

Newdigate C of E Infant School



## Starting School



HELPFUL HINTS

PREPARING YOUR CHILD FOR SCHOOL

# How to use this booklet

Dear Parent

Thank you for taking the time to read this booklet which contains some ideas and activities to help your child.

**Praise and reassurance** are essential in developing confidence and independence. Talk and share ideas, but try to resist the temptation to 'change' or improve a drawing or painting. Please remember children do not develop at the same rate.

## Preparing for School

### The first day

All children come to school with a mixture of excitement, expectancy and a certain amount of trepidation.

This is natural and to be expected.

You can best help by speaking of school as somewhere to look forward to and somewhere exciting to be. We will do our part by warmly welcoming your child and ensuring that they are well cared for as well as effectively taught.

Please note that the greyed out areas, reflect how we would normally organise our school transition and school day, however due to the current unprecedented situation guidance is constantly changing and we will be making adjustments on an ongoing basis.

Whilst your child is attending on a part-time basis please bring your child to the outside door of their classroom at 8.50am or 1.10pm for children attending in the afternoon. The class teacher or teaching assistant will be at the door to greet them. If they feel confident to come in alone that is brilliant, but if you wish to stay with them for a few minutes, that's fine too but, try to make it a quick kiss goodbye and go, lengthy goodbyes generally lead to tears.

Normally an upset child will settle once mum or dad have left the classroom. We will ring you if we think your child is unduly upset during the day and needs you.

When your child is attending full-time, assemble in the playground with the other parents and children. When the bell goes encourage your child to line up and go in with the rest of the class independently.

It is not uncommon for a few children to show some reluctance in coming to school after the novelty of the first few days wears off. If this happens, do try not to be too anxious, but leave your child with us in a calm and reassuring way having first said goodbye and telling him/her that you will see them at home time. You might like to leave something small of yours for them to look after during the day. This will be a constant reassurance that you will be back later. Alternatively, draw a heart on your wrist and one on your child's; the magic invisible string will keep you connected.

## **Physical Development**

### **Moving and handling**

Practise throwing, catching and kicking a ball.

Practise cutting with scissors, drawing and colouring.

Scootering and pedalling on a trike/bike.

### **Health and self care**

You can help your child by practising the following things at home:

- ◆ Undressing and getting dressed. (Particularly putting inside clothes back the right way.)
- ◆ Putting shoes on the correct feet
- ◆ Putting on socks
- ◆ Doing up buttons
- ◆ Putting on coats
- ◆ Holding a pencil correctly.
- ◆ Using a knife and fork.
- ◆ Using the toilet independently and knowing to wash their hands with soap afterwards.

### **Personal, social and emotional development**

Social skills are probably the most important life skills your child will ever learn. We begin learning social skills from the moment we are born and we keep on learning all through our lives. They are the key to your child making and keeping friends and to the enjoyment of life.

#### **Encouragement and praise**

Give lots of encouragement and praise so that your child learns to feel positive about themselves and develops good self-esteem. It also supports our 'have a go' approach to learning; we encourage all children across our school to have a *Growth Mindset* ie to believe they can achieve with practice or resilience rather than a fixed mindset of ability. Please also encourage your child to know that it is alright to ask for help.

#### **Looking after things**

Encourage your child to tidy away their own toys and take care of their own and other's possessions.

#### **Sharing and taking turns**

Encourage your child to share toys and take turns, and give lots of praise when they do so. Simple board or card games such as Snap and snakes and ladders are good for practising turn-taking.



## Language for communication and thinking

- Children need really good speaking and listening skills to learn. In their first five years they will learn more about speaking and learn more words than at any other time.

### How can I help my child to communicate?

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- Encourage listening as well as talking.
- Listen to and read stories and rhymes.
- Go on listening walks and listen to everyday sounds.
- Ask them to retell a story, for example, *Goldilocks and the 3 bears*.
- Recall what you did on a day out. Ask what their favourite part of the day was.
- Ask them to remember some items you need to buy/have bought at the shops.
- Play Simon Says
- Ensure they can follow a two-step instruction.
- Have your dinner without the television on to enable conversations

### Talk together and involve them in conversations

- Wherever you are and whatever you are doing, talk about it. It is important for children to hear language. Always value what they say and respond to it. Top tip—a conversation is like a game of tennis—take turns speaking and listening! Help your child to use the correct tenses.

# Literacy

## Reading

Sharing books and preparing for reading

It is never too early to start looking at books and sharing stories with your child. Children who are read to and enjoy books from an early age are most likely to become fluent and successful readers themselves in the future and more imaginative writers.

We want children to know that reading is fun and worthwhile, so it is important that they see adults reading and enjoying books, newspapers, magazines etc. Children that see the value in reading will want to read for themselves and will be well motivated to learn. These children often exhibit reader-like behaviour at an early stage. You will see them pick up books by choice and pretend to read by saying what they can see in illustrations. Or they may remember some things you have read to them earlier and 'read' it again. This is a natural progression in learning and should be highly valued and encouraged.



### Reading must be fun

There are plenty of well-illustrated and colourful picture books and stories for reading aloud to choose from.

Sit your child on your knee or close to you while you read so that you can enjoy the story together. Let your child hold the book and encourage him or her to turn the pages.

Talk about the pictures first. **Ask questions** about the pictures and then after they have listened to the story.

### Involve your child

Try to involve your child in the story as you are reading. Relate events to things you have done together and let him/her talk about what they think will happen next.

Sometimes point to the words accompanying the pictures.

Your child may be able to join in the words with you when the story is repeated and words are remembered. This can also help to reinforce the left to right movement needed for reading.

### Encourage your child

Encourage your child to **re-tell** favourite and familiar stories in their own words.

Stories on CD, simple information books and carefully selected comics can add to your child's experience of 'reading'.

Listen to music together and sing and, most importantly, recite nursery rhymes, finger plays and simple songs. Children enjoy the rhythm and repetition, and this is a key early reading skill.

### Use your local library

Your child can join the library. A trip to the library to borrow some new books can quickly become a regular activity for your child.

Listed below are just a few of the interesting and exciting books available for young children, which are likely to be available from your local library:

- Gruffalo series - Julia Donaldson
- Charlie and Lola series - Lauren Child
- On Friday Something Funny Happened - John Prater
- We're Going on a Bear Hunt - Michael Rosen
- Ten in the Bed/Ten out of the Bed - Penny Dale
- Look out Suzy Goose, New House for Mouse - Petr Horacek
- You Choose - Nick Sharratt and Pippa Goodhart

Any traditional tales (Three Little Pigs, Red Riding Hood etc), and books with rhymes in them.

During the pandemic Oxford owls books are offering a free ebook library including some for 3-4 and 4-5 year olds and phonic books. ([oxfordowl.co.uk/for-home/find-a-book/library-page](https://oxfordowl.co.uk/for-home/find-a-book/library-page))

#### At school

To begin with we will send home library books which children can choose themselves, then gradually they will be given books that are from the reading schemes that we use in school. Alongside this activity we will be teaching your children to recognise letters, sounds and simple key words by sight. **Phonological awareness** lays the foundations for reading and writing. To teach the letter sounds we use the Read Write Inc scheme. For each sound (phoneme) there is a picture and a phrase.

#### Phonological Awareness

People often think that reading begins with learning to sound out letters. Most young children are getting ready to read, however, long before they learn that letters stand for sounds. Reading actually starts with children tuning into the sounds of spoken words. That's where phonological awareness comes in. Phonological awareness is a skill that allows children to recognise and work with the sounds of spoken language. In pre-school, it means being able to pick out rhyming words and count the number of syllables in a name. It also involves noticing how sounds repeat themselves (alliteration). For example, "Susie sold six salami sandwiches".

Later phonological awareness moves from noticing to doing. Children can come up with rhyming words, and they can break words apart into syllables or single sounds by listening rather than clapping. The more experience your child has of doing these things, the better equipped they will be when they learn to read and write.

Remember it is important that reading should be an enjoyable activity and if your child is becoming stressed or is too tired to read then the session is best ended or you could try reading a page each.

5 or 10 minutes each day is much more valuable than a 20 minute session every few days.

At Newdigate we are very successful in building reading skills in children and you can be confident that your child will progress well and that any difficulties will be quickly identified and addressed in close consultation with you.



## Writing



### Making marks

At first children need plenty of time to explore and experiment making marks on paper with a variety of implements. Do encourage your child to experiment with all types of writing tools, e.g.

pencils, wax crayons, chalks and felt tips.

No formal instruction is needed at this stage. These 'marks' (emergent writing) and scribbles have real meaning for children so it is important to praise and value each attempt. Ask your child to read back what they have written.

### Learning about writing

Children learn about writing by noticing print and watching others write and draw.

Point out bus or street signs and supermarket labels so that children come to realise that the funny squiggles all around them convey meaning. They may even start to say 'what does that say?' when they see print. Let children see you writing letters, shopping lists and filling in forms. Give them the opportunity to 'write' lists of their own or sign birthday cards and invitations.

### Activity Ideas

Activities which help to strengthen fingers and develop the fine motor skills necessary for writing are important at this stage too.

Encourage your child to make models from junk modelling, duple, lego and roll and cut out shapes from playdough or pastry. 'Hama' bead and pegging activities are also useful.

### Recipe for making playdough

1 cup of salt

2 tsp cream of tartar

2 cups of flour

2 cups of water

2 tsp oil

Few drops of food colouring

Cook on a medium heat, stirring continuously. Remove when the mixture leaves the sides of the pan. Knead well. Store in an airtight container.

### Developing fine motor control

Let your child use scissors to cut out pictures from old catalogues, magazines or cards, and glue or paste the resulting shapes on to paper. If your child has difficulty cutting paper let him/her try cutting play dough first - it's much easier. Thread beads or pasta to make necklaces and bracelets.

Make shapes or patterns in shallow trays of dry sand, or with paint using fingers. The patterns could be curvy or zigzag but try to encourage making the pattern from left to right.

Use wide brushes to make pictures with water on slabs outside on a dry day. Colouring, painting, drawing, dot to dots and mazes, tracings and drawing around templates (your own child's hand is useful) all help.

### Patterns and lines

- Before learning to write letters, children can benefit from drawing patterns and lines across paper.

If these are based on letter shapes they help children to develop good habits and move their pencil in the correct direction from the start.

### Names

- Children are interested in any ideas using their name. Make a name card for your child and use it to encourage name and letter recognition. Try to encourage them to recognise their own name in writing.

At first encourage him or her to trace over the letters using the index finger. Then clip tracing paper over the card and let your child trace over their name using a thick pencil.

Use letter **sounds** not alphabet names for letters.

Let your child make their name using magnetic letters.

Play matching or sorting games using sets of alphabet cards.



### Holding the pencil

Always encourage your child to hold the pencil correctly. The tripod grip is the correct and most comfortable hold. The child holds the pencil between the index finger and thumb with the other fingers underneath and the hand resting on the paper. At school we use the phrase 'Two froggy legs sitting on a log.' Do not worry if your child is left-handed.

### Handwriting

Your child will be taught lower case letters first in a cursive script before being introduced to capital letters. Every letter must start from the line. Please see the enclosed handwriting sheet. If you or your child writes anything, make sure you use lower case letters.

Capitals only need to be used for the beginning of a sentence and for names.

THOMAS X Thomas

### Time

Talk to your child about events in the day, night, morning and afternoon. Use prepositional language e.g. before, after, next, since etc. Use the language of yesterday, today, tomorrow and the days of the week.

# Mathematics

## It's not just about numbers

The idea of mathematics for pre-school children can seem a bit daunting. However, at this age a lot of maths is about understanding ideas such as size, shape, and pattern - things that most adults would not think of as maths at all. If your child gains an early understanding of these concepts, then this can give him or her a flying start with number work.

## Shapes

Give your child opportunities to notice and recognise the different shapes around them. Use the proper names when talking to children about 2D and 3D shapes. Go on shape hunts around the house.



Look at road signs and discuss the different 2D shapes you see.

Vocabulary to describe 2D shapes is corners and sides.

Vocabulary to describe 3D shapes is faces, corners and edges.

## Counting

Children enjoy counting real objects. Counting the stairs as you take your child up to bed each night; count your fingers and toes, count buttons on clothes; count the number of apples into a shopping bag; count 'pennies' in a money box and save up to buy something.

Practise counting forwards and backwards and counting on from different numbers.

Counting up to 20 is now an expectation for Reception-aged children.

Make up little games and ask your child to fetch, 3 books, 4 spoons or to do 5 claps, 2 jumps etc. Draw children's attention to numbers in everyday life.



Look for numbers on cars, buses, clocks, houses and telephones. Show your child how to write numbers in a tray of sand, salt or shaving foam.

### Counting rhymes

Recite counting rhymes, particularly those that involve holding up a number of fingers like, five speckled frogs, '1,2,3,4,5 once I caught a fish alive' You can get counting songs on CD and you tube and there are lots of fun interactive games on the internet. Read counting books such as 'The Very Hungry Caterpillar' by Eric Carle.

### Pattern

Helping to lay the table encourages children to notice pattern - 1 knife, 1 fork, 1 plate in each place.

Let your child use beads and cotton reels or pasta tubes for threading. Encourage 'repeating patterns' using two colours i.e. blue/green, blue/green along the string.

### Matching

Playing matching games with socks, shoes, gloves and picture cards can be fun. The ability to match lids to pans and bottles to tops.

### Sorting

Sort objects into colours e.g. buttons, toys. Look out for certain colours e.g. how many red cars do we see on our walk? Objects can be sorted for size, shape and function too. A 'collection' of seasonal items is useful for developing sorting skills; you could collect leaves in autumn, shells in the summer, cards at Christmas. Encourage children to notice similarities and difference in their collection.

### Maths at bath time

At bath time let children fill different sized bottles with water and discover which holds most. Put different coins in the bath—can your child find the 2p? etc.

### Measuring and Weighing

Children like to help with cooking. Let them measure ingredients with a cup or spoon and watch you use the scales to weigh and balance. Set the timer to bleep when the food is ready. This will help make your child aware that it takes a length of time to cook food. Use the vocabulary: heavy, light, heavier, lighter, half full, full. Order items from lightest to heaviest. Encourage them to be observant and inquisitive from an early age.



### Recognising and ordering numbers

Look at numbers. Where can you find them? Write them down.

Choose a number for the week e.g. 2

Encourage your child to look out for this number all the time.

Can your child see the number 2 anywhere?

- at home
  - in the kitchen
  - on pages in a book
  - on the remote control
  
- in the street
  - on doors
  - on car number plates
  - on buses
  
- while out shopping
  - on the shop till
  - on shelves
  - in shop windows

- Make individual number cards from 1 to 5.
- Hide number cards in the house or garden for your child to go a hunt for.
- Put them in order
- Remove one number. Ask your child which number is missing.
- Show your child one number—"what is one more/ one less than that number?"
- Give your child 3 random numbers. Can they order them from smallest to largest?

When your child can do this, repeat with higher numbers, 1 to 10, then 1 to 20.

Dice games—

- Use a 'dotted' dice and write the numbers 1 to 6 on a sheet of paper. Throw the dice, can your child guess how many dots there are? Check by counting. Ask your child which number on the paper matches the dots on the dice.
- Take turns to roll a dice and count on to 10/20 or back to zero from the number rolled.



### One more, one less

For this game you need a dice, a coin and some building blocks or Lego bricks.

- Take turns to roll the dice
- Build a tower with that number of blocks or bricks
- Then toss the coin. Heads means take one brick off, tails means add one on.
- If you can guess how many bricks there will be after this, you keep them!
- The first to collect 20 bricks or more wins!

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### Investigate

Investigate ways of making a total,

For example, 3 red sweets and 2 orange sweets make five.

4 red sweets and 1 orange sweet makes five.

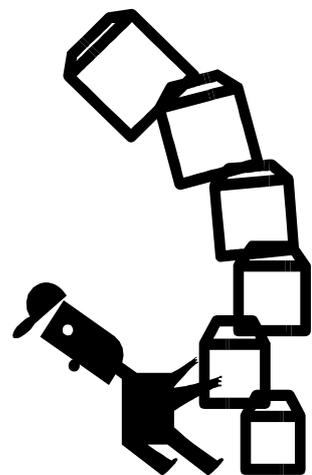
What shapes can you make when you cut a sandwich ? Rectangles, squares, triangles.

### Build a wall

For this game you need a dice and some building blocks or lego bricks.

- Take turns
- Roll the dice
- Collect the number of bricks to build your own wall.
- The first to 20 wins!

For a change, start with 20 blocks or bricks each. Take away the number on the dice. First to exactly zero wins.



## Understanding of the World

### Questions, questions, questions

Science for young children mainly involves asking questions to encourage them to be observant and inquisitive about the world in which they live.

The following simple activities can provide fun learning situations for scientific investigation.

### Plants

Plant cress seeds on damp cotton wool or blotting paper. Put some on a sunny windowsill, some in a fridge and some in a dark cupboard and see what happens to them.

### Changes over time

Observe growth in your family on a height chart.

Draw attention to seasonal changes.

Talk about the weather every day.

### Collections

Collect and sort leaves using describing words such as rough, smooth, crinkly. Look for pebbles, shells and sea life on a visit to the seaside. Put a collection of familiar objects in a bag or box and let your child try to work out what they are just by sense of touch.



### Clothes

What sort of clothes do we need to put on if it's hot/cold/wet today? Why are warm clothes warm?

### Cooking

Cooking with your child gives opportunities to see the changes in food brought about by heating and cooling.

### Sand play

Children enjoy playing with sand. Try to provide opportunities for children to compare how wet sand can be used for building and how dry sand pours like a liquid.



### Water play

Fill a sink, bath or paddling pool with water and let children play under supervision. Add soap or blow through a straw to make bubbles. Add food colouring to make coloured water. Provide bottles, funnels, cups and jugs for pouring and measuring. It takes a lot of skill to fill a small container from a large one and vice versa. Provide corks, bottle tops, boats, small pebbles for floating and sinking games. Use water 'vocabulary': pour, squeeze, drip, soap, suds, spill etc.

# Expressive Arts and Design

## Expressing feelings

Drawing, painting and craft activities can help children to express their feelings when it may not always be easy to put these into words. They also help children to develop the physical skills necessary for hand-eye coordination - being able to hold a brush or pencil and control it.

## Activity Ideas

You can help your child by providing a variety of materials and experiences. Paint can be applied to paper or any suitable stain resistant surface. It can be applied with brushes, rollers, fingers, sponges and any small object with a textured surface e.g. lego brick, cotton reel.

Collage pictures can be made from anything. Pasta, tissue paper, sequins, fabric scraps, paper cut out by children, can be stuck to thick paper or card with glue.

## Threading

Children also enjoy threading necklaces using pasta, polystyrene shapes and straws.

## Making Models

Junk modelling materials, like cereal boxes, plastic trays (that vegetables / fruit come in) cardboard boxes and cylinders can be used to make models of all kinds. Sticking can be frustrating, so adults help is sometimes needed. But try to encourage your child to be resilient and keep trying. Whilst using these junk modelling materials you can use the mathematical vocabulary like cube, cuboid and cylinder. Also make models with clay and dough.

## 'Doing it' is what matters

Children find pleasure and satisfaction in handling all these materials and learn about texture, colour, size, shape and quantity. Remember, for a child it is the 'doing' that matters, not the finished picture. Talk and share ideas, but try to resist the temptation to 'change' or improve a drawing or painting.

## Role Play

Encourage your child to take on different roles and to develop their imaginative story lines.

