

Preparing children for school



Focus this month – Telling stories about school

Focus -

- Finding children's local schools and making maps
- Visiting the library and borrowing some starting school books
- Talking to the child about 'starting school' and listening to their concerns
- Role playing schools to develop imagination
- Teaching classroom rules - praise 'good sitting', 'good waiting' and 'good listening' skills
- Reminding children to sit with 'school legs' – cross legged on the carpet

Throughout the month we will also work on –

Letters and sounds 1 - aspect 5

alliteration Maths focus –

- Fractions and symmetry

Illustrated maths songs and rhymes –

- 3 currant buns
- 5 little leaves

Introduction – July plan

Preparing for school focus – telling stories about school

It is important that children are confident about starting school. They need to know where their school is and what will be happening when they arrive. Parents can help by taking children into school for settling in sessions and chatting about their school days. We will support children by **telling stories** about school.

To further develop children's awareness of school and ease anxiety we might –

- Finding children's local schools and making maps
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Notice board display

The summer holidays can be an anxious time for young children who are getting ready to start school – we really want to help your child and **ease any anxiety** they might be feeling. Adults use excited voices to talk about school, uniforms, playgrounds, lunches etc and children become worried about the changes.

Children, as we know, learn best through play so during July we will be learning about our new schools by finding out as much as we can about them together. We will look at their websites and talk about the photos we see – learn the names of teachers – role play schools – make maps to and from school and, most importantly, chat about our wonderful school days to reassure children that school is fun!

Here are some examples of the ways we will work with parent to ease their child's transition and address any concerns they might have...

- **Reading** - we have lots of lovely books about school that we will read together. Picture books provide children with characters and storylines they can relate to and the stories themselves share coping strategies which the children will learn from. They also prompt conversation – which might reveal any concerns the child has which we can talk about.
- **Role playing** – we will set up a school room and all pretend to be at school. The older children often role play schools, marking a register and playing 'literacy' and 'numeracy', so this is a game the little ones already know well and enjoy.
- **Visiting** – we will walk past the schools and talk about them, drawing maps and looking at the playgrounds and halls the children will be using from September. This will help the children to become familiar with the new school and the journeys they will be making.
- **Shopping** – as well as buying uniform and shoes, we suggest parents to let their child to choose an album or book they can use to keep all their stickers and certificates in one place at home. This can add excitement to the shopping expedition – we all love to receive stickers!
- **Puppets** – our puppets know all about starting school and will tell the children lots of stories and share ideas and coping strategies.

At home, We suggest parents to find out who is going to be in your child's class and meet up at the park or your house with them (if possible) over the next few weeks so your child knows some of their friends before they start. The children here are great friends – but of course they are not going into the same classes...

It's really important that we work closely together and tackle any concerns as they arise.

Starting school: working together to prepare children for the first day at school

Read books about starting school – my favourite is...

Expressed how I feel eg happy, sad, angry

Done some homework* with my parents at home

Stood and waited patiently in a queue

Shared toys and games with other children

To help prepare me for school I have...

Spotted my name displayed with lots of others

Waited for a few moments for my needs to be met

Rehearsed my morning routine** with my parents at

Asked to go to the toilet, washed and dried my hands

Sat and listened to a story or song without shouting out

*Homework - draw or colour a picture, complete a puzzle, made a model or similar by myself...

**Routine - get up, eat, clean teeth, put on uniform, brush hair, put on shoes and coat, get bag and go ... on

Starting school: working together to prepare children for the first day at school

Coped with rejection eg a child not wanting to play

Sung number songs and rhymes

Sat quietly and read a book by myself

Put up my hand to ask or answer a question

To help prepare me for school I have...

Played with shapes and building blocks

Played games with sounds and rhyming words

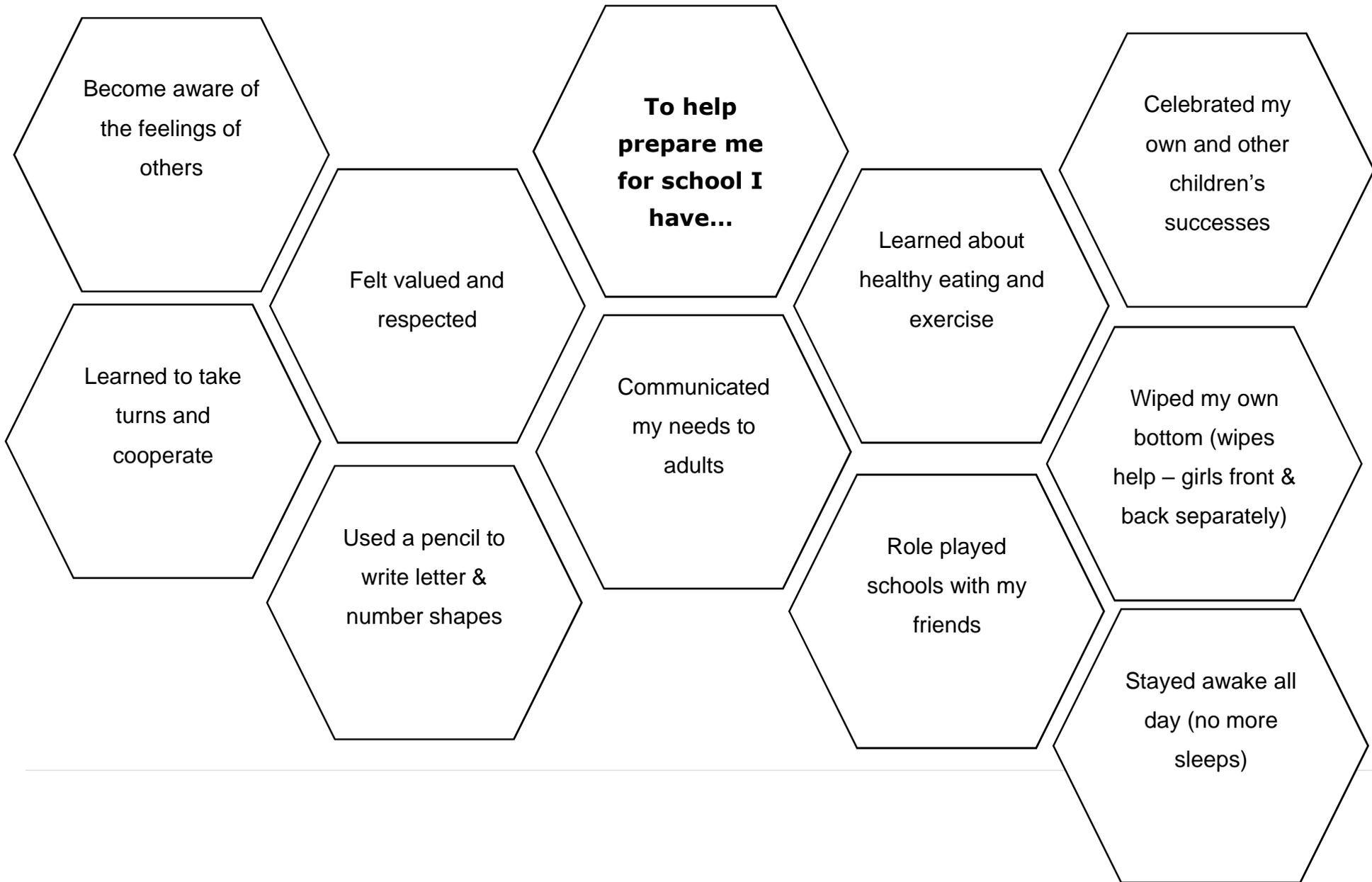
Recognised when I am thirsty and poured my own

Followed a routine through the day

Used pictures or props to tell stories & bring songs alive

Wiped my own nose and put the tissue in the bin

Starting school: working together to prepare children for the first day at school



Starting school: working together to prepare children for the first day at school

Made friends with some of the children in my class

To help prepare me for school I have...

Visited school to look round my new classroom

Taken off my own clothes and put them into a pile

Met my teacher and learned their name

Chatted about school and any concerns

Managed my emotions when asked to stop or wait

Put on my own coat and shoes (Velcro helps!)

Learned how to eat using a fork and spoon

Done a puzzle without an adult sitting next to me

Talked about classroom behaviour expectations

Letters and Sounds aspect 5 – alliteration

Planning...

1. Name recognition
2. Matching initial sounds of words game
3. We went to market
4. Initial letters – I spy
5. Natural resources – I spy
6. Experiment with sounds and words
7. Playing alliterative 'silly soup'
8. Alliteration chants

Name recognition

- Finding the correct letters to make each child's name Spelling them out – capital followed by lower case

Name recognition example activities -

- Decorating names using stickers or felt tip pens
- Hunting for letters from their names in sand or sensory rice
- Using a dotted font so children can trace
- Cutting letters from the child's name into a jigsaw which they can slide back together
- Writing letters on leaves so children can construct their names outside
- Covering the letters of names with stones, stars or favourite stickers etc...

Observing – do the children recognise their names? Can they spell out some of the letters?

Matching initial sounds

This game assumes children can recognise the letters of the alphabet so we make sure that we use it alongside learning letter shapes and sounds activities we are planning, using letter sounds that are significant to the children first, such as the sounds that start their names.

Laying out some toys and a selection of letters – just a few to start with depending on the ages of the children and their developmental stages. Picking up the toy ...

- This is a polar bear – what does 'polar' start with – listen carefully – ppp polar – can you find the letter 'p'?
- This is a car – what does 'car' start with – listen carefully – ccc car – can you find the letter 'c'?

Using a combination of toys and pictures of real objects when playing this game to keep the children engaged and challenged.

Sharing learning with home – make sure parents are teaching their child the same letter sounds they will need for school. When writing their names they will need to know capitals but when sounding them out the sound should be phonic.

We went to market

Reading the book 'My Granny went to market' by Stella Blackstone. Playing an alliterative memory game with the children...

Mummy or daddy go to market and buy lots of food – the children think of things they might buy, adding an alliteration word and saying the items in order. Having a prop basket with items from the play food box to start with is very useful.

Alliterative items might include – silly soup, potty potatoes, green grapes, tinned tuna etc...

Extension - putting some items of play food into a basket and play a matching game with the children eg.

- Taking out all the food that starts with 'p'...
- Finding all the food that starts with 'c'...

Initial letters – play I spy with children's toys

Putting together a tray of small toys – just a few depending on the ages and developmental levels of the children – and name them, holding them up one at a time and saying clearly...

- This is a butterfly with colourful wings
- This is Spiderman wearing his spider mask
- This is Elsa in a pretty dress etc...

When we are naming the objects we might ask the children to repeat them back to us, saying for example – This is a butterfly with colourful wings... what is it? And the children would reply 'butterfly'.

Then playing 'I spy with my little eye something beginning with...' and be ready to give the smaller children clues – something beginning with b which has blue wings... something beginning with g which has 4 legs and a beard etc. Encouraging the children to listen carefully when it's not their turn and ask them to put up their hands rather than shouting out – essential 'school ready' skills.

Initial letters – playing I spy with natural resources

Collecting some natural resources from the garden or when we take children on a walk – just a few depending on the ages and developmental levels of the children – and name them, holding them up one at a time and saying clearly...

- This is a green leaf... lll
- This is a smooth brown conker... ccc
- This is a spiders web... www
- This is a smooth stone... sss
- This is a slimy slug... sss
- Her is some rough brown bark... bbb

Experiment with sounds and words

Finding food that starts with the same letter –

- Banana, bread, broccoli
- Milk, marmalade, meatballs
- Soup, sugar, strawberries etc...

Pointing to the food, saying the names of the food and see if the children can hear the initial letter.

Extension - playing a food alliteration game –

- The crisps are crunchy... crunch, crunch, crunch
- The tuna is tinned... tin, tin, tin
- The chicken is chunky
- The cabbage is crispy
- The soup is soft etc...

Playing alliterative 'silly soup'

Asking a small group to sit in a circle so they can see a selection of rhyming objects placed on the floor. Using a bowl and spoon as props to act out the song.

Each child in turn chooses an object to put into the soup and places it in the bowl.

After each turn, stirring the soup and sing – to the tune 'Pop Goes the Weasel' -

I'm making lots of silly soup

I'm making soup that's silly

I'm going to cook it in the fridge

To make it nice and chilly

In goes... a fox... a box... some socks...

There are quite a few examples on YouTube. Popular chants include –

- She sells sea shells on the sea shore
- Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled pepper
- Luke Luck likes lakes
- Boppy Bitty bought a bat etc...

Working with home – can parents remember any playground chants of rhymes from their childhoods which they can share with their child?

Alliteration – I can...

- Recognise initial letters in words
- Suggest an object with the same sound as my name
- Suggest animals that begin with the same sound
- Suggest non-words that begin with the same sound
- Sort objects that begin with the same sound
- Join in with an alliterative story with suggestions
- Look at an object and recognise the initial sound
- Make an alliterative sentence for names of friends
- Select an object for alliterative 'silly soup'

Mathematics focus - Fractions

Children do not need to learn complicated fractions in the early years – these can be left until they are at school. However, we are expected to introduce words such as half and quarter into play activities and teach their meaning.

The easiest way I have found to do this is by using food such as –

- Cakes and other circular food
- Fruit and vegetables – real as well as wooden fruit and veg that can be cut with a knife

We are not expected to teach fractions as they used to in our school days – by making children look at a circle and colour in half or draw a line through the middle. We teach them in practical ways – ask one child to cut a bun in half and another child to choose their portion – it really focuses the mind!

Focus book – ‘The Doorbell Rang’ by Pat Hutchins - each time the doorbell rings, there are more people who have come to share the lovely cookies.

Games include –

- Cut an apple in half and look at the patterns inside – you can cut it in half different ways – are the patterns the same or different?
- Link fractions to symmetry – talk about half the butterfly, half the snowflake or half the face and you draw the other half to make it look the same
- Share at snack and meal times – can the child take half the fruit and leave half for their friend?
- Look at shapes – which ones can be cut in half / quarter and which ones don’t work very well?
- When experimenting with water or sand fill half a jug or half a spoon

Activity idea – make a paper plate pizza with each child including their favourite toppings. When it is finished show the children how to cut their pizza in half, folding first.

Extend their learning to fold other shapes in half such as squares, rectangles and triangles.

Supporting home learning – ask parents about their child’s experiences with fractions – sharing things out – using words such as ‘half’ and ‘quarter’ at home and build on their home learning.

Maths focus - Symmetry

We always start teaching symmetry by making butterfly pictures.

The children paint in lots of lovely colours on one side of thick paper

We fold it over and they help to press down

When we unfold we can see how the paint has transferred to the other side of the paper

When dry the children can cut their painting into a butterfly shape and add pipe cleaner feelers

Other symmetrical activities Include –

- Leaves and plants
- Snowflakes
- Mandalas or Arabic patterns
- Prayer mats
- Printing on scarves or other material
- Wallpaper samples
- Circles of eg pizza
- Mirrors – reflections - drawing half of children's faces using a mirror and then filling in the other side
- Environmental symmetry – house bricks, roof tiles, wallpaper patterns etc
- Shapes eg triangles, hearts and squares

Activity idea - make a book of photos featuring some of the most famous symmetrical buildings from around the world. Photos of buildings you could include...

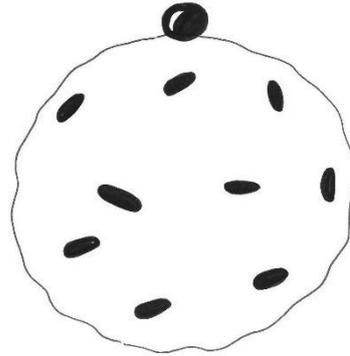
- Taj Mahal in India
- Gherkin in London
- Chichen Itza in Mexico
- Egyptian pyramids
- Sydney Opera House in Australia
- Mont St Michel church front in Paris
- Parthenon in Greece... etc

Take the children on a symmetry walk – see if you can spot any houses or buildings in your local area to add to the collection.

Supporting home learning – ask children to look for symmetrical things at home and bring them into the provision to share with the group.

3 currant buns

3 currant buns in a baker's shop
Round and fat with a cherry on the top
In came xx with a penny one day
Bought a currant bun
And ate it right away – YUM!
...ensure each child has a turn



Activity ideas – 3 currant buns

- Make some currant buns together – any excuse!
- Give the children a specially made cardboard coin each so they can buy buns from you while singing the song – older children can handle real money.
- Encourage the children to say 'thank you' at the end of the verse.
- Take the children to the shops to buy a bun each.
- Set up a bakery small world play area for the children to play with after you have taken them to the bakers shop – make baker's hats for each child.
- Add currants to playdough – lots of fine motor practice picking them up and pushing them into the dough mixture.
- Make different sizes of currant buns and use them to make comparisons – bigger than, smaller than, wider than, fatter than, thinner than etc.

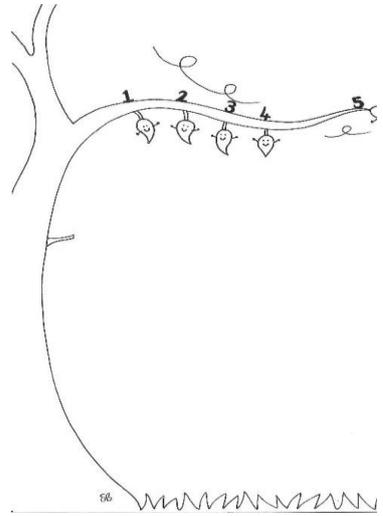
Observe – are the children making links between having pennies and spending them?

Early Years Outcomes – link to maths / handling money

Support home learning – share the currant bun recipe with parents so they can make them together

5 little leaves

5 little leaves so bright and gay
Were dancing around on a branch one day
The wind came whistling through the town
Who! Who!
And one little leaf came tumbling down
...continue counting down to 0



Activity ideas – 5 little leaves

This is a great song for autumn when the leaves are falling from the trees...

- Make some leaves and a branch – use them to help bring the song alive
- Look carefully in leaves you have collected – use a magnifying glass and see if you can find some minibeasts crawling around
- Make counting leaves – use them for setting out in number order
- Compare leaf shapes – look at a book about trees and find out what the trees are called
- Collect different colours of leaves – use paint colour cards for matching games
- Put some herb leaves in the messy tray – use them to make a smelly sensory picture by adding lots of glue
- Use leaves to make a garland
- Put dry leaves in the messy tray and scrunch them with your hands – you can dry them in the microwave if it's a wet month
- Make a leaf display on the notice board to share what you have been learning with parents

Observe – can the children count down from 5 to 1?

Early Years Outcomes – link to understanding the world / the world

Support home learning – teach parents the rhyme so they can say it with their child at home.

References

- Early Years Foundation Stage (DfE, 2014) and related documents.
- E-book mini 77 'Preparing for School' (© 2008 - 2016) from Sarah Neville | Knutsford Childminding and the references therein. Illustrations © Nigel Graven (2016).

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