areas they will not be able to progress.

Prime areas are:

Communication and language development
Physical development
Personal, social and emotional development (PSED)

Literacy is broken down into

Speech and language
Reading
Writing

The overlaps as you can see are obvious -

Physical is connected to reading and writing
Communication and language is connected to **all** literacy areas
A child who is happy, secure and settled will learn. PSED affects all learning throughout your life

1. "Let's talk"

Children need to develop their speech and so they need to be exposed to talk. This may sound weird but keep talking to your child. Even if you feel your child is articulate please consider –

- ✓ babies in prams / children need to face you to see you talk and your facial expressions
- ✓ children need to see the shape of your mouth moving
- ✓ they need to hear sounds clearly
- ✓ they need a gentle running commentary of what you are doing
- ✓ they need to be given time to process what they are going to say
- ✓ everything they say needs to be valued
- ✓ Say it with a smile, they will gain confidence from your positivity

- ✗ they don't need to be asked lots of questions

- ✗ they don't need to be pressured to speak quickly
- ✗ they don't need correcting
- ✗ they don't need to listen to screens instead of a person
- ✗ they don't need a dummy or a bottle

We are proud to have earned the 'Talk Derby accreditation through the hard work of Miss Burke. Please see our website for more details.

Here at Whitecross we value everything children say: we give them time to speak, we laugh at their jokes, we don't ask many questions, we talk about what we are doing, we model vocabulary, we explain slowly and carefully, we repeat back simple mispronunciations correctly e.g. "I go to toilet." – "You are going to the toilet, well done!"

As the confidence, the vocabulary, the use of tenses, the use of connectives, the understanding grows language will continue to develop.

2. Reading

Read to your child as much as you can

Children will associate reading with pleasure if you take the time to do it

Use funny voices

Laugh

Make it cosy

It needs to be fun, relaxed and happy

Always read at bedtime and many other times whenever you can

Reading is the start of phonics

The key to phonics is **listening skills** which starts with reading stories

The phonics curriculum Phase 1 has seven aspects, which we cover in nursery:

- 1) General sound discrimination
- 2) Instrumental sounds
- 3) Body percussion
- 4) Rhythm & rhyme
- 5) Alliteration
- 6) Voice sounds
- 7) Oral blending and segmenting

All of this needs to be secure before we start the reception year. The government advice is to not push children onto letters and sounds, but to ensure these areas are solid and secure, fully understood and to stretch the child sideways for a deeper understanding rather than push forwards to learn letter sounds

If this is in place learning letter sounds is easy, fun, exciting to do alongside friends in reception and appropriate. If you have a five year old who can decode words confidently you would not give them a Harry Potter text to read. It would be boring and the comprehension would not be there. Learning to read is not a race. Learning to read appropriately it is the greatest gift in the world. So many children are turned off reading as they grow because it is forced on them too early.

What to do

✓ **Read to your child. It is enough 😊**

It is the best preparation for school. It teaches -

- Love of books and reading
- understanding of story sequence
- characters
- plot
- illustrations
- authors
- prediction
- sequencing
- inference
- page turning
- tracking left to right
- print awareness
- comprehension
- developing a wider vocabulary
- understanding
- listening skills
- conversation & discussion
- + many more skills...

Please do not worry about teaching your child the names or sounds of letters. Often unintentionally and with the best intentions parents teach their children incorrectly. Reception teachers struggle to support children to unlearn mistaught phonics. Sounds are now taught as pure sound to support blending at an age when children are ready.

If they are pushed early

- ✗ they don't hear as many quality read stories as time is spent encouraging them to decode
- ✗ Reading for meaning is lost as time is spent learning to decode rather than enjoying the story and having fun
- ✗ They can be put off reading because the skill is too hard, requires too much concentration and becomes boring turning children gradually off reading
- ✗ Why spend time on sounding out when they will have more fun with you reading to them? One day you will look back and wish for time to read to your children again

If children ask about letters then tell them about them what they are but don't let this distract from the enjoyment of the story. Spotting letters in the environment is a good way to learn about them. Also it is crucial that children observe family reading. They like to copy you and learn by watching you.

3. Writing

In order to become a writer children first need to develop good muscle control with gross motor skills. Children need to run, climb, swing, balance, throw, push, pull etc.

They need to develop strength in their pincer movement which needs to come from their whole body.

- low level climbing such as planks to walk across
- tunnels made from cardboard boxes for children to crawl through
- large buckets of water and decorating brushes for children to paint walls and fences
- squeezey bottles filled with water to make patterns on the ground
- selection of plastic jars with screw top lids (with treasure inside)
- scrunch up tissue paper and pop bubble wrap
- dried pasta, beans or lentils for children to transfer from one pot to another with their finger and thumb or tweezers
- threading
- peg boards
- playdough
- weaving

The list is endless and so much fun!

To develop the children's ability to physically write, we

- actively encourage children to make marks in all areas of the Nursery
- value marks children make in whatever form
- provide children with various media in which to make marks, including sand, silica, glitter, corn flour, foam, chalk, paint, crayons, pens, pencils
- provide opportunities for children to practise movements needed using their gross motor skills with ribbons, scarves, pom-poms, large brushes
- provide opportunities for children to improve their fine muscle control by using malleable materials and small construction sets
- scissors can be used for snipping cooked spaghetti, strips of paper. Cutting out shapes comes much later with hand eye coordination

We believe the marks children make should be spontaneous, not imposed or directed, because they are then relevant and meaningful to the child.

We all need to share and celebrate our children's writing, with them as individuals, with other children and with you as their parents.

Please don't

- ✗ encourage a child to trace over letters
- ✗ practise saying the alphabet
- ✗ hold a pencil in a tripod grip before they are ready

Lots of parents would like their child to be ready for school. Reading and writing early is not being ready for school. Below is a list of things children need to do at home and nursery to be ready for school:

- put on their own coat
- put on their own shoes and fasten them
- be confident with fastening zips, poppers, buttons or Velcro
- put on own pants ,socks, trousers or leggings
- pulling on hats and gloves
- turn clothing the right way round
- wash hands properly
- use a knife and fork to cut up soft food
- drink from a cup or beaker confidently
- pour their own drinks from a jug
- wiping their own bottom

These activities will help develop your child's core muscles and fine motor skills.

Ways we develop early writing at nursery

Dough Disco

Squiggle (while you wiggle)

Get your dough and your pom-poms, parent participation required

Information about both of these activities is available online, feel free to explore and have dough discos at home

Some further information about our teacher-led practice at Whitecross

There is a close relationship between the spoken and written word. Therefore

- we, as adults, listen to children and encourage them to listen to each other

- we provide them with lots of stimuli to promote their story-telling, such as small world toys, various role play opportunities, puppets and telling/reading them good quality books
- we model writing, including writing their own descriptions/comments about their drawings and paintings, and scribing their stories for them

There are several stages of emergent writing which your children might demonstrate to you

- scribbles – children are communicating meaning with their scribbles and will often be able to tell others what they have written
- letter-like forms – children write circles, lines and other letter shapes in their play, which may be spaced randomly on the paper initially but will be written in a more linear way as the child's experience develops
- independent writing – as children become familiar with the letters in their name, they may use them (along with number symbols) in their writing
- more recognisable writing – children will begin to relate letters to the sounds they can hear in words and use their developing phonic knowledge to write simple phrases or sentences

Help your child learn to write



SCRIBBLING & DRAWING

Your child needs to practice making marks and shapes before being able to write letters. Provide lots of opportunities to scribble and draw so they can develop these skills.

PLAYDOUGH, PEGS & FINGER PUPPETS

Your child needs to be able to use their fingers independently to write. Activities that strengthen and encourage your child to use their fingers will develop the skills your child needs.



CLIMBING & SWINGING

Your child needs strong arm and body muscles to sit up and write. They also need good control of their arms. Outdoor activities that encourage them to use their whole body will develop these muscles.

THREADING, CLAPPING, BATTING & STREAMERS

Crossing the body's mid-line is an important skill needed for writing. Encourage your child to thread items along a string. Clapping games, batting a tennis ball or a balloon, and playing with long streamers, all help to encourage this skill.



TORCHES & BALL GAMES

Your child needs to track with their eyes to write. Asking your child to follow a torchlight, just with their eyes, will develop their tracking skills. Ball games will also develop this skill.

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PLAYING WITH AND IDENTIFYING LETTERS & WORDS

Your child needs to be interested in letters and words to write. Encourage your child to look for letters and words in their home and environment.



WRITING LISTS & WRITING FOR A PURPOSE

Your child needs to understand that writing has a purpose. Ask your child to help you write a shopping list or write a note for a friend or neighbour.

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Dummies and Speech Development

Many parents use a dummy to help soothe their child. This is understandable as most babies have a strong sucking reflex and often a dummy can help settle a child. Dummies can be an invaluable support to parents and babies in the early months of development.



However, did you know that prolonged use of a dummy can cause potential risks to the development of speech and language?

Overuse of a dummy can have an impact on:

- The development of babbling, an important early stage in learning to talk
- Development of the full range of tongue movements, important for sounds like t, d and l
- Tongue position and pattern of tongue movements making speech sounds unclear, important for sounds like s and sh
- Gaps between the upper and lower front teeth which may lead to a lisp making sounds like s, and z difficult
- Reduced desire to communicate – with a dummy in the mouth, some young children may become less likely to seek out talking activities
- Increased dribbling – some children may find it difficult to get good lip closure because of the dummy and may have more saliva dribbles and slushy sounding speech

How can you help your child?

Getting rid of a dummy is not easy! However, it can be more difficult to wean children off as they get older. This can result in stress for both of you.

Choose the right time for your child to give up their dummy – not when you are under pressure.

Make a clean break – throw away the dummy over a weekend, or at a time when you have support.

Most babies and toddlers will fret for no more than two or three days.

Once you have decided to give the dummy up, don't be tempted to give it back, and make sure there are none left around.

