

Introducing - December

Preparing children for school



Focus this month – Social skills

Social skills focus -

- Playing turn taking games together
- Taking children into group situations where they can meet new friends
- Teaching children how to share toys, playing with something else while we wait
- Helping children to be confident to approach other children and join in with their play
- The children need to know to be friendly with other children and negotiate solutions to problems

Throughout the month we will also work on –

Alphabet – letters N, O, P and Q

Maths –

- Focus on time and capacity
- 2 illustrated maths songs – This old man; Hickory dickory dock

Preparing for school focus – focus on developing essential **social skills** to support children ready for starting school. Children need to be able to make friends, share, take turns, understand what to do and how to interact in group situations, join in with groups games etc.

Ofsted expect us to monitor children's progress very carefully so that, as soon as they have established and practiced a new skill or gained new knowledge, next steps activity ideas are put in place to support them to develop further. This means using Early Years Outcomes as a monitoring tool, regularly checking to make sure the children are making progress against the 'typical behaviour' outcomes.

Letter to parents –

We welcome parents to the monthly 'preparing for school' letter and we will remind them that it's a slow plod rather than a gallop to the September finish line. Focusing on how their child is developing their **social skills** during the month.

Planning to work on new skills each month through the year, consolidating learning and introducing new skills such as –

- Playing turn taking games together
- Taking children into group situations where they meet new friends
- Teaching children how to share toys, playing with something else while we wait
- Helping children to be confident to approach other children and join in with their play
- Children need to know how to be friendly with other children and negotiate solutions to problems
- Working within school boundaries.

Alphabet – letters N, O, P and Q

Maths –

- Focus on time and capacity
- 2 illustrated maths songs - This old man; hickory dickory dock

Dear parents,

When your child starts school, they need to be able to share, take turns, understand how to play in a group, negotiate with other children, join in conversations and make friends. These essential **social skills** will allow them to cope better in a busy group environment. Your child has already been offered lots of opportunities to learn these social skills because they go on outings with you and we regularly take them out and about to meet friends and play.

From December and through the following months we are going to be focusing on making sure your child achieves the 'typical behaviours' in Early Years Outcomes for personal, social and emotional development – developing their self-confidence and awareness, helping them to manage their feelings and behaviour and understanding how to make appropriate relationships. With these skills securely in place, they will be able to positively approach other children and make friends, participating in group play and being able to deal with any conflicts that happen around them.

To monitor your child's social development, we will chat to you about how they are getting on at home. We will talk to you about their social interactions outside the provision and we will share information with you about how they share toys and equipment, take turns during games, express their needs during play and when talking to an adult, ask and answer questions, follow directions, understand rules during group games etc.

We will continue to plan lots of activities to support your child such as –

- Visiting friends and going on lots of outings
- Playing games that encourage your child to share and take turns
- Organising activities during which your child has to listen carefully and follow instructions
- Modelling social interactions during role play
- Giving them strategies to use so they can negotiate and solve problems
- Helping your child to express their needs appropriately
- Asking your child to wait a few moments before their needs are met
- Teaching your child that their words and actions might hurt others

We will be observing your child's progress carefully to help them prepare for next September and the big adventure of school, both in the classroom and playground. To support them at home, it can be helpful to meet up with friends who will be in the same class as your child at school. This will ensure they have a set of friends they are looking out for so they can be confident when they take those first steps on their new adventure.

Developing children's social skills

Outings – are an important part of the pre-school week. Taking children to a variety of places teaches them how to behave in different situations and they are more likely to meet new friends and learn about sharing and taking turns when they are out and about. A pre-school weekly plan usually looks something like this –

An Example for daily outings -

- Monday – outing to toddler group – opportunities for social interaction
- Tuesday – outing to the library – we take turns when we read books
- Wednesday – friends come to play – they bring a special activity with them
- Thursday – outing to singing group – we all chose different songs and dances
- Friday – outing to soft play – lots of opportunities to develop our gross motor skills, take turns and share in a group.

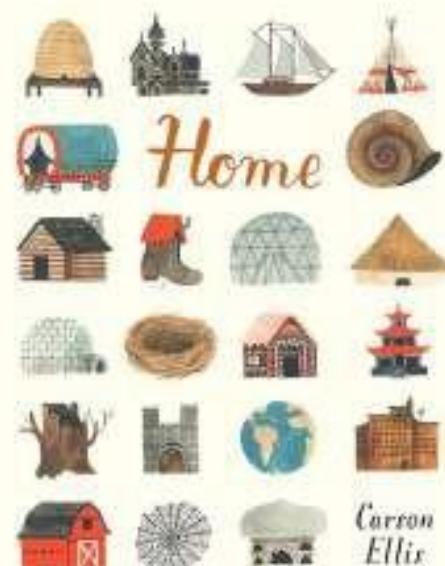
The children will look forward to doing something different... similarly when they go on visits to friends' houses and they take one of their activities to enjoy.

Activities that might be shared include –

- Song bags
- Recipes
- Sensory playdough
- Fairy gardens
- Dressing up clothes etc...

Games that encourage sharing and taking turns – there are lots of commercially available games or can be made by ourself. The best games are played when adults and pre-school children sit together and have fun – learning instructions – taking turns – helping each other etc. We have traditional games such as dominoes and playing cards we make games based on children's current interests.

Books that show similarities and differences – we have a home-made book called 'we are all different'. It contains photos of current children and hundreds of other pictures of children from around the world engaged in normal daily activities such as playing, eating or dancing. We also read books about children such as 'Home' by Carson Ellis.



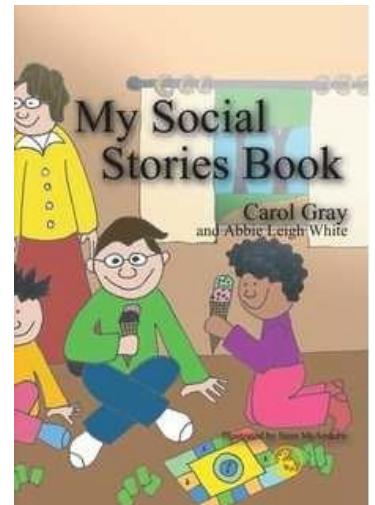
Listening and following instructions –

Following from last month when we were focusing on children's concentration, listening games such as 'Simon Says' and 'Duck, duck, goose' encouraging children to follow instructions and interact as part of a group. We also teaching school ready skills such as interacting with others and playing as part of a group.

Modelling social interactions – role play is an excellent way to promote social interactions. We might, for example –

- Monday – reading a book about and talk about flowers
- Tuesday – visiting a flower shop and do some flower arranging with home-made flowers
- Wednesday – visiting a garden centre to buy some seeds and so some planting
- Thursday – providing resources such as tabards, flowers, vases, seed packets etc so the children can role play flower shops – model interactions such as being the customer and the sales person
- Friday – continuing with role play if the children are still interested – or taking it in a different direction.

If children are struggling with social interactions, find it difficult to stay out of their friends' personal space or are constantly disrupting others they won't be able to manage well in the classroom. This can lead to teachers raising concerns with parents and even medication. Social stories work well for many children – they model how to behave in a group, allowing the child to be at the centre of the story which is relevant to them.



Negotiation skills – we need to give children strategies to use so they can negotiate and solve problems in a group. Some children are born leaders – we've seen them in the playground rallying their troops for a game of chase! Other children are content to follow along behind their friends ... but they all need to be able to stand up for themselves and say 'no' when they don't want something to happen.

Expressing needs – we need to help children to express their needs appropriately – they will soon be in a busy classroom where the teacher is on their own with maybe 30 children. They need to be able to say 'I need the toilet', 'I am thirsty' or 'I feel poorly' loudly and clearly.

Asking children to wait a few moments before their needs are met – some children really struggle with waiting! We use 'hand on hand' – the child comes to tell us something but we are busy with another child so they put their hand on our hand – we acknowledge they are waiting and give them our full attention as soon as we are free.

Literacy focus "N" is...

Necklace – we will for example - do some threading with the children and make a pretty necklace. We might use painted pasta or beads to make a necklace. Can the children make patterns?

Share learning with home – suggesting parents to make a necklace with their child.

Night – we will do some night and day experiments with the children and talking about similarities and differences – animals that come out at night – pictures of night and day – stars and the sun etc.

Number – playing some games with numbers. Setting out a number line and counting forwards and backwards... counting how many children are in the house and finding the right number... estimating how many leaves are in a pile and then counting them to check.

Extension activity – making some sensory numbers out of leaves to display in the garden.

Nest – making some birds nests from twigs and leaves the children find in the garden – taking them on a nature hunt to search for more things they can use to decorate the nest. Why do birds make nests?

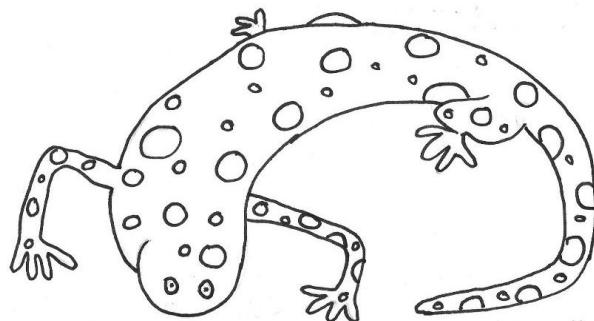
Challenge understanding – we will teach the children what happens in a nest? Reading 'Owl babies' by Martin Waddell and find out more.

Focus – n is for newt

Activity ideas include

for example –

- Visiting the library and reading a book about newts – finding out where they live and what they eat
- Going to the pond and searching for a newt – taking buckets and nets and see what we find in the water
- Making a newt in an 'n' shape
- Rolling a balls of playdough into circles to add as spots on the newt's body



Literacy focus "O" is...

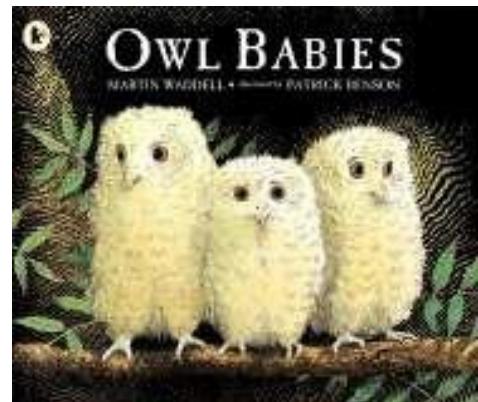
Orange – can we mix orange? What colours do we need? Letting the children loose with different combinations to see what they can make. Finding out about different types of oranges and trying a different one each day – tangerine, satsuma, large orange, mandarin, easy peeler etc...

Ostrich – an ostrich is a funny bird which puts its head into the sand when it wants to hide – much like children believe you cannot see them if they cover their eyes!

Looking at pictures of ostriches and talking about what they are doing and why... playing a game of hide and seek.

Owl – finding out more about owls – reading 'Owl Babies' – hoot like an owl and fly around the garden.

Owls come out to hunt at night – learning with children what other animals are out when they are safely tucked up in their beds?

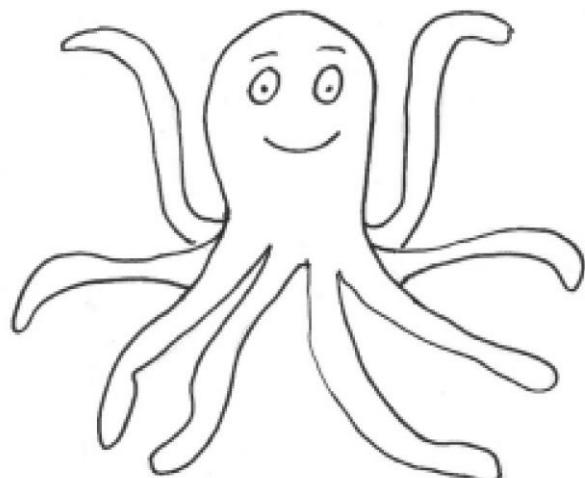


Focus – o is for octopus

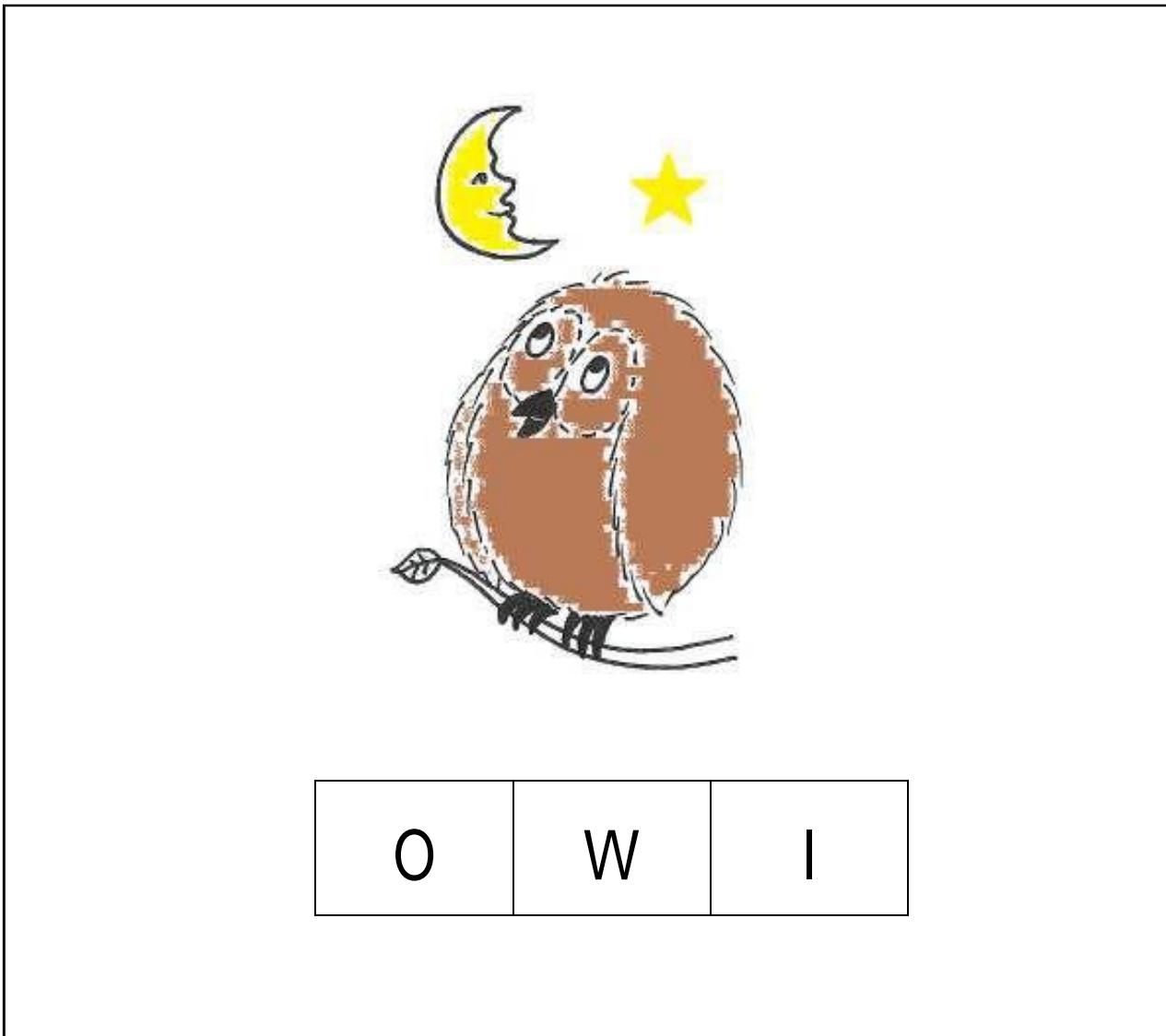
Activity ideas include

for example –

- An octopus has 8 long arms – making their arms with the children
- What has 8 legs – do they know?
- What is an 8 sided shape called?
- Craft idea – make an O shaped octopus and add 8 tentacles dangling from the bottom.
- Listening to and dance along to the song 'Henry the Octopus' by the Wiggles on YouTube.



Making a jigsaw



O	W	I
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Literacy focus "P" is...

Peter and Paul – singing 'two little dickie birds sitting on a wall, one named Peter and one named Paul. Fly away Peter, fly away Paul – come back Peter, come back Paul'.

Post box – writing some postcards or letters and taking them to the post box with the children. If children like posting things we could make a post box from an old tissue box which has been decorated - and they can post small toys inside.

Pizza – making some paper plate pizzas with our favourite toppings. Talking about healthy and unhealthy eating with the children – and making your own healthy pizzas for tea.

Extension idea - thinking about simple fractions when cutting up your pizzas – do the children know how to make half? What about a quarter?

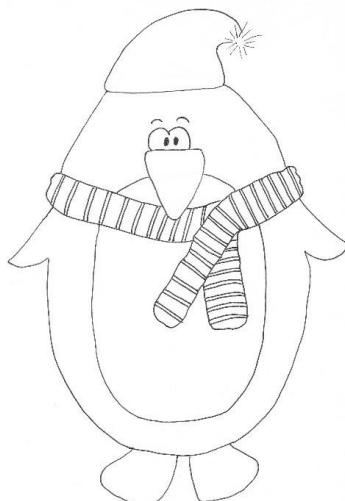
Pig – making some farm animal masks with the children and planning some small world farmyard play. Reading '3 little pigs' (traditional tale) and role playing in the messy tray.

Focus – p is for penguin

Activity ideas include

for example –

- Setting up the small world penguins with some snow (pretend snow works well) and ice cubes to making little houses for the penguins.
- Reading a book about penguins and learning about where they live
- Drawing some black and white penguins
- Making a penguin face mask
- Watching Bert pretending to be a penguin in a clip from 'Mary Poppins' and copying his funny dancing



Literacy focus "Q" is...

Queen – looking at some pictures of the queen and the royal family. Talking about what a queen wears, where she lives and what she does all day. Finding some film of the queen with her family walking the dogs as well as during a ceremony – talking about her different jobs. Her crowns are stored in the Tower of London – finding some pictures to show the children.

Extension idea – making our own crowns using jewels on a long thin piece of thick paper or thin card and lots of glue.

Quilt – do the children have quilts on their beds? Quilt covers come in lots of different patterns – using a selection of pictures of quilt covers and talking about colour and pattern.

Working with home - asking parents to help their child take a photo of their favourite quilt cover so they can share them with the group.

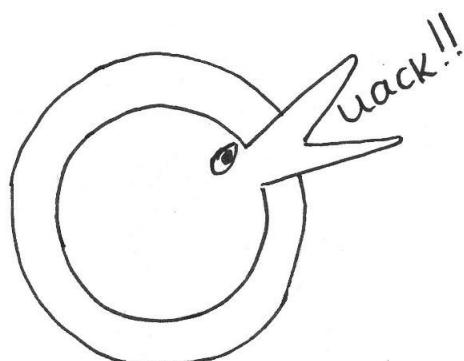
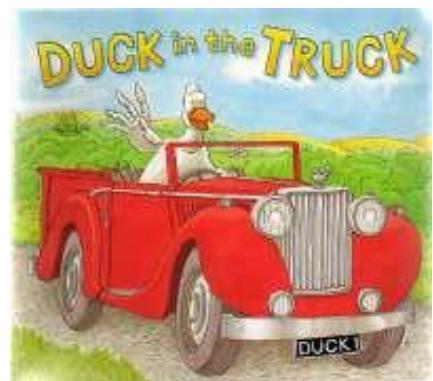
Quail – a quail is a type of bird – have the children heard of it before? Looking up some pictures of quails and talking about them – its size, shape etc. We will compare the quail to birds that visit our garden like blackbirds or robins – how is it the same / different?

Focus – q is for 'quack'

Activity ideas include

for example –

- What sound do ducks make?
- Reading 'Duck in the Truck' by Jez Alborough – finding pictures of the characters on Google Images if children enjoy colouring or making masks
- Watching a 'Daffy Duck' cartoon with the children – can they quack like daffy?
- Going to the local pond and taking some seeds for the ducks.



Maths focus – time

We have a time-line which we use with the children every day. It started as a visual prompt for a little one who used to constantly ask ‘when am I going home?’ and it has become an important part of our provision. When all the children have arrived and we have done the school run, we sit down for a chat about the day and date, how we are feeling, the weather outside etc and then we talk about what we might want to do next. We have visual prompts for most things – we collect pictures from magazines and online but mostly we like to include photos of the children, updating them when they leave us with new photos.

We don’t detail everything we are going to do during the day because, of course, children’s interests change and we often add a ‘surprise’ card which helps prepare children for something new happening. Our visual routine might say for example...

- Outing to the park
- Lunch at the café
- Playing in the garden with...
- Eating tea
- Going home...

It’s not a detailed rundown of the day but it does give the children structure and help them to recognise the daily flow. We find they often revisit the routine to check where they are up to and learn very quickly when their parents are going to arrive.

Focus books – ‘What’s the time, Mr Wolf?’ Debi Gliori – follow Mr Wolf through the day and spot lots of fairy tale characters along the way.

‘Five minutes’ peace’ by Jill Murphy - Mrs Large tries to take a peaceful, relaxing bath but her family has other ideas. How long is 5 minutes? Do the children know? Can they watch 5 minutes on a clock?

Songs include – Hickory Dickory Dock; cobbler, cobbler mend my shoe

Activity idea – making a new visual timetable featuring the children in our provision, going through their normal daily routine. Having the children taking photos so they are fully involved in the process.

Supporting home learning – sharing our visual timetable photos with parents and explaining how they are to support their child to understand the rhythm of their days. Suggesting parents to make a visual timetable for their child to use at home.

Maths focus – capacity

Vocabulary - capacity words include – fill – measure – empty – half – full – pour – tip – heavy – light

We teach capacity during planned activities and play invitations such as –

- At the sand tray
- Playing with water – coloured water adds interest – add jugs, spoons, funnels etc
- Cooking with children
- Watering the plants
- Pouring water at snack and meal times

We talk to the children about...

- How much? Is it full or empty?
- Is it half full / empty? Is it nearly full / empty?
- Do we have enough / not enough?
- Do we need to add more / take away to have less?

Focus book – ‘Mr Archimedes’ bath’ Pamela Allen

Mr Archimedes hops in and out of a bath with different animals including a kangaroo, goat and wombat. He looks closely at the water level each time, trying to understand why the water overflows when all the friends are in the bath.

Making an experiment with the children by putting the small world animals into a bath – does it overflow?

Activity idea – setting up a sand tray invitation to play for the children. Including spoons, jugs, cups etc and some laminated words and pictures to prompt conversation. Observing what the children currently understand relating to capacity and thinking about how we can extend learning next time we plan a similar activity.

Supporting home learning - sharing capacity-themed activity ideas that the children can play at home. For example, parents might give their child a couple of measuring jugs and bowl of water and talk about whether it is full or empty as they pour water from one jug to the other.

This old man, he played 1
He played nick knack on my drum
With a nick knack paddywack give a
dog a bone
This old man came rolling home.

Other verses –

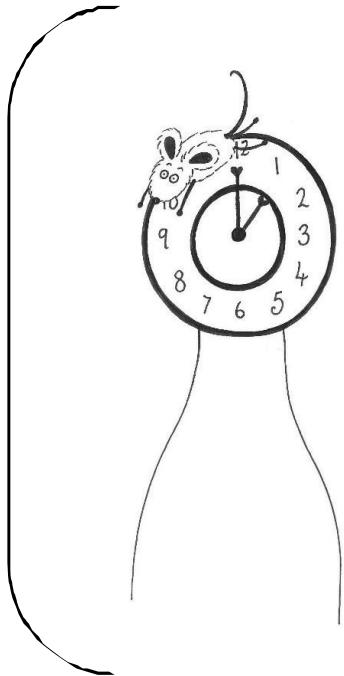
2 on the shoe - 3 on the knee - 4 on
the floor



Activity ideas – this old man for example -

- Making decorated drums using old boxes or tins
- Looking at drums from around the world
- Do the children understand how to drum gently – loudly – quietly - hard?
- Introducing quiet and loud drumming into the different verses
- Looking at photos of men – old, young, tall, short, fat, thin etc and make comparisons
- What is old? What does it mean? Is daddy old? Is granddad old?

Support home learning – explaining to parents that we are talking about loud and quiet and suggesting some activities for them to try at home.



Tick tock, tick tock, tick tock
Hickory dickory dock
The mouse ran up the clock
The clock struck one, the mouse ran down
Hickory dickory dock
Tick tock, tick tock, tick tock

Other verses –

2 the mouse said 'boo'

3 the mouse went

whee

4 the mouse said 'no more' and that's when the song finishes with 'tick tock tick tock time to stop'

Activity ideas – Hickory Dickory Dockfor example-

- Making a clock and use a small world mouse to role play the song
- Giving each child a turn to be the mouse
- Reading a book about a mouse – 'Town Mouse and Country Mouse' is a favourite
- Seeing if the children can keep the beat of the tick tock with rhythm sticks or a drum

Support home learning – explaining to parents that we are teaching their child about rhythm which links closely to their number and letter learning. Asking what clapping songs they sing at home and using some in the provision.