

Preparing children for school



Focus this month– independence skills

Independence skills focus-

- Putting on own coat and shoes
- Climbing up the climbing frame at the park
- Getting own water
- Taking a tissue, wiping nose and putting it in the bin
- Using the toilet, flushing and hand washing etc...

Throughout the month we will also be working on –

Alphabet – letters e, f, g, h

Maths –

- Comparing long and short
 - Comparing loud and quiet
 - 5 little ducks went swimming one day
 - 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 once I caught a fish alive
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Notice board display

We hope your child enjoyed some of the sitting and listening activities we suggested last month. Please let us have lots of feedback about what they are doing and saying at home so we can support their learning while they are here! We are consistently promoting a 'can do' attitude to learning and you might hear your child saying 'yes I can' and 'I can do it' at home as they are encouraged to try to do things by themselves.

During October we will be focussing on developing and consolidating your child's **independence skills**. We won't just be doing this during October of course... but we will be starting to think more about how to promote independence to ensure your child can do the things they will need to be able to do in school such as...

- Putting on their own coat – hood on the head, reach back to put arms in one at a time
- Putting on and fastening up their shoes – Velcro are much easier for everyone! Half a sticker in each shoe can help them go on the right feet
- Managing their own lunches – your child will be taking turns to set the table, pour drinks for friends, share out food etc as well as using cutlery rather than fingers
- Toileting and hand washing and drying properly afterwards
- Changing clothes after playing outside or getting wet – even if they go on back to front
- Doing up zips (we will start them off to begin with) and fastening buttons
- Talking to and sharing ideas with a group of children

We do not expect to start practicing all these skills on Monday and Tuesday and have them consolidated by Wednesday... we are going to be thinking about them from now until next September, encouraging and supporting them a little at a time until they are able to manage independently.

I am sure things will go wrong sometimes! They will not want to put on their shoes... and water will be spilled... and some days will feel like a battle... and that's absolutely fine because we are all entitled to have bad days! However, we will keep plugging away because, when your child has learned these skills, they will be one step closer to being well prepared for school.

So... no more 'I can't' and 'do it for me' ... we are promoting a 'can do' attitude to learning new things with lots of praise for trying even if it doesn't go quite as planned! ☺

Developing children's independence skills

The essence of independence is to be able to do something for one's self."

Maria Montessori

Children develop concentration, coordination and independence when they practice the activities at home as well as in the provision and they gain respect for the world in which they live. You will notice that the environment is calmer and the children are able to concentrate better – which supports them for future learning. This type of teaching links very closely to the recently introduced DfE and Ofsted requirement to teach children about British values.

Practical life activities help children develop independence as well as respect – they are given real tools to do real jobs which enhance the environment for everyone. Activities include –

- Cleaning the floor after playing with the sand or water – provide a sweeping brush, mop, waste bin etc and show the children how to keep the floor safe.
 - Clearing up after food – provide children with cloths, cleaning fluid (child safe) and brushes so they can wipe the table and sweep the floor.
 - Hanging up paintings – apart from the great fine motor skills they are practicing when doing this activity, children are learning to do the chores they will need to perform as they get older.
 - Measuring – provide scales and different things to weigh to teach children about weight (maths) and practice pouring and spooning carefully and with increased control for when they are involved in cooking activities.
 - Dressing – provide resources which allow children to practice buttons, zips, poppers and ties. Children also will be allowed opportunities to put on and take off their own socks and shoes.
 - Bathroom skills such as cleaning teeth, washing face, brushing hair and hanging up the towel after use are part of practical life activities which are included in our normal daily routine. We will provide child-friendly resources and child-height mirrors, hooks etc to promote independence.
 - Pouring – we will provide small jugs of water and open cups for the children to practice with so they will be able to pour water at the table during meals. Older children can help the little ones until they are confident to do it for themselves.
 - Scrubbing potatoes or other vegetables – we will give the children a bucket of water and a scrubbing brush and show them how to prepare the vegetables ready for peeling and cooking. We will involve children in every aspect of food preparation and cooking as part of their daily routine.
 - Crushing herbs – We will give the children a pestle and mortar and show them how to crush herbs we have bought or grown in the garden. We will focus on sensory, smelly herbs to stimulate their sense of smell.
 - Lemon or orange juice – we will let the children cut the fruit and squeeze out the juice – it will taste so much nicer if they have made it themselves and they will learn about the effort that is needed to produce their food and drinks.
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- Take it in turns so each child has a go at setting the table for meal times. We will make it a proper job – they should clean the table first and then set out a place mat (children can make and laminate their own), knives, forks, spoons, cups and a container of water. Some children find it helpful to use prompts which show them where the utensils and plates are placed. In the spring and summer they can go with a practitioner into the garden and cut a sprig of flowers for a jug in the centre of the table.
 - We will grow vegetables, herbs and flowers in the garden and will put the children in charge of looking after them. We will teach them that plants need water, sunshine and good soil and provide them with a watering can and access to a tap (supervised).
 - Washing up – We will give children a bowl, cloth, soapy water and some resources and wash them together. We are teaching so many skills with this activity – pulling up sleeves, putting on an apron, keeping the environment and resources clean for everyone to use, respecting resources etc.
 - Transferring – We will provide pots and spoons and something to transfer between them.
 - Paper craft – we think of all the skills we as adults take for granted that we can do every day in our office. We punch holes in paper, use a laminator or binder, print sheets from the computer, draw lines with a ruler, cut sticky tape, use glue, colour pictures for display etc. It is important that children are given opportunities to practice these life skills in a supportive environment before they are thrown into a busy classroom where it is expected that they can do everything!
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Literacy focus - E is for...

Egg – we will eat a different type of egg every day of the week –

Monday - scrambled

Tuesday – fried

Wednesday – poached

Thursday – omelette

Friday – egg custard

We will draw some oval shapes and decorate them – look at Faberge eggs for inspiration.

Focus – e is for elephant

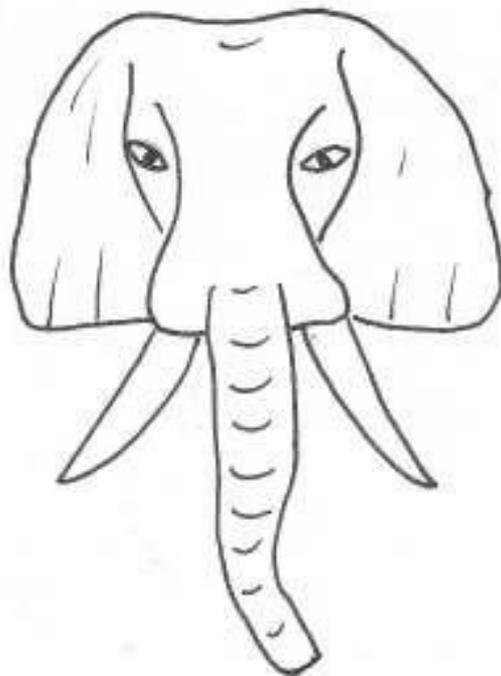
- Look at pictures of African and Indian elephants – can you spot the similarities and differences?
- Make paper plate elephant masks
- Read stories about Elmer the colourful elephant and focus on shapes, colours and patterns
- Sing with the children –

An elephant walks like this and that

He's terribly tall and terribly fat

He has no fingers and he has no toes

But goodness gracious what a long nose!



Literacy focus - F is for...

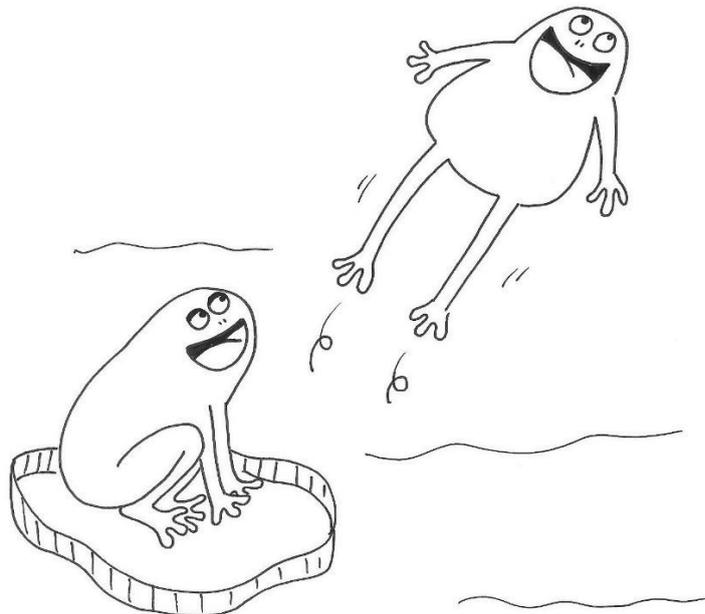
Flag – we will make a flag with the children. Look through a book of flags and choose some really colourful ones – we will use positional language to talk about where the various colours are located on the flags – before, in front of, after etc.

Fish – sing '1, 2, 3, 4, 5 once I caught a fish alive' and do the actions. We will make some fish for each finger

Focus – f is for frog

Activity ideas include –

- Sing '5 green and speckled frogs' – bring the song alive by using frog puppets and a log on a piece of blue material to represent the pool. Don't forget some yummy bugs!
- Find out where frogs live – visit the local pond and go on a frog hunt
- Learn about the life cycle of a frog
- Make a frog jigsaw – cut a picture of a frog into pieces and slide it together



Literacy focus - G is for...

Grass – we will grow some grass heads with the children. We will Talk about the colour of grass – is all grass the same shade of green? We will take some photos and compare...

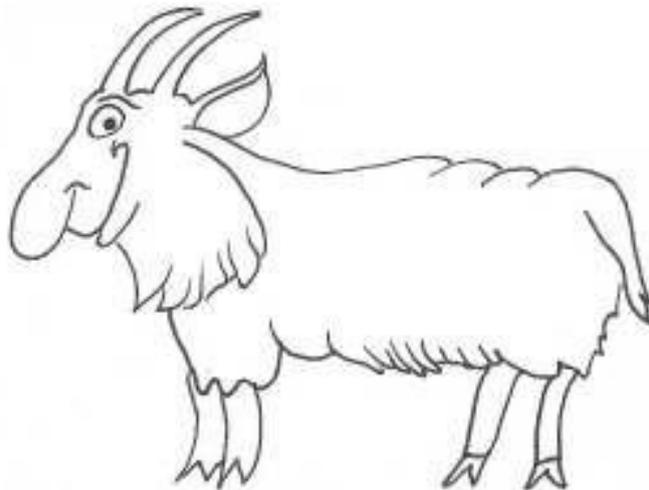
Green – what is green? We will take the children on a walk in the local area to find lots of green. We will let them take photos of green leaves, grass, toys in the playground, painted doors etc which they can look at later to reinforce learning.

Garden – We will look around the garden for 'g' shapes hidden among the shrubbery and under / over / through the toys. Give the children clues to help them find the 'g' shapes...

Focus – g for goat

Activity ideas include –

- Read '3 Billy Goats Gruff' (traditional tale)
- Talk to the children about goats – what do they already know?
- Make a paper plate goat face (design ideas online)
- Goats and sheep are different... look at the similarities and differences



Literacy focus - G is for...

Hands – we will draw round each child's hands and decorate them. Look at pictures of decorated hands mehndi style and use them to copy. Can the children give each of their finger nails a different colour?

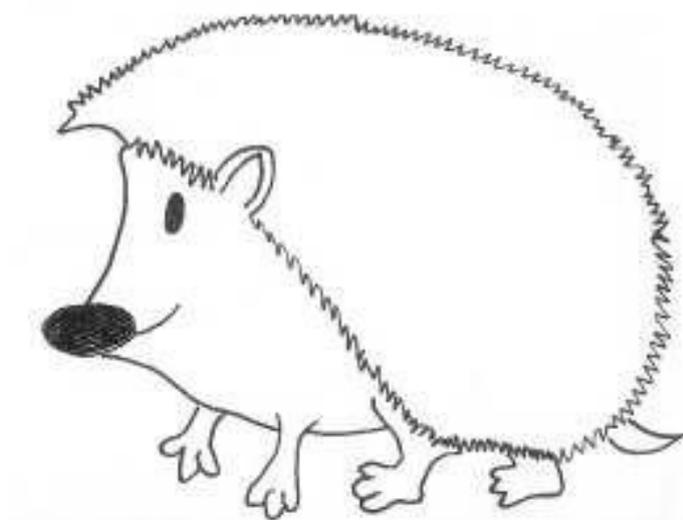
House / home – we will read 'Homes around the world' by Kate Petty (Oxfam) and talk about the different types of houses children in the story live in.

Heart – we will look at heart shapes with the children – keep Valentines cards for sorting and counting hearts and make your own shapes with stencils or drawing freehand.

Focus – h is for hedgehog

Activity ideas include –

- Find out why hedgehogs are spiky
- Read about Mrs Tiggywinkle (Beatrix Potter stories)
- Pretend to be a hedgehog moving round the garden – they are very quick!
- Make a hedgehog from fallen leaves
- Create a corner of the garden for a hedgehog – they are welcomed by gardeners because they eat the slugs and snails.



Mathematics focus

Making comparisons - loud and quiet

Noisy neighbor game

This game is taken from Letters and Sounds phase 1 –

When are we quiet / noisy? All the children are fast asleep and we start to tell a story... Early one morning when everyone was asleep we heard a sound coming from next door... (We make a sound – yawn, munch, sneeze, sniff, clap, stamp, pat knees, snore etc)

Then we say – wake up children! What is the sound?

Everyone says – be quiet noisy neighbour we are trying to sleep – and goes back to sleep. We will Repeat using another noise.

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Loud and quiet games

We will play games to help the children make comparisons between loud and quiet sounds -

- I can play instruments loudly... I can play instruments quietly
- I can use a loud voice in the garden... I can use a quiet voice in the house
- I can stamp my feet loudly... I can tiptoe quietly
- I can whisper... I can shout
- In the garden I can hear a loud noise... I can hear a quiet noise

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What is loud in the house / garden?

We will go round the house and garden looking for loud and quiet sounds. We will make a list of the different sounds the children can hear – the washing machine, tumble drier, vacuum cleaner, books that make a noise, baby when he is tired etc...

We will tape some of the noises and play them back – we will ask the children to close their eyes and listen carefully. What do they remember?

Mathematics focus

Making comparisons - long and short

Long and short names game

We will say our names and the children's names in different ways – loudly, quietly, stretching it out, making it short, with a beat (tapping out the phonemes) etc.

We will encourage the children to listen to each other's names and play games with them. Focus on long and short – who has the longest / shortest name?

More activity ideas –

