

VISIT TEACHEARLYYEARS.COM

teach EARLY YEARS

12

SUMMER
ACTIVITIES



**WATERWAY
FUN AND PLAY**

Outstanding advice for foundation stage professionals 

Covid catch-up

WHY WE CAN'T
RUSH TO REPAIR

“I WON'T BE
INCREASING
RATIOS”

- SEE PAGE 11

Body autonomy

Empowering
children to say 'no'



ONE SCHOOL'S
ANTI-RACIST
JOURNEY

EMOTIONAL
LITERACY AT
DANDELION

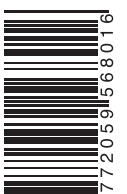
EXPERT ADVICE
ON PLANT-BASED
NUTRITION

How to
embrace
risky play

p.38

Are we investing in BABY ROOM STAFF?

£4.99 | Issue 122



FUN WITH DOUBLES • TACKLING SUSTAINABILITY

aceville



Discover CLPE's Power of Reading in the Early Years

The complete book-based approach to improving literacy standards in your school

CLPE's flagship Power of Reading training programme, specifically tailored for Early Years teachers, is proven to impact on children's communication, language and literacy development, and improve outcomes in reading and writing. This training programme offers in depth training in areas including talk and story, rhyme and song and outdoor texts.

- ★ **98%** of teachers saw improved engagement in children's reading
- ★ **97%** saw an improvement in children's writing.
- ★ Children who are part of the programme make an additional six months progress compared to their peers.*

“The project has had a tremendous impact upon the teacher involved who would now like to aid the literacy lead in promoting and ensuring effective teaching of reading across the school. This is due to the teacher's increased confidence in understanding the reading process, in ensuring high quality texts and how research feeds into us developing as effective teachers of reading.”

STEVEN SMITH, HEADTEACHER, BADEN POWELL PRIMARY.
TEACHER IN HIS SCHOOL ON THE POWER OF READING
IN THE EARLY YEARS TRAINING



This training is delivered face-to-face or online.

Find out more and book your place now...



CENTRE FOR LITERACY
IN PRIMARY EDUCATION

* Leeds Trinity University report on the impact of Power of Reading in the Exceed Academies Trust, Bradford, March 2019.

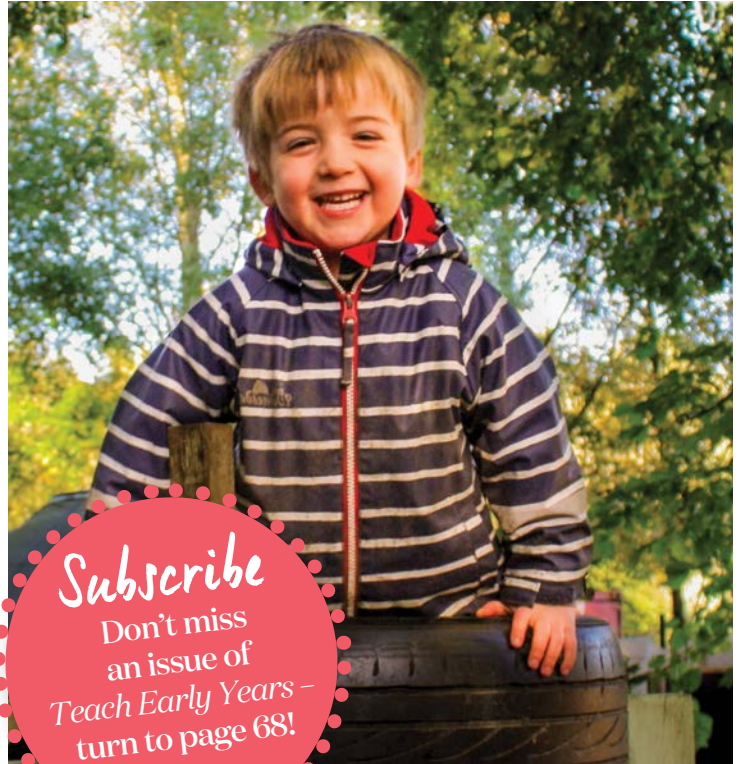
Hello



Change is something we can all feel a little apprehensive about – from changing the way we work to preparing for a new cohort as your pre-schoolers start Reception. But in many ways educators can, and do, spearhead change. On page 9 June O’Sullivan, CEO of LEYF, urges policymakers to take babies more seriously and invest in their emotional wellbeing and development. On page 62 Cheryl Hadland, founder and MD of Tops Day Nurseries, discusses how they tackle sustainability and shares practical ideas for early years settings. And on page 66, headteacher Kelly Hawker and deputy head Simon Wright from Cherry Garden School talk about their journey into anti-racist practice and the significant impact it’s had on the happiness and wellbeing of staff and pupils.

With summer in full swing and September around the corner, we’ve brought you plenty of inspiration, from fun ways to get moving outdoors (p42) to messy play ideas for fine motor skill development (p46). We also learn from Rhiannon Scott, Outdoor Learning Lead at Kids Planet, about their new Udeskole qualification that’s encouraging children to reconnect with nature (p72). For more ideas and inspiration, sign up to our fortnightly newsletter at teachearlyyears.com

Michelle Tempest - Editor



Subscribe
Don't miss
an issue of
Teach Early Years –
turn to page 68!

Regulars Voices

6 Nursery Now

Your update from the early years.

48 Resources

Great ways to play on a budget.

54 Book corner

Inspiring titles to share with your 0-5s.

58 Have you seen...

TEY's round-up of the latest early years tools, toys and activities.

9 What about babies?

June O’Sullivan tells why policy makers need to take babies seriously.

11 Adjusting ratios

“Quite simply, I won’t” says award-winning childminder Katherine Cooling-Smith.

13 How to speak child

We must be aware of children’s real feelings, says Nikky Smedley.



THE EXPERTS...



JUNE O'SULLIVAN
CEO of the London Early Years Foundation.



KERRY MURPHY
Author and lecturer in early years and SEND.



EMMA DAVIS
Early years lecturer, PhD student and forest school leader.



JAMEL C CAMPBELL
Early years educator, author and consultant.



Editor: Michelle Tempest, 01206 505979
michelle.tempest@theteachco.com

Contributing editor:
Elaine Bennett

Product Manager:
Karen Elrick
01206 505946,
karen.elrick@theteachco.com

Head of commercial solutions:
Richard Stebbing

Education manager:
Hayley Rackham
hayley.rackham@theteachco.com

Art editor:
Richard Allen

Designers:
Ben Kemp and Hannah Kemp

Group editor: Joe Carter

Photography:
CliQQ Photography,
www.cliqq.co.uk

Accounts:
01206 505995

Subscription enquiries:
0330 333 0043

Subscription department:
Sharon Kilbride

The views within this magazine are not necessarily those of the publisher. Every effort is made to ensure the veracity and integrity of the companies, persons, products and services mentioned in this publication, and details given are believed to be accurate at the time of going to press. However, no responsibility or liability whatsoever can be accepted for any consequence or repercussion of responding to information or advice given or inferred. Copyright Aceville Publications Ltd.

aceville

Features

16 Covid catch-up

Kerry Murphy explains why it's time to take catch-up in a different direction.

19 My Snapshots

Adam Marycz shares how he celebrates individuality at his setting.

22 Waterway play

Fun activities perfect for summer, from Judith Harries.

25 Natural materials

Laura Moore shares five essential resources for your setting.

26 Respectful conversations

Dandelion Education on empowering young children to find their voice.

30 Talking about war

Tamsin Grimmer offers ideas about how to support and reassure young children.

32 Communication focus

Fennies Nurseries provides practical ideas for creating a language-rich environment.

34 Plant-based menus

Edwina Revel offers expert advice on meeting children's nutritional needs.

50 Body autonomy

Emma Davis explores how books can open up important conversations.

74 Sustainable activities

Outdoor inspiration from The Muddy Puddle Teacher.

38 Risky play

Dr Jamie Galpin on supporting staff to embrace adventurous play.

42 Gross motor skills

Encourage outdoor play with these fun activities from Carley Sefton.

46 Fine motor skills

Messy play ideas that hone hand-eye coordination, from Jamel C Campbell.



TEACHING IN RECEPTION?

This issue, read about...

- Outdoor art ideas, p20
- Activities to support mathematical understanding, p28
- Exploring poetry for young readers, p52

FROM THE PUBLISHERS OF



EYFS Focus

Management

- Tackling sustainability – p62
- How NOT to manage – p65
- One school's anti-racist journey – p66

- Financial planning – p69
- Language development Q&A – p70
- Udeskole qualification – p72



✓ Validated by the Department for Education

Jolly Phonics

Trusted by teachers loved by children

Enjoyed by
millions of
children and
teachers
in over 100
countries.



The wonderful way to teach reading and writing

www.jollylearning.co.uk

info@jollylearning.co.uk

Nursery Now

News and views from the early years



In brief...

A survey by the Early Years Alliance suggests that relaxing ratios wouldn't lower childcare costs. Just 2% of early years providers say that changing ratios would mean lower fees for parents.



The Nuffield Foundation calls for an ambitious early childhood strategy underpinned by clear objectives, sustained investment, joined up services and early intervention (tinyurl.com/Nuffield-1).



PACEY and The Fawcett Society have published a report, Childcare and Early Education Systems, comparing early education and childcare in England, Australia, Canada, Japan, New Zealand and Switzerland (tinyurl.com/Fawcett-1).



Summer-born admissions

The government will not pursue plans to legislate on summer-born admissions to Reception. Former minister Nick Gibb committed in 2015 to allow summer-born children to be admitted to a Reception class at age 5 and stay with their cohort. This is currently something that schools and local authorities can decide.

According to a statement released by Academies Minister Baroness Barran on 21 July, data suggests that the current system is now working well. The statement reminds local authorities of the advice on school admissions for summer-born children (tinyurl.com/Summer-Rec).



TWEET TALK

@first100days

Sensitive, responsive and trusted relationships are fundamental to infant mental health.

@PGResearchBase

Slowing Down our Approach to Early Childhood Education; Professor Alison Clark's Froebel Trust funded research explores how slow pedagogy can make a huge difference to the everyday lives of young children.

@welovecuriosity

Take the pressure off! Pushing a child to write their name in readiness for school is NOT going to help them settle on their first day.

“Our latest research survey report shows that the majority of requests for delayed entry to reception are now approved”

ACADEMIES MINISTER BARONESS BARRAN

Nanny salaries

13%

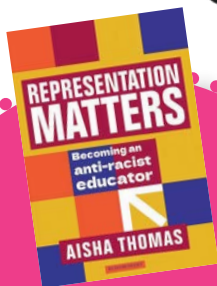
• UK NANNY SALARIES HAVE RISEN BY 13 PER CENT ACROSS THE UK – THE BIGGEST INCREASE IN FIVE YEARS. NANNYTAX SALARY INDEX



Early intervention

“...it is the most deprived 20% of local authorities that have been most impacted by the decrease in ‘Family Help’ spend since 2012.”

STOPPING THE SPIRAL REPORT



Look out for...
Representation Matters:
Becoming an anti-racist
educator by Aisha Thomas

A report commissioned by leading children’s charities has highlighted a dramatic decrease in early intervention services. Pro Bono Economics produced the report, commissioned by The Children’s Society, Action for Children, National Children’s Bureau, Barnardo’s and NSPCC.

Stopping the Spiral – Children and young people’s services spending 2010-11 to 2020-21 states that there has been a significant reduction in spending on family support, young people services, and children’s centres, with spending on children’s services now heavily focused on late interventions. Local authority spending on early intervention services for children and young people fell by £1.9 billion between 2010-11 and 2020-21.

According to the report, “While change is coming slowly, and spending is starting to move in the right direction again – including with the recent welcome investments in Family Hubs – the figures suggest resources are not yet at the level required to meet the challenge.”

To read more about the findings and recommendations, visit tinyurl.com/Spiral-Report



WORLD SPACE WEEK

World Space Week 2022 takes place between 4 and 10 October, and celebrates ‘space and sustainability’. Two branches of the topic will be covered: achieving sustainability in space, and achieving sustainability from space.

Space exploration and remote Earth observation can drive change, including measuring climate change, and identifying sea and land pollution.

To find out more about celebrating World Space Week, visit worldspaceweek.org/events/how-to

95%

OF STAFF DON’T FEEL RESPECTED BY POLITICIANS ACCORDING TO FAMILY’S RESPECT THE SECTOR: THE EARLY YEARS EDUCATION REPORT ([TINYURL.COM/FAMILY-REPORT](https://tinyurl.com/FAMILY-REPORT))





Timotay
PLAYSCAPES



Transform Your Outdoor Space!

Timotay Playscapes, your access to award winning inspirational outdoor play spaces. Using imaginative thinking and natural materials to create an inclusive and nurturing environment specific to your school.

- Playground design and construction
- Outdoor classrooms and canopies
- MUGA
- Forest Schools
- Climbing frames
- Playground surfacing
- Playground equipment
- Mile a day track

Contact us for your **FREE** funding guide



Book your **FREE** consultation today!



Call **01933 665151** or email enquiries@timotayplayscapes.co.uk to book your **FREE CONSULTATION**
timotayplayscapes.co.uk



“Babies are fizzing with brain power

How can we make sure policy makers take them seriously?



I HAVE LONG RELUCTANTLY ACCEPTED THAT ANY child under two is almost nonexistent in our early years policy. But just for the record, children arrive at nursery sometimes as young as three months old, and by six months many are in fulltime daycare for up to ten hours a day. So, why are they so invisible?

We know that investing in early years is the best way we can nurture society, but the few policies that support that statement mostly focus on children aged three-plus, with a nod at the two-year-olds. The First 1001 Days Movement (tinyurl.com/First1001) challenges national and local decision makers to value and invest in babies' emotional wellbeing and development.

Read Alison Gopnik's work or watch her Ted Talk (tinyurl.com/BabiesThink) and you will find that baby brains are fizzing with synaptic connections. Their brains are flooded with neurotransmitters that are inducing learning and plasticity. And the inhibitory parts haven't come on yet. Research scientist Dr Suzanne Zeedyk would tell you that the way we relate to babies shapes their brains, and early years specialist Alice Sharp has written books rejoicing about babies and what they can do.

BABIES IN LOCKDOWN

Today, babies face a new challenge – especially those born during the pandemic. Two-year-old children have spent almost 80% of their life in the pandemic and those aged 18-months have spent their entire life living through it. In the Babies in Lockdown report (tinyurl.com/babiesinlockdown) parents raised their concerns, which included:

- Almost 7 in 10 (68%) parents felt the changes brought about by COVID-19 were affecting their unborn baby, baby or young child.
- A third (34%) of respondents believed that their baby's interaction with them had changed during the lockdown period.
- One quarter (25%) of parents reported concern about their relationship with their baby, and one third (35%) of these would like to get help with this.
- Almost half (47%) of parents reported that their baby had become clingier. One quarter (26%) reported their baby crying more than usual.

Now that these babies are attending nurseries, we are observing their progress. Have you noticed if babies

are particularly anxious or their physical development is delayed? Have you noticed if trying to learn to communicate with adults wearing masks has impacted on their social and communication development? After all, watching people's mouths or following their expressions and responses is a critical element of children's early language learning.

ACTION RESEARCH

Are we taking babies seriously enough? Do we invest enough in staff who lead baby rooms? Some time ago I got involved in baby room research (tinyurl.com/TheBabyRoom) with Kathy Gooch and her team at Canterbury University.

Sadly, she confirmed that baby rooms were often led by inexperienced staff and the status in the nursery (and across the sector) for baby room staff was low. Now is the time to change this. We can start by doing some action research in our settings. Practitioner/teacher-led action research is a wonderful means of investigating practice and gaining a deeper understanding of what is happening for the babies. For those unfamiliar with action research, it is best described in three steps:

Look: Ask a question or observe and describe the issue to be investigated. Gather information, starting with observations.

Think: Analyse and interpret the data you are finding. What is it telling you? Think long and hard. Look at what is happening, be objective and talk about what you see.

Act: Judge the value of the findings. Formulate solutions and get the support of your team. Tell the story and agree how to embed it in practice.

We need to make sure babies have the best experiences to support their development. You can find some action research questions for baby room staff at teachearlyyears.com/babies-brain-power

To make policy makers realise that babies matter, we must raise the status of our baby room staff. Let's celebrate best practice for babies, provide access to relevant high-quality training and build their skills as action researchers. Baby room staff need to become experts in their field so they can shout out for our youngest children.

 June O'Sullivan MBE is the CEO of the London Early Years Foundation. Visit June's blog at leyf.org.uk/junes-blog or connect on Twitter @JuneOSullivan



Polylino

Bring the magic of storytime
to every child!

A multilingual digital picture book service for early years

- ✦ Supports EAL, SEND & disadvantaged children
- ✦ Improve access to high-quality books in the nursery, school & at home
- ✦ Aligned to the EYFS framework to support language and literacy development

Scan for a
free trial



www.polylino.co.uk





KATHERINE COOLING-SMITH IS AN AWARD-WINNING CHILDMINDER.

“I won’t be increasing ratios”

The value of early years practitioners as professional educators will once again be undermined, says Katherine Cooling-Smith...

I CO-MIND WITH MY COLLEAGUE Carrie from my home in Essex. Our pedagogy is very much based on fostering a love of learning for our children through open-ended, natural play.

Watching our children develop from babies right through to school is such a privilege. Being able to bridge gaps in development and knowing that we’ve done absolutely all we can to meet each child’s individual needs, to support our families, and to offer children a huge array of opportunities that broaden their experiences is something very special. We are giving them the confidence they need to make that transition to school seamlessly.

CONSIDER THE IMPACT

The recent proposal to increase ratios to bring down the individual cost per child is a big concern. If ratios increase, the value of early years practitioners as professional educators will once again be undermined.

The expectation of prospective parents will be that if we can offer those ratios, and lower our individual rates, we should.

However, for me, the increase would only be viable in meeting the children’s basic care needs. It doesn’t consider the

impact it would have on our ability to offer the high-quality opportunities for learning and development that we strive for, and that we know every single child deserves.

Another concern, specifically as a childminder, is that we find ourselves constantly fighting for a better understanding of our role within the early years.

Parents often believe we are less qualified than nursery practitioners, that we don’t educate or socialise the children, and that we aren’t regulated to the same standards.

Many of us work alone, or with a handful of assistants, and therefore we know our limits with regards to how many children we can physically offer high-quality provision to at any one time.

Quite simply, I won’t be increasing ratios. I have often worked with a slightly larger group of children due to continuity of care when I have felt comfortable to do so, and I fully understand the changes needed within my practice to be able to do that effectively.

I know it wouldn’t be possible for me to focus my attention on the children; to plan and extend learning right there and then; to spot those teachable moments and wonderful opportunities for sustained shared thinking. It would also be harder to keep our environment calm and focussed, and to maintain the enthusiasm and motivation needed to drive this if I was overstretched.

We spend a lot of our time away from the setting and it wouldn’t be physically possible for me to safely take a larger group of under-fives out without hiring an assistant. I’m not willing to compromise the

opportunities for my children, or more importantly their safety.

CHANGE IS NEEDED

Fundamentally, the structure of the economy is such that both parents now need to work to meet the rising cost of living. Childcare is now an integral part of that economy and must be supported more effectively.


It needs to be a balance. Nurseries and childminders are closing in vast numbers, and so for those in the early years to function effectively and to keep their doors open, we need to look at why this is happening.

I was chatting with Samantha Hearth, a director of Rutland Early Years Agency Ltd, and we agreed that one of the most effective changes the government could make is to simply alter the terminology around funding.

By changing ‘Free Childcare’ to ‘Funded Childcare’, it would enable parents to have a better understanding of the shortfall that we face in facilitating funded spaces, and it would enable early years settings to charge the difference between our normal daily rate, and the funded rate we are paid by our local authorities.

I’d also like to see a change in the identity of childminders and nursery staff. Our roles have evolved significantly over the last five to ten years, with changes to the EYFS now including terminology such as ‘education’, ‘teaching’ and ‘curriculum’.

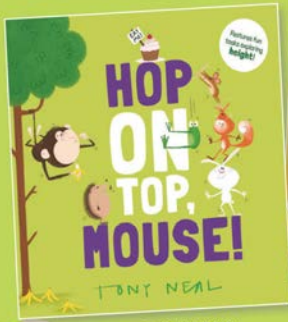
I believe we should be given a title that better reflects this. Simple changes such as these would emphasise the real value of our roles and would in turn build confidence in the eyes of the families we work with.

 Katherine Cooling-Smith runs Kayte’s House Childcare and Early Years from her home in Essex, with her colleague Carrie.

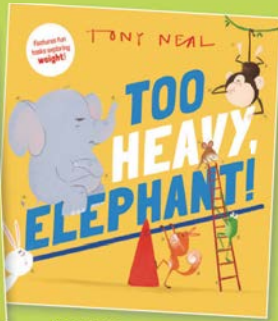


Make maths easy for little learners

Our maths inspired picture books are perfect for introducing early maths concepts in a fun and gentle way.



978-0-19-278280-9



978-0-19-278286-1

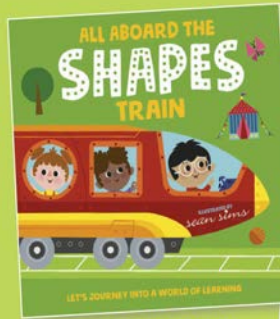


978-0-19-278331-8



978-0-19-278327-1

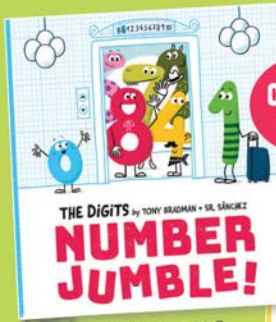
Money, Time, Shapes, and Sums
COMING 2023



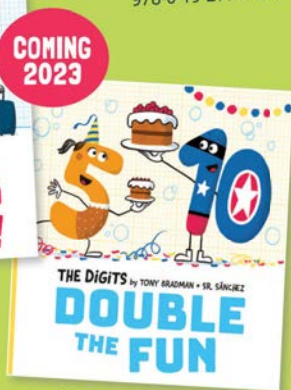
978-0-19-277472-9



978-0-19-277470-5



978-0-19-278361-5



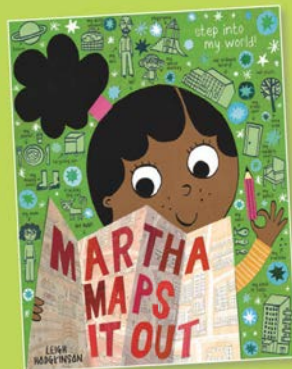
978-0-19-278363-9



978-0-19-277461-3



978-0-19-277901-4



978-0-19-277778-2

Available
online and
from all good
bookshops





NIKKY SMEDLEY IS A WRITER, EDUCATOR AND PASSIONATE ADVOCATE FOR THE CHILD.

HOW TO SPEAK CHILD

Build confidence

DO YOU KEEP ANY SECRETS FROM MUMMY AND DADDY?

"I'm actually quite a big boy now"

K (MALE)

When K said that to me, did he mean that because he was 'quite a big boy now' he had secrets that he wasn't prepared to divulge to mummy and daddy, or to me? Or did he mean that the very fact of his being 'quite a big boy now' was a secret from his parents?

From the conversations I had with K, it became apparent there were elements of truth in both. As quite a large boy for his age, I could see that in the classroom he relied on his physique to provide a sense of control and security.

"I began to notice an underlying fear in K"

REAL FEELINGS

Of course, it's not unusual to see children assume a challenging attitude in order to hide, or as a way of expressing, their true feelings and I began to notice an underlying fear in K. He seemed to lash out at other children when he felt afraid or unsure of his capabilities.

After some commotion over the building blocks, I talked with K and discovered that he liked being big and strong, but didn't think of himself as a bully. He thought the other boy was better at building than him, and he'd been afraid of messing it up.

The two of us worked with the blocks together for a while.



I concentrated on building his confidence as much as the tower, praising each of his efforts profusely. We showed the tower to the other boy, invited him to help, and peace was established. However, K continued to feel scared and uncertain.

SPOTTING PATTERNS

As the staff and I worked together to support his journey, awareness was key: being aware of when K was likely to feel scared or unsure; being able to spot and point out patterns of behaviour; and supporting K in recognising and managing his emotions.

Importantly, we worked hard to develop K's confidence in himself and his own abilities. I can't pretend any of this took less than a long time, but it taught me some excellent lessons as I watched K's confidence continually grow.

Whether confidence builds quickly or it's a gradual process, children can undergo profound changes with our support and encouragement. Watch, listen, be aware. From one week to the next, that brilliant child brain might make unexpected leaps for which you are not prepared but which might bring them, and you, boundless joy.

Nikky is also the author of *Create, Perform, Teach!* (Jessica Kingsley Publishers)

LEARN MORE

As part of the How to Speak Child project, Nikky has been collecting interviews with children about how adults communicate with them. She'll look at a selection of prominent themes over the course of the series, but to read more now, you can...

👉 head to the How to Speak Child blog, at howtospeakchild.com/blog

📘 join her Facebook page at facebook.com/Howtospeakchild



LYNNETTE BROCK IS DIRECTOR OF SCHEMAPLAY COMMUNITY INTEREST COMPANY.

Explore schemes through themed roleplay

Providing a meaningful context supports and extends children's investigations, says **Lynnette Brock...**

1 Observe play

By watching children's self-chosen, free-flow play, you'll see them demonstrating what they can and want to do. They'll draw on their operational schemes, such as transporting, containing or connecting, to explore particular investigative pursuits. For example, Archie is filling two different sized cups with dried peas. He fills and empties each one in turn, starting with the largest cup, which he then empties into a smaller one (which overflows). The action of filling and emptying is repeated several times. He says, "You put all of them in here – it's a lot and it's big! If you put them in this small one, I don't think that's a lot, is it? They don't all fit!"

2 Dig deeper

In the example above, a containing scheme is being applied by Archie. Helpfully, he also verbalised his scheme operation, saying, "You put all of them in here." This is an example of language being embodied (the meaning of the word is tied with the sensory motor processing unit associated with its meaning).

The containing scheme supports exploration of 'inside', 'outside' and the 'barrier between the two', as well as figurative knowledge of containers.

However, your role is to dig deeper than simply observing, noting and 'seeding' the scheme across different contexts within the nursery environment.

You should also ask yourself, "What is Archie exploring? What do I understand about his play?"

3 Make a plan

Archie is also exploring quantity, and perhaps capacity and size, but he is struggling to ascertain whether both cups contain 'a lot'. Providing a meaningful context for capacity and quantity to be explored through roleplay, anchored in the containing scheme, could support and extend Archie's investigation, as well as his developing mathematical language and communication.



4 Introduce roleplay

Once a theme that can match Archie's scheme operation and investigation is identified, consider what he and the other children in the setting know about the role. A nursery outing or visit by a parent to talk about their job could offer an insight, which you can further support with videos and by reading stories and singing songs. Try and use relevant roleplay props that will enable, for example, the containing scheme to be applied in the story context. When you plan roleplay to support a specific child's investigation, consider how adults will initially model the play to support the investigation, and how other children could access the play. For example, there may be children applying a transporting or rotating scheme. Incorporating these operations into the theme may result in a richer, more collaborative, play. Children are social beings whose competences are interwoven with those of others; often enhancing their role-taking and narratives.

6 Resources should provide opportunities for mark-making, recording, tallying and seeing texts in different formats

5 Resource the play

The job role, the child's scheme application(s) and their investigation(s) inform what specific props you select. For Archie, consider resources to support perception of quantity, capacity and size, anchored in his application of containing. Seed the environment with different sized cones for selling popcorn, different quantities of goods to be sorted and stored in crates, or different sized wheelbarrows or buckets to contain and transport varying quantities of goods. Dressing up (as a garden centre worker, for example) can really help children immerse themselves into roles, and to identify different clothes for different jobs or weather conditions. Everyday activities contain literate experiences. Therefore, resources should provide opportunities for mark-making, recording, tallying and seeing texts in different formats

6 Facilitate gender equality

Plan to support children's operational schemes and their investigations, ensuring that roleplay themes are not directed by gender, but by children's capabilities and enquiries.

7 Identify new schemes

Once Archie has used containers to support his investigation of volume and quantity in various roleplay themes, containing has anchored new schemes to be acquired and developed. These include sorting, categorising, counting, grading by size, tallying and recording quantities. He can now recognise and form numbers as a result of seeing number symbols while enjoying differing roles. It all started with containing and an enquiry: "I don't think that's a lot, is it?"





KERRY MURPHY IS AN AUTHOR AND LECTURER IN EARLY YEARS AND SEND.

Take catch-up in a different direction

The pandemic has offered us an opportunity to re-think what children truly need to thrive says Kerry Murphy...

One of the things I have loved about our Early Years Foundation Stage Framework is the principle of the Unique Child. It is fascinating and empowering to embrace the idea that children do not all follow the same developmental pathways but take varied, winding, diverse and adventurous paths to growth.

But, over recent years, we have been subject to this fundamental principle being reduced and squeezed out of our everyday practice. This has unfolded during the recovery from a global pandemic – a time in which freedom to learn in unpressured ways is even more essential to our wellbeing.

I don't want to wholly deny or invalidate that there has been significant adversity throughout the pandemic and that, yes, in many cases, children have missed out on vital learning opportunities. We cannot undermine that, if done right, education can have profound positive effects on children's wellbeing and learning.

But fundamentally, I disagree that overloading children with demands and pressure to race to an imaginary finish line is the answer. Equally, I have felt uncomfortable that learning loss is framed as though it is the fault of the child or family not being resilient enough to the effects of the pandemic.

The main issue with the current catch-up approach is that it perpetuates the idea that we get one shot at learning. It is a longshot to think that all can be solved by standardising and placing more top-down pressures on learning. Learning is a lifelong pursuit

built on secure social and emotional foundations. There is no doubt that a global pandemic has rocked those foundations and created emotional ruptures for children and adults alike.

And so, we need time and space to repair, recover and resolve.

We are still living in a pandemic, and yet, our expectations of children remain ill-adjusted

EDUCATIONAL DEBTS

The pandemic has led to renewed efforts to perpetuate harmful stereotypes about different groups of children and families. We are exposed to the message that children from disadvantaged backgrounds are faring much worse because of the pandemic.

They absolutely are, but we must face the reality that these issues also existed before the pandemic. The so-called disadvantage results from communities being underserved before, during and in the ongoing "aftermath" of the pandemic.

When we think about disadvantaged groups, we can believe that this is about individual failures rather than the result of systemic inequality and the rise of poverty (Rana et al., 2022). The basic needs of many of our children are still not consistently met, so how might we engage children in learning without these basics in place?

Should our focus at this time be on interventions that prime children to sit still and be ready for academic learning? By narrowing our focus on creating the ideal learner, we are gradually building up further social and emotional debts. And we need to start repaying those debts to ensure that children can thrive.

RUPTURE AND REPAIR

According to Branam (2022), rupture relates to anything that disrupts our social and emotional connections. During the pandemic, adults and children all experienced the loss of social and emotional connections.

Our worlds were turned upside down, and we were catapulted with uncertainty into a "new normal". While many have tried to 'keep calm and carry on'... as normal, this is not necessarily the best approach for education.

We need to see an education system that adapts itself to the different directions that life takes us. We need time to repair and reconnect. The best moments I have observed in recent months are when educators prioritise authentic quality time, re-establishing safe havens for children, and engaging in the messy processing of the pandemic, whether through conversation, play or attuned communication.

The catch-up narrative poses a risk on this quality time as we haul children into interventions or focus on training them to be "ready" for the next phase of education without letting this current phase naturally unfold.

UNINTERRUPTED PLAY

Play is often discussed in relation to early years, but the pandemic has



highlighted that children of ALL ages need more time to play. Play should not be used as a behaviour management currency. For example, I recently observed a teaching assistant consistently deduct minutes of playtime from children. We must ask ourselves why we still live in a world where this is deemed an acceptable way to control children?

We are still living in a pandemic, and yet, our expectations of children remain ill-adjusted because we conform to the policies of schoolification and reward and sanction. Significant discussions, initiatives, and policy debates have been about lost learning and academic catch-up. But less has been said about the loss of play. According to Ryan & Deci (2006), play promotes wellbeing, yet children's usual opportunities for play became limited throughout the pandemic. For example, the closure of play spaces such as playgrounds and the natural world which are essential for promoting competence.

There was also the loss of social play in which children learn to connect and relate to each other. Children's choices and self-direction in play naturally had to transform and adapt to new environments. Yet, what

priority has been given to play in catch-up?

Some might argue that jumping headfirst into intense schoolification is like building a tree house on chocolate stilts. Children of all ages need time to consolidate the pandemic through their play. More opportunities for child-led play and critical thinking are often our best chance of repair.

What's more, we need to understand how the pandemic has shaped play experiences and learning. The work of the Play Observatory has been essential in making sense of child development through adversity. You can access more information at play-observatory.com.

We cannot deny that children might need lots of support from us over the coming months and years in the recovery from the pandemic, but we need to seriously think about which agendas serve children's developmental needs.

The pandemic has offered us an opportunity to re-think what children truly need to thrive, and it will always come back to basic needs; connection; and play. So, the next time you hear about catch-up and learning loss, seek to centre those three things first.

Kerry Murphy is a lecturer in early years and SEND at Goldsmiths University. Kerry is also the author of *A Guide to SEND in the Early Years* and *Little Minds Matter: Supporting the Wellbeing of Children with SEND*.

FURTHER READING

- *It's OK Not to Share and Other Renegade Rules for Raising Competent and Compassionate Kids* by Heather Shumaker (TarcherPerigee)
- *Self-regulation and the problem of human autonomy: Does psychology need choice, self-determination, and will?* Richard M. Ryan and Edward L. Deci
- *Bridging the BAME Attainment Gap: Student and Staff Perspectives on Tackling Academic Bias. In Frontiers in Education (Vol. 7).* Karan S Rana, Amreen Bashir, Fatehna Begum, and Hannah Bartlett.



THE UK'S
#1
choice for labels



**NO MORE
LOST ITEMS!**

Help parents & their children get organised
with our **colourful** labels.
Nothing gets lost or mixed up again!

Boost your school funds with My Nametags
Join our fundraising scheme today!

  @MyNametags

www.MyNametags.com



Outdoor Classrooms

MINI MATHS OUTCLASS RESOURCE PACK includes Phonic Song pack

A natural and fun way for your children to learn about the basics of numeracy, language and communication skills.

Mini Maths features a unique subitising pattern design, formulated to help children become fluent in language and numeracy. Mini Maths Outclass Pack quickly teaches quantity assessment, teaching the critical life skills and fluid thought necessary to form the maths minds of the future.



@outdoor.classrooms

Mini Maths Outclass Resource Pack £54 + VAT £64.80.
orders@@outdoorclassrooms.co.uk | (0113) 256 9941

www.outdoorclassrooms.co.uk



@outdoorclassrooms

Celebrating individuality

Adam Marycz shares how he supports children to be confident in who they are...

Self-portraits

Providing children with the opportunity to build their identity, sense of self and self-confidence is one of the most important values within my provision.

At the beginning and end of every year, I provide the children with a canvas each, to create a representation of themselves. Alongside the canvas the provocation includes: a mirror, neutral-coloured pencils and a wide selection of felt tips, including the 'colours of the world' collection which represent a diverse range of skin tones for the children to choose from.

The intention behind the provocation is for the children to look in the mirror, alongside a supporting adult, and explore what they see – who they are.

It's important that when the children discuss and consider what they see in the mirror, they're not restricted in how they translate this to



HAVE YOU READ...

In my literacy rich environment there's a book for every occasion. One of my favourite authors is Scott Stuart. His books are perfect for supporting children to understand of the uniqueness of their identity. Both *The Very First You* and *My Shadow is Purple* help children to explore how everyone is different and that this should be valued and respected.

the canvas. Whilst some children will choose to draw themselves in a more traditional portrait style, others will represent themselves completely differently.

One child this year chose to draw a number of different sized cars, each one with a stickman style representation of themselves in it. This expression of identity is the beauty of this learning experience and the uniqueness of each child's art.

themselves while they read and speak the affirmations. They're encouraged to do so out loud, and with their friends too. For the younger children, the adult will read the affirmations out as prompts during group discussions.

For example, we might have a small selection of cards, read them to the children and encourage them to remember what each one says or ask each child to say something they like about a friend.

This opportunity is important for all children involved: the child being reminded of why they are amazing receives the boost to their wellbeing, and the child giving the boost is supported to understand the importance of being kind to others, and the power their words hold.

Positive affirmations wall

Embedded within my continuous provision is this 'positive affirmations' language-rich experience. The cards are from Kimberly Smith (@hyggeintheyearlyyears on Instagram) and whilst they're usually situated on the wall around the mirror, we also remove them for small group discussions. My provision is accessed daily by children aged two to 11 so these cards are perfect right across this age range.

The mirror provides the children with an opportunity to look at



READ MORE
Adam Marycz is an early years teacher, manager, writer, editor and podcast host. Follow Adam on Twitter and Instagram: @adameyleader



ADELE DARLINGTON IS AN EYFS TEACHER AND ART LEAD IN RUTLAND.

Come rain or shine

Revel in our unpredictable British weather and store these creative ideas under your sun (or rain) hat to enjoy with your class...

LIKE THE INCALCULABLE UK climate, no two days are ever the same in the world of early education. One thing is for certain though – each new day offers us the opportunity to combine the creative subject of art with our erratic outdoor elements to provide exciting, engaging and educational experiences for young learners. Children love the freedom of the outdoors – the fresh air and space trick them into thinking they're not learning even when they are! Contrary to stereotypical thinking, classrooms do not have to have four walls and a ceiling, and they certainly don't have to be indoors. Education and optimum learning can take place anywhere and at any time.

All weather types, no matter wet or dry, hot or cold, offer a multitude of ways for learners to explore, experiment and create wonderful works of art. As the saying goes, there's no such thing as bad weather, only inappropriate clothing. So, stock up on puddle suits, coats, hats, sun cream and wellies and prepare to take the children on some outdoor arty adventures...

RAINY DAYS

The rain lends itself to a plethora of explorative activities. Whether it's actually coming down outside or just wet from previous rainfall, take advantage of nature's showers and venture out onto the playground. Powder paint and puddles combine perfectly to provide the opportunity for children to explore basic colour theory. Give them pots, spoons, brushes and powder paint and let children play about with quantities and combinations of colours. You will most likely end up with a playground of brown puddles, but your class will have discovered so much in creating them – notably

the fact that mixing the three primary colours together results in brown! Encourage discussion as the children explore and drop in subject-specific vocabulary – such as the terms 'primary' and 'secondary' colours – to aid learning and create meaning. As well as puddle painting, there are oodles of other arty activities children can partake in when the weather is wet. Paint pictures then hang them in the rain to see how the drips alter their appearance, use tissue paper on a white canvas and watch the colours bleed, or attempt some raindrop photography with an iPad. The children will be full of amazement if they look closely at a raindrop to photograph it; the inverse image within the drop will fill them with awe and wonder!

SUNNY DAYS

With sunshine undoubtedly comes shadows, and these can be used to create a variety of pieces of artwork – some transient and some of a more permanent nature. You can use example of work by artists such as Vincent Bal to excite and inspire children. They will love his fun, cartoony style and the imaginative ways he uses shadows to complete his artwork. Give children time to play with objects and the shadows they cast, time to explore and time to experiment with compositions. Using a camera to photograph shadow artwork means creations can be kept forever rather than lost when the sun goes behind a cloud. If you have a wall in the sunlight, or a sunny section of playground your learners can use their hands in different positions to create shadow pictures. Task them with creating different animals and see who can make the most realistic looking shapes. Children also love to draw around shadows – place objects on a

roll of paper and draw an outline (toy dinosaurs cause much excitement!) or use chalk directly on the playground. Drawing around human shadows is another fun activity and facial features and hair can be added either with chalk or found objects in nature such as stones, leaves and flowers.

Sunny days are also perfect for landscape artwork. Arm the children with paper, pencils and clipboards, find a shady spot and spend an afternoon admiring the view. Discuss what they can see, touching on compositional elements such as foreground, midground and background. Encourage them to look at the space on their blank canvas and visualise their drawings. Thumbnail sketches are fun ways for them to compose their pieces before diving onto their plain page and viewfinders can help your artists if they wish to focus on particular aspects of the landscape. Don't worry if your area is more man-made than natural, the aims of the session can remain the same whether they are drawing trees and fields or a playground and buildings. For a landscape with a twist, use the artwork of Alma Thomas to get children thinking about a bird's-eye view of what is in front of them.

CHILLY DAYS

While sunny days may be preferable for outdoor adventures, don't let winter's freezing temperatures put you off venturing into the playground; just wrap up warm and remember to pop on some gloves to avoid frosty fingers! Snow is a sculpting gift to the world from mother



THINGS TO INCLUDE IN YOUR OUTDOOR ART KIT



Wet weather clothing such as puddle suits and wellies are essential for a rainy day. They not only keep the children dry but also ensure school uniform is protected from the colourful masterpieces being created.



Sunhats are a must for those hot, cloudless days to protect children's heads from the sun. It is also advisable to ask parents to send sun cream in with children if you are planning on creating in the sunshine.



iPads or other tablets/photography equipment for outdoor photography projects.



Tools such as brushes (decorator size as well as the usual school brushes), pots, palettes and toothbrushes. It is helpful to store this equipment together in a labelled storage container so it can be easily accessed for impromptu outdoor art experiences. Keeping indoor and outdoor art equipment separate is advisable as outdoor tools can obviously become a little bit grubby.



A collection of objects with which to print on a large scale, such as old bike or pram wheels, sink plungers of various sizes, old wellies, trainers and other shoes with interesting sole patterns.



Art easels for playground landscape and observational painting.



Chalk is a fantastic medium for use outdoors. It will work on most outdoor surfaces including the playground and walls, and also develops a lovely velvety texture when mixed with puddles.



Powder paint for creating colourful puddles.



Old wooden or plastic frames can provide focus to outdoor art. Children can place them on the playground or field and fill with their artistic creations, whether that be drawing, painting or using found natural treasures.

Children love the freedom of the outdoors - the fresh air and space trick them into thinking they're not learning even when they are!

nature and children can create with it in much the same way they would magic sand or play dough. Provide sand moulds, buckets and other containers and encourage sculpting with hands, too. Many will want to create snowmen but why not give learners some other challenges - who can create a snow dog, a castle, a car or a boat? If the icy temperatures last, you could invite viewers to admire your snow creations in your sculpture park.

Waterway fun and play

Develop fine motor skills and number recognition with these creative water activities from **Judith Harries...**

Indoor fun

FREEZING FRUIT

Make some coloured ice cubes with the children using drops of food colouring or natural dyes such as orange juice and crushed blackberries. Place them in the water tray and encourage children to handle them. How do their fingers feel? Ask them to observe how long the ice takes to melt. Does it happen quicker on a hot day? Talk about changing states and introduce scientific language such as solids, liquids, frozen, thaw and melt. Alternatively, freeze small toys inside the ice blocks for children to chip at with a variety of tools.



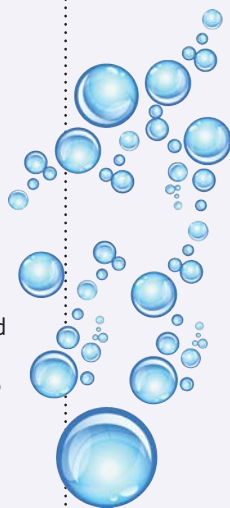
FLOATING ARCHIPELAGO

Create an archipelago of islands using floating plastic trays, small world play people, animals and toy boats. Show images of groups of islands online and introduce the word 'archipelago' as many young children enjoy the challenge of tackling a new 'long' word. Encourage the children to play imaginatively, taking people to and from different islands using the boats. Are there any other ways the people could travel? Talk about the different sizes of the islands. Extend play by giving each island a number and transporting that number of people to the island.

BUBBLE BOTTLES

Make some recycled bubble shakers to accompany watery songs. If you have different-sized clear plastic bottles with lids, fill each bottle with water, a few drops of food colouring and a small amount of washing up liquid. Add some small beads, bells and buttons. Fasten the lids securely and shake. These will sound and look spectacular as the bubbles are created inside the shaker. Play along to this song, to the tune of 'The wheels on the bus':

*Shake the bubbles, up and down,
Up and down, up and down.
Shake the bubbles all around,
Put the bottles on the ground.*



Outdoor only!

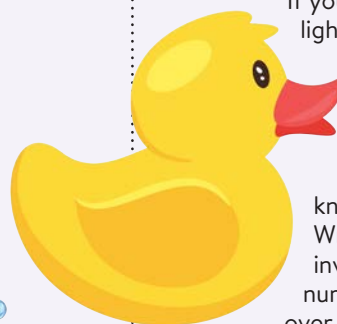
WATERWAYS, FALLS AND WALLS

Prop up one end of a water tray and attach different sizes of plastic drain piping and tubing. Children will love pouring water in and out of the tray. Let some pipes drain into a paddling pool so the children can paddle and splash on a hot day. You could also add pumps and sieves so children can create their own waterfalls. Extend the activity by using a staple gun or wire to attach different items such as water wheels and funnels to a piece of fencing, trellis or wooden pallet. Hang this above the tray to create waterfalls!

COUNT AND RACE

If you have a selection of lightweight plastic bottles or containers, place them in a row on a wall or upturned buckets. Provide children with water pistols and see how many bottles they can knock over using jets of water. Write numbers on the bottles and invite the children to add up the numbers as they knock the bottles over. Sing 'Ten plastic bottles

standing on the wall' as they play and practise counting backwards. Alternatively, use a roll of aluminium foil to create a slidey pond. Place plastic ducks or boats at one end and invite the children to race the ducks or boats by shooting them along with their water pistols.



WATER CIRCUS

Organise some fun water circus activities in your setting. Try a water relay race with two teams of children. Set up two water containers at the end of the course. Ask the children to take turns to run down the track carrying a small jug of coloured water and empty it into their team's container. The team with the most water at the end wins. And why not try water hoopla with quoits floating in the water tray?

Creativity with water

BOTTLE PHONE

Create a musical instrument using water. The bottle phone is a pitched instrument like a xylophone. Set up six clear glass bottles or jars in a row and fill with different amounts of coloured water. Tap them gently with a metal spoon or drumstick and sort into a scale or pattern of pitches from low to high (left to right). Let the children play patterns and tunes. Record the sound of the bottle phone and listen back with the children. You could add other watery instruments such as the bubble bottles and rain sticks.

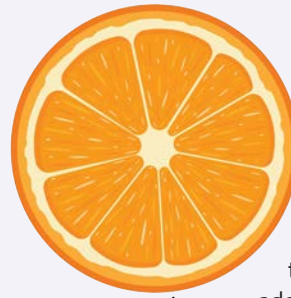
CHALK PRINTS

Fill a small washing up bowl or shallow tray with 2cm of water. Carefully scrape or grate some different coloured chinks onto the surface of the water. Children can help do this using a serrated plastic knife. Watch the colours spread out. Let the children gently place a sheet of stiff white paper on top of the chalk and leave for ten seconds. Lift up the paper and see how the colours stick to the paper. Leave the chalk print to dry. The chinks will need to be regularly replenished as the activity continues.



WATER PAINTING

Go outside on a sunny day and let the children paint walls, patios, furniture and themselves with water. This is one of the simplest and least messy water activities and costs nothing! Just provide pots of water and lots of different-sized brushes including big decorating brushes. What happens when the sun shines on their artwork? Create chalk pavement art and add water to enrich the colours. Go outside on a rainy day, wearing waterproofs, and invite the children to paint on easels in the rain. What happens to their pictures when the rain falls on them?



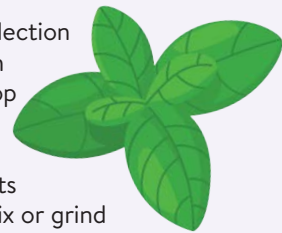
Smelly water play

ORANGES AND LEMONS

Using halved oranges, lemons and limes, try some fruit printing. Place small amounts of orange, yellow and green paint in shallow trays and let the children print onto black or white sugar paper. After this activity, slice the painted fruit and add sliced oranges, lemons and limes to the water tray. The paint will come off in the water and colour it as the children clean the fruit. Provide sieves, jugs and bowls for the children to use as they play with the citrus fruit. Encourage them to smell the fruit and to describe how it looks, smells and feels.

PERFUME FACTORY

Set up a table outside with a selection of pump soap bottles filled with water, food colouring and a drop of soap; some mixing bowls; and a pestle and mortar. Using scissors, let the children snip bits of leaves, herbs and flowers. Mix or grind the cuttings with coloured water to create perfumes or potions! Provide small bottles with lids to hold the perfume or potions and use jugs, syringes, turkey basters and funnels to fill the perfume bottles. What do the perfumes smell like?



TIP:
Water play is a great way to keep cool on a hot day. Combat heat stress by 'spraying' children with cool water using a plant spray or water pistol.

SQUEEZING FINGERS

Strengthen children's hands and fingers through these activities. Fill a water tray with water perfumed with soap or try using the potions from the perfume factory. Add coloured pompoms, sponges and flannels to the water. Invite the children to pick up the drenched sponges or pompoms and squeeze the water out of them into empty containers using their fingers. Can they twist and squeeze all of the water from the flannels? Extend the activity by floating a variety of lids on top of the water. Ask the children to fill the lids using pipettes and syringes but take care not to sink them.

LEARNING TOGETHER

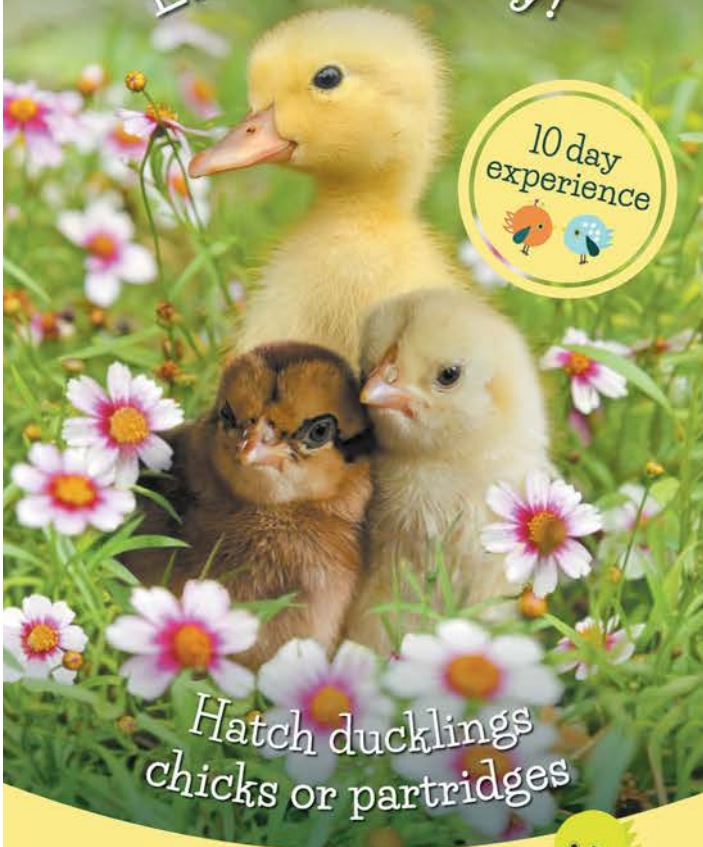
One of the joys of water play is that it can be used to develop all areas of the early years curriculum. Sharing equipment in the water tray and working cooperatively will develop personal, social and emotional skills. Fine motor skills can be enhanced and there are lots of opportunities to talk, listen and communicate over the water tray or during the 'Water circus' as children play together. Take care not to spend too long outside in the sun and make sure children are covered in suncream and wearing hats.



Judith Harries is an author and teacher of music and drama, with experience of working with children aged nine months to 11 years.



Educational... Ethical...
Extraordinary!



Hatch ducklings
chicks or partridges

New educational
resources included by
best-selling author



MOLLY POTTER
emotional literacy & wellbeing

See website for details



Now taking bookings for 2023
www.incredibleeggs.co.uk



BRITISH SIGN LANGUAGE ONLINE COURSE



- ✓ Beginners
- ✓ 20hrs CPD
- ✓ Study from home
- ✓ Staff training
- ✓ Learn at your own pace

Sign up at:
british-sign.co.uk

~~£25~~
£3

Pay what you can: To enable more people to learn British Sign Language we are asking people to pay what they can for this course (minimum contribution of £3).

CARE SUPPORT SERVICE

Easing
Isolation &
Exhaustion



We provide support,
respite and home care to
families who have children
aged 0-19 with congenital
heart defects or feeding
issues across the North
West of England.

- ♥ All staff are Enhanced Child DBS Checked
- ♥ CQC Registered and fully insured
- ♥ Minimum of 2 hours support each week
- ♥ Fully trained support workers (Hoist, Meds, Suction, CPR, Vent etc)

This service is free to access for families who do not qualify for a funded care package from local authorities or CCG's. To refer a family or indeed yourself please get in touch or complete our simple Referral Form online.



✉ info@lagans.org.uk

☎ 01204 800300

🔍 www.lagans.org.uk



LAURA MOORE IS AN EARLY YEARS CONSULTANT.

INSPIRING RESOURCES

Natural materials

Offer open-ended play, create sensory experiences and explore the natural world with these suggestions from Laura Moore...

1 PEBBLE TOWERS

Growing up by the sea means I spent many hours on the beach exploring. When you really look at pebbles, you discover that they can be rough or smooth and usually vary in colour, tone and shade which make them a great resource to use for exploring different themes and sorting accordingly.

A fun game to play with pebbles is to try stacking them in a tower. This will encourage the development of problem-solving skills and logic as children will have to think about the best pebbles to use from the bottom to the top if they want their tower to stay standing. It's a brilliant mindful task for adults, too!

2 SHELL ART

Staying with the beach theme, shells are an excellent resource to prompt discussions about patterns and detail. There's something really fascinating about shells of any shape, size and colour so it's no surprise that children are often mesmerised by them.

You might find that some children have lots of knowledge about shells but there may be children within your setting who have never seen or held one before, so all that talk among their peers and with other adults will allow for amazing learning opportunities. Creating pieces of transient art is another lovely activity to do with shells, particularly when outside.

3 PINE CONES

Pine cones, acorns and conkers should be a 'must-have' in continuous provision for children to use as they wish.

These natural resources can be used as props within their role play. For example, they can be added to a mud kitchen for use as pretend food items or creating a forest theme for animals. I have even seen them used as dinosaur poo – a wonderful addition to small world, imaginative play.

4 PLANT POWER

Indoor plants offer a variety of learning opportunities for children. They learn what plants need to stay alive and can take ownership of ensuring they are cared for. Flowering plants and herbs, such as lavender and mint, allow for additional sensory experiences.

Being surrounded by greenery can help create a sense of calm too – good for supporting both children's wellbeing and yours!

5 STICK PLAY

Take a walk through any woodland or green space and you are likely to find sticks of all shapes and sizes on the ground.

Children often love stick collections, and these are an excellent resource for opportunities to count, compare and measure, build, and practise mark-making in mud or sand.

Give a child a stick and it instantly transforms into anything their imagination allows for – a witch's broomstick; a sword for a knight; a wizard's magic wand... the list is endless. Take a bag on your next stroll out and about, and get collecting!

Laura Moore is an early years consultant. For more inspiration, follow Laura on Instagram: @lauraloveslearning





“We trust children”

Emma Harwood and Freya Deal from Dandelion Education explain how they support children to find their voice...

DANDELION EDUCATION IN Norwich is a philosophy-led forest school nursery co-founded by Emma Harwood and Hayley Room. Freya Deal joined the team four years ago as operations manager and works closely with Emma and Hayley in the running of both of Dandelion’s settings.

The two settings – a third is due to open soon – offer outdoor care and education (with a yurt available on each site) in scenic woodland. Dandelion places a huge emphasis on empowering children through play, exploration and high-quality interactions.

“The training for all of our staff is bespoke, so children know what to expect,” says Emma. “They know nobody’s going to say ‘Don’t’ or shout at them.

“It’s very much about giving children their own voice. We trust children, we

walk alongside them. We don’t talk at children; always with them – offering respectful, reciprocal conversations.”

High-quality communication

The team at Dandelion are sensitive to the individual needs of every child. “Our staff are highly trained and qualified, and have a really deep knowledge,” says Emma. “They understand child development and trauma. For example, when a child is experiencing high cortisol levels, staff know the child isn’t ignoring them; they understand that they need to offer emotional support to that young person, rather than expect an immediate response.

“If a child is upset or angry about something, we’ll ask how they feel and how we can help them to feel better. The child’s response might be, ‘I need

ten minutes with you over there so I can have some space’, or quite often they say, ‘Can I have a hug?’ and then off they go. That time for high-quality communication and listening is so important.”

Body autonomy

Freya agrees, “There’s so much research about how important those first 1,000 days are, but early years isn’t treated like it’s education.

“We call all of our staff at Dandelion ‘early years teachers’ because that’s what we are. Early years staff are often made to feel like we’re simply nappy changers.

“But everything we do – including changing nappies – is about educating and scaffolding learning. It’s about taking children on to the next stage and making them secure.

TALKING POINTS

1 Emotional literacy

The team uses special 'Dandelion Dialogue' cards to talk to children about emotions. "The ones for sale didn't cover the range of emotions we wanted so we created these, which have additional emotions such as 'calm' and 'proud', explains Emma. "Emotional literacy makes a huge difference to how children respond to each other."



"We use nappy changing as an opportunity to teach children about body autonomy, letting them know that we do need to change their nappy but we'll ask them to help and they can take their own trousers down.

"We'll often say, 'Emma can change your nappy or Freya can change your nappy'. We offer a choice, and we'll always use the proper words for body parts, and that's really important for children's safety," says Freya.

Emma continues, "If somebody has done something that they shouldn't and a child says, 'They touched my 'cookie'', nobody's going to know what they mean. If they say, 'Somebody touched my vulva', we would know what's going on – children need that language.

"We introduced a new song to teach children about body ownership: 'It's my body and mine alone, from my elbow to my toe...' and we practise saying, 'no, thank you'. This might simply be saying it to another child who's going to give them a hug. At Dandelion, we teach the children to be respectful and ask first. The children know they've got that right to say 'no' to anybody."

The staff at Dandelion support children to understand that talking



2 Early years ratios

"They're talking about moving two-year-old ratios from 1:4 to 1:5. At Dandelion, we keep a ratio of 1:2 for children aged two. I wouldn't hand over my two-year-old granddaughter to somewhere with a ratio of 1:5," says Emma. "The suggestion is that the way you make money, the way you survive as a setting, is to go to government ratios, but we just won't."

about body parts is nothing to feel embarrassed about. "It's a small window that we have to make the correct body language something that feels natural and normal", Emma tells us.

"If we haven't already done that by the time they're three, it creates a really big battle because children have all the outside influences by then as well."

Unpicking stereotypes

As well as supporting children to have the vocabulary they need to express themselves, staff at Dandelion are keen to ensure that self-expression isn't limited by gender stereotypes.

"We work hard to teach children that gender is nothing to do with whether you can climb a tree, use an axe or a drill, or wear a dressing-up dress. Any child can do any of those things, but there are plenty of outside influences that reinforce stereotypes," says Emma.

"If a child says, 'Only boys can use axes', for example, our staff are well trained and know how to have that conversation in a respectful and non-judgemental way that unpicks the child's beliefs. We don't say 'You're wrong'; we ask 'What if?'. We use questions to encourage children to think a little more deeply and unpick their own thoughts whilst always respecting and valuing their opinions."

"We also adapt stories to combat gender stereotypes," explains Freya. "So, in Little Red Riding Hood, we'll mention that the wood cutter is a woman, and in The Three Little Pigs, the one carrying the bricks might be a woman, so the

3 TED talk

Respectful, reciprocal conversation is an idea Emma is passionate about – so much so that she has done a TED Talk (tinyurl.com/emma-ted) all about communication and empowering children. In it, Emma discusses the importance of empowering children through language and communication, being their thesaurus, and allowing them the time they need, or want, to talk.



children begin to understand that those jobs are available to everybody all of the time."

Dandelion Education has been shortlisted for the Nursery World Awards 2022 in two categories: Eco-Friendly Early Years and Enabling Environments. To find out more about Dandelion, visit dandelioneducationltd.com

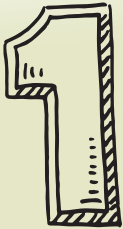


MADELEINE FOX IS AN EDUCATIONAL WRITER AND FORMER SEN TEACHER.

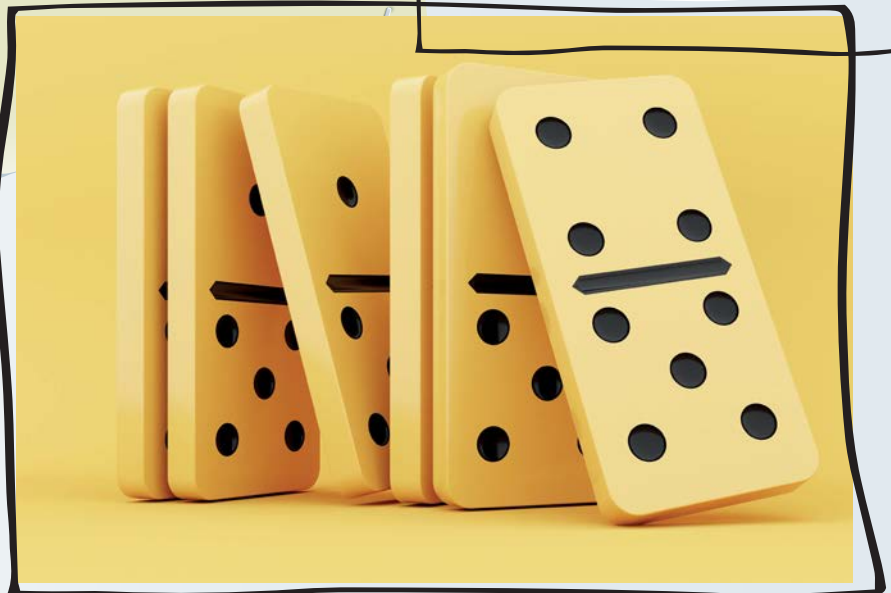
How I do it

Learning about doubles and using them in context is an important early skill, says **Madeleine Fox...**

Learning about doubles and near doubles, understanding what doubles are, mastering their quick recall and using them in context is an important early skill to help with mathematical understanding. Here are some fun starting points for introducing doubles across the curriculum. These activities involve dominoes; painting doubles; music and movement. They can take place indoors or outdoors, and there are also many links for learning about symmetry, shape and pattern. Afterwards, children can explore how this new knowledge can help them with their everyday mathematical calculations.



Start by asking the question, "What are doubles?" Doubles mean "two lots of something". Use a box of dominoes and show how we can count the number of spots on each side. Giant classroom dominoes are great for this exercise. Can children see any dominoes that have the same number on each side? Look at the shape of the spots – they are arranged in the same way as the spots on a die – an easy way to recognise the number without counting.



Share out the dominoes face down. The children turn them over and each child with a double domino scores a point. Can they add them together and say the number sentence? This can be played as a small group or in pairs. Arrange the double dominoes in order – 1 + 1, 2 + 2, 3 + 3. Invite the children to draw a picture of the dominoes and say a number sentence for each one.



Cut black paper into large rectangle domino shapes – fold in half then open back out and paint a white line along the crease. Paint white spots on one side then fold and open out again to reveal a double domino! Make a display of your domino shapes in increasing order. You could also cut paper into different shapes – circles, triangles, squares – to print doubles. Children can paint on one side and fold the paper in half to explore which shapes are symmetrical and which are asymmetrical.



Play "Copy me" using musical instruments and different sounds. Bang a drum twice, ring a bell three times or shake a shaker four times before asking children to copy. Remember to count each time, then work out how many sounds there are altogether (keep the numbers small). Start this as an adult-led activity until the children are clear about how to play before inviting different children to lead.



Engage children in a fun game of throwing doubles. Each team has two hoops, bean bags and a large die. Taking turns, a child from each team throws the die to generate a number. The child then throws that number of bean bags into each hoop and says the number sentence. Or children themselves can jump in the hoops, making human doubles. You can also use chalk to draw around the bean bags and hoops in the playground. Why not vary the game by using other objects such as cones and teddies?

MIDLANDS

FREE EVENT



childcare & education EXPO

Join your community at...

CBS ARENA, COVENTRY
23-24 SEPTEMBER 2022

- Attend CPD Seminars
- Meet Special Guests
- Join Free Workshops
- Find Inspiration Zones
- Source New Resources
- Discover Activity Ideas
- Network With Your Peers

Register for your
free ticket here



We're also in London on the 3rd - 4th
March 2023, find out more below...

www.childcareeducationexpo.co.uk

THE HOME OF EARLY YEARS & PRIMARY EDUCATION INSPIRATION



TAM SIN GRIMMER IS AN EARLY YEARS CONSULTANT, TRAINER AND AUTHOR.

How to talk to young children about war

Tamsin Grimmer shares ideas about how to support and reassure children in early years settings...

WAR IS A DIFFICULT CONCEPT for young children to understand and it can be hard to know if and how we should discuss it with them. Should we try to shelter them from the situation by avoiding conversations about it or should we talk about it in a manner which our young children will understand?

We have all been shocked, horrified and upset by the devastating news images and stories coming out of Ukraine. Many children will be feeling frightened and anxious, and they may feel it will have a direct impact on their lives.

Even our youngest children may have heard adults discuss the events or may have seen images on the television or social media.

There will, however, be some children who do not know about the conflict and we need to be sensitive to the differing levels of information children will have heard.

WHERE TO START

It's a good idea to find out what, if anything, children know about the conflict. We can do this through observing our children, noticing their behaviour and noting any changes, listening to their conversations and questions, and working out how they feel and what level of information they have about the situation.

Children need love and reassurance, they need to feel safe and secure, therefore hearing stories about war will be unsettling and frightening, regardless of their level of understanding.

PRACTISE COMPASSION

War is a very difficult concept for children to understand and the reasons why countries go to war are even more difficult.

Remember that there will be groups of children who may be particularly vulnerable at this time, for example, children who have already experienced trauma, those who are refugees or who have lived experiences of violence and fighting.

Some children will have family members who live in Russia, Ukraine or neighbouring countries. The conflict will have a direct impact for these children, and we must ensure we remain sensitive to this at all times.

It's really important that we practise compassion and are careful how we discuss the role of Russia. Ensure our comments do not add to hate-speech or discriminate against one group or another.

There is enough hate in the world already; our role is to love, be compassionate to everyone, and help our children feel safe and secure with us.

Do's and don'ts for difficult conversations

- ✓ Listen to children and answer questions honestly, using terms that are factual and avoid the potential for misunderstandings or stereotyping.
- ✓ Use correct language whilst remembering their age and stage of development, for example 'war', 'fighting', 'dead'.
- ✓ Do not add to children's anxiety and fears by listening to the news with the children present or talking to colleagues about the situation in their earshot.
- ✓ If children initiate a conversation about war, respond in language they will understand.
- ✓ Reassure children that they are safe – they rely on us for their feelings of safety and security. Acknowledge children's feelings and accept all emotions.
- ✓ Don't worry if children ask the same questions over and over again. They are trying to reassure themselves and we must answer consistently to offer reassurance.
- ✓ Remain calm when discussing conflict – if you are feeling frightened yourself, this will come across through the discussion.
- ✓ If children use playful interactions to explore war and express their feelings, support this and use them as opportunities to discuss difficult concepts like death that are hard to understand.

Tamsin Grimmer is an early years consultant and Director of Linden Learning. Follow Tamsin on Twitter @tamsingrimmer



**Because development doesn't
look the same for all children.**



Join thousands of Early Years settings benefitting from Tapestry and discover the easy-to-use, secure online learning journal helping early years practitioners and childminders monitor progress, develop their provision, and collaborate in equal partnership with families to build a picture of each unique child.



Find all our features and request a free no-obligation trial today or contact us to discuss your needs at customer.service@eyfs.info





RAGEENA TAHIR IS HEAD OF EYFS AT FENNIES NURSERIES.

Language-rich environments

Rageena Tahir and Olivia Jones share how to bring a language focus to your setting...

Babies are instinctively wired to learn language. From babbling to showing an understanding of what they hear, babies' speech and language development quickly begins to emerge.

When children acquire strong language skills, this offers a gateway to most other forms of learning, as well as communicating their needs. Speech and language skills open the door to a wealth of other skills including problem-solving, social and personal development, and emotional regulation. So it's important we provide the best possible learning environment to continuously enhance learning opportunities and support children to build these skills.

A language-rich environment promotes and encourages the enhancement of children's communication and language development, taking into account both the physical and emotional environment, including positive and responsive interactions with adults.

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

Not only do children begin to develop their physical skills by exploring their environment through play; they are also forming imagination and language skills. There are many ways you can bring a language focus to the forefront of your physical environment. Here are just a few:

Open-ended resources: Using open-ended resources in your setting and giving children time to play supports them to learn new words, engage in back-and-forth conversations with one another and use resources in a variety of ways, including problem-solving. Loose parts play can include resources such as reels, acorns, rings, boxes, crates, planks, containers – anything that children can

make into whatever they choose. With a little thinking and imagination, boxes can be turned into skyscrapers or racing cars.

Signs and labels: Using labels in your nursery is a great way to surround the physical environment with words. Seeing these labels every day helps children to memorise letter formation and understand the relationship between a word and its meaning. Remember though, don't go too overboard with the label maker as this could become overwhelming and more difficult for children to memorise.

You could also welcome children at your setting with some colourful self-registration cards. Self-registration is a great way to encourage children to recognise their name. This usually starts with their ability to recognise the first letter.

Try adding print to role play areas. For example, recipes with pictures will help children to comprehend the instructions and attribute meaning to the words, and real food packaging in home corners supports children in recognising familiar logos and brands that they may use at home.

Outdoor exploration: The outdoors provides its very own classroom naturally primed for learning and exploring, with trees, plants, paths, levels and the ever-changing weather. Supplementing this with further resources such as wheelbarrows, water channels, magnifying glasses and tools will encourage further exploration and the opportunity to introduce new concepts and vocabulary. Through discussions and shared sustained thinking, children will develop confidence in communicating. And of course, with outdoors being an extension of indoor learning, books and other print materials can be introduced to support learning.





EMOTIONAL ENVIRONMENT

An environment means more to a child than what's physically around them; how they feel within that environment

Listen carefully to children, observe body language and what the child is doing, and respond appropriately

can influence their learning and development too. It's essential for a child to feel safe and secure in your setting. Creating a nurturing sense within your environment can also open up a wealth of opportunities for a language-rich environment.

Tuning in: Listen carefully to children, observe body language and what the child is doing, and respond appropriately.

HOW TO DO A COMMUNICATION AUDIT

Consider these points when making enhancements to your setting. Continuously reflecting on each of these areas and making improvements based on what you observe will help promote a language-rich environment.

- Where are the most conversations taking place in the room?
- Which staff within the room are having the most interactions?
- Are these good quality interactions?
- Which resources do the children use most?
- What are the children's current interests?
- Are there spaces within the room to be quiet and reflect?
- Are there spaces for imaginative play?

This is the basis for secure, positive and supportive relationships between adults and the child. This relationship will in turn ensure that adults are providing warm and responsive interactions that support and coach children through understanding and managing their emotions – also known as co-regulation. These types of interactions provide opportunities to introduce children to the language of emotions, helping them develop the ability to assign words to how they are feeling.

Cosy spaces: Create a quiet, cosy reading corner using cushions and soft rugs to support a relaxing emotional environment. Keep books at a level children can easily access so that older children can independently select which story they'd like to go and read.

Rageena Tahir is Head of EYFS and Olivia Jones is a content writer at Fennies Nurseries. Visit fennies.com



EDWINA REVEL (RNUTR) IS THE PROGRAMME DIRECTOR AT EARLY START NUTRITION.

PLANT-BASED meals



Edwina Revel offers advice on meeting the nutritional needs of young vegetarians...

VEGETARIAN MEALS HAVE become popular choices for many families. Some of the reasons for choosing a vegetarian diet may be due to dietary preferences and as a way to eat more sustainably.

In fact, it's estimated that around 5% of adults and children are vegetarian. But are vegetarian meals and snacks suitable for infants and toddlers? According to the NHS, they are suitable for all children as long as they are planned to include a wide variety of foods to meet their nutritional needs.

Vegetarian diets

For vegetarian children, who eat dairy products and eggs, a healthy diet is the same as anyone else, but without meat or fish.

A vegetarian diet does not include:

- Meat or poultry
- Fish or seafood
- Insects
- Gelatine or animal rennet
- Stock or fat from animals.

Some children may need a dairy-free diet or a diet that avoids eggs, because of an allergy to a specific animal protein, or because they are lactose intolerant. Families should be advised to seek allergy support and management from their GP.

Vegetarian or vegan?

In early years settings, it's important to be aware of children's individual dietary requirements. Whether they are based on cultural,

religious or medical needs, children's choices, beliefs and safety must be protected.

There may be variations in the type of foods excluded, so here are some considerations:

Lacto-ovo vegetarian: Excludes meat and fish. Allows for both dairy products and eggs.

Lacto vegetarian: Excludes meat, fish and eggs. Allows dairy products.

Pescatarian: Excludes meat. Allows fish, dairy products and eggs.

Vegan: Excludes all animal products, including meat, fish, eggs and dairy food.

Dietary recommendations

Infants and young children, in particular, need enough energy (calories) to grow and be active, and enough

nutrients (protein, fat, carbohydrate, vitamins and minerals) to ensure they remain healthy.

The Eat Better, Start Better food and drink guidelines (tinyurl.com/start-better) provide guidance for early years settings to support children, including vegetarians, to achieve a healthy, balanced and nutritious diet.

Here at Early Start Nutrition when reviewing menus, we often find they lack vegetarian sources of iron and so we are putting it in the spotlight to ensure your menus provide sufficient sources.

Including iron

Iron is important for children as it supports the function of several bodily systems, particularly making haemoglobin, a protein in red blood cells that transports oxygen around the body.

A deficiency in iron can cause anaemia. This results in less oxygenated blood, meaning the body receives less oxygen than it needs, which limits children's ability to be physically active.

Children with iron deficiency will often appear pale, tired and their general health, resistance to infection, appetite and energy will be reduced. It's important for families to speak to a healthcare professional if they are concerned about their child's iron levels.

The latest results from the National Diet and Nutrition Survey highlight that around 11% of children





aged 18 months to three years have iron deficiency (low iron stores).

To support children to achieve their iron intakes, it's important to include a variety of iron rich foods two to three times a day across meals and snacks.

GOOD SOURCES OF IRON

- beans and lentils
- ground/smooth nut butters and seeds
- tofu and soya beans
- fortified cereals
- dark-green leafy vegetables such as kale
- wholegrains, such as wholemeal bread and brown rice (please note that children need a variety of white and wholemeal)
- dried fruit, such as apricots and figs. Remember to offer these with meals, rather than as a snack between meals, to help prevent tooth decay.

Meeting iron requirements

The absorption of iron may be enhanced if foods or drinks rich in vitamin C are consumed at the same meal, such as pepper, broccoli, cabbage, kiwi or pineapple. Vitamin C can increase iron absorption by up to four times.

If any children at your setting are vegetarian, here are some ways to help meet their iron requirements:

- All main meals (lunch and tea) must include a vegetarian source of protein, such as pulses, beans, lentils and eggs – these foods are good sources of iron.
- Beans, pulses, eggs and other proteins can be provided as part of snacks, once or twice each week. For example, hummus, egg fingers.
- There is the option to include protein foods as part of breakfast on some days, and so for vegetarian children that might be beans or eggs. You could also include iron fortified breakfast cereals like Weetabix or Ready Brek.

Meat alternatives

As outlined in Eat Better, Start Better, menus should limit bought and homemade products made from meat alternatives to no more than once a week. These include vegetarian sausages, burgers, nuggets and pies, and Quorn.

Quorn is made from mycoprotein which is a mushroom. It's low in iron, energy and fat, and high in fibre. If serving once per week, we recommend serving it with beans/lentils.

Meat alternative products are often high in salt and were developed for the adult market. Their salt content is

USEFUL RESOURCES

For advice on planning a vegan menu, check out Early Start Nutrition's blog, 'Is a vegan diet suitable for young children?' (tinyurl.com/vegan-children).

See Early Start Nutrition's example vegetarian menu for inspiration when planning meals (tinyurl.com/ES-menus).

You can learn about the Vitamin D recommendations for young children in Early Start Nutrition's blog (tinyurl.com/Vit-D-blog).

not suitable for young children. Instead of regularly using meat alternative products, choose high quality plant-based proteins, such as beans, pulses, lentils and tofu. For menu inspiration, see the useful resources above.

Iron supplements

There are no recommendations to offer an iron supplement to infants and children. The best way to ensure children get all the nutrients they need, including iron, is to offer a balanced and varied diet.

The Department of Health and Social Care does, however, recommend that babies from birth to one year of age should have a daily supplement containing 8.5 to 10 micrograms of vitamin D if they are breastfed or formula-fed and having less than 500ml of infant formula. Children aged one to four years should be given a daily supplement containing 10 micrograms of vitamin D.



SCAN HERE
TO ENTER
→



**Win 10
Sets of Kids
Waterproof
Clothing!**



www.spottyotter.co.uk/teach-competition



@spottyotter

GIVEAWAY

Sign up to our email mailing list for a chance to win this fantastic

Natural Fine Motor Set

Visit

cosydirect.com/teachey



EYFS FOCUS

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

In each issue, we focus on a different area of the EYFS to bring you inspiration for your setting...



“Gross and fine motor experiences develop incrementally throughout early childhood, starting with sensory explorations and the development of a child’s strength, co-ordination and positional awareness”

EYFS Framework 2021

THIS ISSUE...

Gross motor skills

38 Dr Jamie Galpin explores how we can support early years staff to embrace adventurous play...

41 Susan Drury offers inspiration for developing gross motor skills with this free resource pack and ideas from Plazoom...

42 Carley Sefton shares fun ways to get moving outdoors...

Fine motor skills

46 Jamel Carly Campbell explains how messy play is perfect for developing hand-eye coordination, and building strength and control...



Adventurous play - is it worth the risk?

Dr Jamie Galpin explores how we can support early years staff to embrace risky play...

THE CRUCIAL ROLE OF PLAY in children's development is well understood. Play is a natural tool that children can use to build their resilience and coping skills.

The statutory framework for the EYFS in England notes that "play is essential for children's development, building their confidence as they learn to explore, relate to others, set their own goals and solve problems." (Department for Education, 2021)

However, this focus on play does not appear to last long; the paradoxical distinction between learning and play arises in the framework when it goes on to state: "as children grow older and move into the reception year, there should be a greater focus on teaching the essential skills and knowledge in the specific areas of learning."

By the age of five, playtime is over. Free play is harnessed and reined in to serve the needs of the curriculum. Play becomes planned, directed and structured, policed by policy.

Yet this conflicts not only with what we know about the value of play, but also with many practitioners' beliefs about the value of free play.

FREE EXPLORATION

Play is often at its most effective as a medium for learning because it allows children to freely indulge and follow that other foundational learning element: curiosity.

Free exploration promotes enhanced learning about the physical and social-emotional environment. We know too that the most compelling situations to explore and engage in are those that challenge our prior expectations. For example, think about how much children (and adults!) are drawn to magic tricks.

Testing expectations, exploring boundaries and learning about their

own capacities through making mistakes, are some of the hallmarks of what is termed 'adventurous' or 'risky' play.

This is child-led play where children experience feelings of excitement and fear. These thrilling forms of play are characterised by uncertainty. Yes, they can have the potential for cuts and grazes, but they also provide opportunities to develop persistence and resilience.

Children become confident, involved learners by taking calculated risks and dealing with uncertainty

However, societal norms have shifted toward greater supervision, and concerns regarding injury prevention are increasingly influencing children's opportunities to engage in risky play. Risks constantly have to be managed and regulated by adults. Of course, we must carry out risk assessments and keep children safe from harm, but children also need opportunities for adventure.

Restricted opportunities are heightened for children with special educational needs and disabilities. All children are perceived to be vulnerable; those with SEND even more so.

Risks are located within the child rather than our recognition that we could be wrapping our own anxieties around the children in our

care. Yet, in the long term we might be increasing the vulnerability of the children we are looking to protect.

Fewer opportunities to engage with risky play leads to fewer opportunities to not only manage risk, but also to manage the uncertainty that accompanies it.

PLAYING WITH UNCERTAINTY

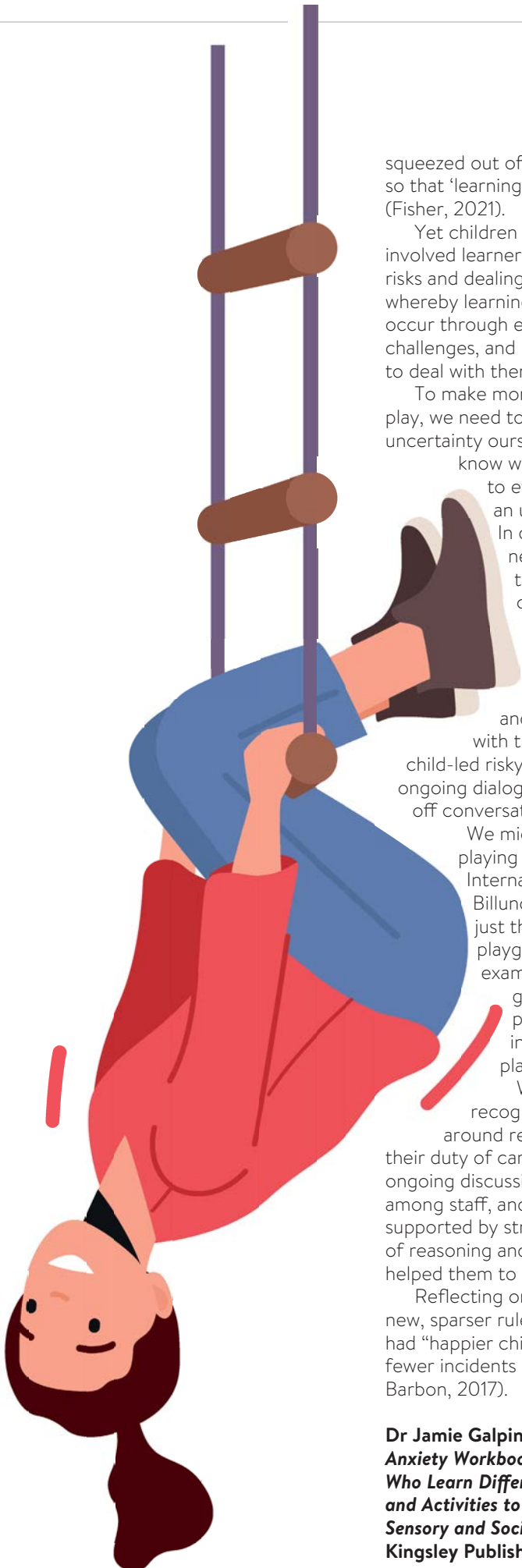
Uncertainty is a fundamental difficulty all humans experience. It is the foundational component of all anxiety. The vast majority of us are desperately seeking certainty. We explore and learn about our world so we can build a better model of it, one that can help us make good guesses about what will happen; making things predictable, expected.

Uncertainty is woven into the tapestry of life. We need to be able to manage this truth, and play is one of the best teachers to help us achieve this. Play is training for the unexpected.

Exploration and novelty-seeking allow us to harvest information about the unknown, about the edges and horizons, and improve our knowledge and understanding. Adventurous play can, over time, reduce children's uncertainty by increasing their ability to predict events in the world.

Having the opportunity through play to successfully handle lower-stakes uncertainty, physiological arousal, and fear, is thought to give children an adaptive coping template and increased capacity to manage uncertainty and more realistic interpretations of physiological arousal in the future.

Despite all these benefits, we are often constrained in how much we can allow adventurous free play. Rules bind both children and adults. Not just the practical rules designed to minimise risk, but rules in the form of policy. For example, play is being increasingly



squeezed out of the school day so that ‘learning’ can take priority (Fisher, 2021).

Yet children become confident, involved learners by taking calculated risks and dealing with uncertainty, whereby learning and development occur through encountering challenges, and building the resources to deal with them.

To make more space for risky play, we need to embrace a little uncertainty ourselves. We need to know when to trust children to effectively navigate an uncertain moment.

In doing so we might need to re-negotiate typical adult and child relations, revisiting policies and procedures.

We need to reacquaint ourselves, and be comfortable, with the positive aspects of child-led risky play. This will be an ongoing dialogue rather than a one-off conversation.

We might begin by playing with the rules. The International School in Billund, Denmark, did just that. Staff relaxed playground rules (for example, children could go up the slide!) giving pupils more freedom in how they used the playground.

Whilst the school recognised the tensions around relaxing the rules, and their duty of care to the children, ongoing discussions and negotiations among staff, and with children – supported by strong documentation of reasoning and risk considerations – helped them to walk that tightrope.

Reflecting on the first week of the new, sparser rules, they found they had “happier children” and fewer incidents (Baker & Benavente Barbon, 2017).

Dr Jamie Galpin is co-author of *The Anxiety Workbook for Supporting Teens Who Learn Differently: A Framework and Activities to Build Structural, Sensory and Social Certainty* (Jessica Kingsley Publishers).

SUPPORTING STAFF TO GET “RISKIER” WITH PLAY

- Address fears and uncertainty surrounding staff member and school accountability in relation to duty of care and the potential for child injury. This can be gained via clear guidance from regulatory bodies and through training.
- Provide training on children’s skills and capabilities to play, including their ability to judge risk for themselves.
- Include education around how intervening in children’s play, and directing through language, may limit children’s adventurous play engagement.
 - Focus on developing positive beliefs about child-led adventurous play, including understanding the benefits.
 - Provide support on how to recognise and evaluate risk and hazards.
- Support staff to reflect on how their current rules and practices might have a positive and negative impact on children’s play, including what they do to manage their own uncertainty.

(The above points are adapted from Nesbit et al., 2021)

For further reading and references, visit tinyurl.com/risky-play

He is working with the LEGO Foundation on their Play for All Accelerator Programme (tinyurl.com/play-for-all), which combines the LEGO Foundation’s expertise in learning through play with nasen’s principles of inclusion.



Outdoor Classrooms

HELP WANTED... to make short demo videos ...

Free education resource sample GIVEAWAY for EYFS practitioners, prepared to make short demo videos aimed at supporting parents of home learners.

We are hoping to empower parents, giving confidence to use education resources with their own, through short, real-life learning example videos. SEN specialists welcome.

MORE THAN £1000 WORTH OF RESOURCES AVAILABLE.

Please DM Richard on instagram @outdoor.classrooms to register your interest..



Whats available? Foundation and KS1 appropriate Maths, Phonics and Science learning resources. Mini Maths Outclass resources pack, Fred's Story Creation pack, Three Bears stories to name just a few.

IF YOU CAN HELP TO MAKE SHORT DEMO VIDEOS CONTACT ME NOW!

instagram @outdoor.classrooms | (0113) 256 9941



@outdoor.classrooms

www.outdoorclassrooms.co.uk



@outdoorclassrooms

BAARMY BETHLEHEM

A BRAND-NEW NATIVITY

Join Cheeky, Rascal and Scamp, the party sheep, as they find one **enormous** reason to celebrate!

FOR 3-6 YEAR OLDS

Find out more at **Out of the Ark.com**



SUE DRURY IS LITERACY LEAD AT PLAZOOM.

Swoop and stomp

Support children to develop their gross motor skills with this free resource pack and ideas from Sue Drury...

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT IS one of the prime areas of learning in the EYFS, and an important aspect of every child's development. Gross motor skills help a child to gain strength and move their body confidently. Fine motor skills involve manipulating smaller items with their hands, such as blocks, buttons and pencils.

When developing gross motor skills, children are expected to negotiate spaces and obstacles safely, demonstrate strength, balance and coordination, and move energetically. An area for children to explore large movements with their body should be included in every early years setting, making use of outdoor space and equipment so children can move without restrictions.

EYFS ANIMAL DANCE MOVEMENT AND MUSIC ACTIVITIES PACK

Young children love to use their imaginations as they play, and a great way to help learners develop gross motor skills is to encourage them to move in lots of different ways. We've made it easy to explore movements with this engaging Animal Dance activities pack.

The resource gives children the opportunity to move energetically outside or in a large, indoor space. They are encouraged to imagine how different animals might move, collecting words that could be used to describe the movements, such as "stomp", "swoop" or "fly", with suggested opportunities to move to music.

Show the different animal images on handy display cards to the children. Can they identify the animals shown? Use the pictures and vocabulary cards as inspiration and prompts for discussion about how to describe animal movements.



The activities in this resource pack will support children to develop their gross motor skills by negotiating spaces with consideration for others and demonstrating strength and balance with a range of different energetic moves.

The vocabulary cards and images could also be sent home to encourage families to talk about how different animals move and as a prompt for outdoor play.

Children will also have the opportunity to be imaginative and expressive by moving in time to music or adding movements to stories and rhymes about different animals.



INSIDE YOUR FREE PACK

- Animal image cards
- Animal movement vocabulary cards
- Teacher notes with guidance on how the resources could be used in the classroom

To download this EYFS resource for free, visit plazoom.com/collections/early-years-inspiration

 [plazoomshop](https://twitter.com/plazoomshop)

 plazoom.com/blog



CARLEY SEFTON IS THE CEO OF LEARNING THROUGH LANDSCAPES.

Fun ways to get moving outdoors

Gross motor skills are crucial to enable children to perform not only everyday activities, but to explore the natural world, says **Carley Sefton...**

1 Get arty

There are so many great ways that art can flourish outdoors, while encouraging children to move around a large space. Take big pieces of paper and stick them up against a fence to draw or paint on. Make this a physical activity. Children will love taking giant, sweeping movements with their brushes, and creating drips and splatters across the paper. I really like this activity as children get to experience how the colours look and feel across different surfaces. On sunny days, you can even use the children's shadows to draw around.

3 Dance and more dance

Dance is a brilliant activity to build children's gross motor skills, including balance, coordination, strength, and an awareness of their own body in the physical space. Think of sounds in nature like wind, rain, or thunder and use these to create dances. Research shows that classical music can have a profound effect on children – try playing Vivaldi's The Four Seasons and see how the children react.

2 Just keep digging

Who doesn't love getting their hands a bit dirty? Give children the permission to dig to their heart's content in earth or sand. The repetitive movements of digging, pushing, scooping, and lifting will build their strength and work the larger muscles in their body. If you're short of space, try creating small world activities in a tyre filled with soil or play sand. This can also create wonderful story ideas.

4 Green Fingers

Gardening uses far more muscles than many of us give it credit for.

From scooping up dirt and planting new seeds, to pulling up weeds and harvesting – these outdoor tasks all call for hand-eye coordination, strength and balance. Letting children lift watering cans and explore the earth with a trowel will build their upper body strength and enhance their body management skills.



5 Make music

There are countless ways that music can support gross motor skill development – and when you're practising these activities outside, it adds a whole new layer to the experience. Taking a stick and running it along railings, banging stones together or using beaters to make sounds on different surfaces can help to develop young people's emerging coordination skills. Plus, if children are producing these sounds while racing around outdoors, they get to work their strength and muscles too!

6

Ignite imagination

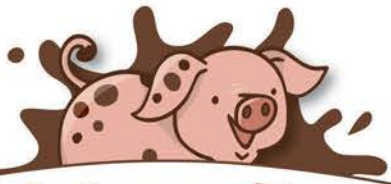
Sometimes the simplest activities are the most powerful. Do you remember being young and darting around the playground pretending that you were riding your pet pony? Or racing your friend through the park in your invisible go-karts? These activities are brilliant when it comes to gross motor skills and children love it when you join in – there's nothing funnier than a teacher being an elephant or a lion.

7 Don't stop moving!

Nature is full of amazing movements, so get the children to copy them – from spinning sycamore seeds falling from a tree, to frogs jumping or worms wriggling. Take your children on a nature walk and talk about all the movement they see. When you're back or in a large space, try and recreate them. You can offer blindfolds while they are doing it, to change their sensory experience.

Carley Sefton is the CEO of Learning through Landscapes – the UK's leading outdoor learning and play charity. To find out more, visit ltl.org.uk





godstonefarm.co.uk   

Godstone Farm

Discover • Explore • Play



Learning and fun all year round, come rain or shine!

FARMYARD
FUN
EDUCATIONAL
SCHOOL TRIPS



 Tilburstow Hill Road, Godstone RH9 8LX



BOOK ONLINE





Elevator PITCH

Why a trip to Godstone Farm in Surrey makes a great out-of-the-classroom experience



1 MEET THE ANIMALS
This is one of the most popular sessions in our tailored schools programme. Little faces beam with joy while meeting furry and feathered friends. These up-close experiences involve handling and stroking the animals, while learning all about their welfare.

3 SEND VISITS
For those with additional needs, a farm visit can be a truly rewarding and memorable experience. A self-guided SEND visit can be arranged, with a private animal experience and dedicated quieter area set aside for lunch.

“Godstone Farm has over 40 years’ experience of providing hands-on learning for school and nursery children. We have over 500 animals to meet!”

NICOLA HENDERSON, CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

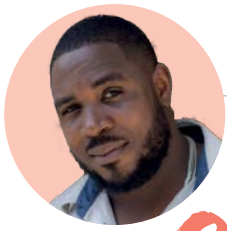


2 ADVENTURE PLAYGROUND
Give children the chance to not only let off steam but learn through testing their own boundaries and calculating risks. This area of the farm offers a rest for teachers while children buzz between giant sandpits, swings and slides.

4 WHATEVER THE WEATHER
Godstone Farm provides an action-packed agenda. A perfect mix of indoors and outdoors across the 45 acres means that, even in colder or wetter months, a farm trip can be enjoyed with the shelter of cosy undercover areas.

To find out more visit the schools tab at godstonefarm.co.uk or email havefun@godstonefarm.co.uk





JAMEL C CAMPBELL IS AN EARLY YEARS EDUCATOR AND CONSULTANT.

Grasping new skills

Jamel Carly Campbell explains how messy play is perfect for honing children's fine motor skills...

WHEN I THINK OF THE development of physical skills that involve fine motor control, a scenario instantly springs to mind – parents wanting their children to be able to hold a pen or pencil correctly and write letters.

Parents or practitioners might give templates to children to aid mark making, or hold the child's hand to guide and support them. In some circumstances, a child may need support by using under-hand or over-hand techniques, especially if they have physical mobility needs/challenges, but it's important that we give children the space to find their preferred grasping pattern, be it full hand or tripod, to develop their hand strength and pen control.

HAND-EYE COORDINATION

Messy play can help to develop fine motor skills and control over one-handed tools. As educators, we are often asked, "When will my child be able to write their name? Are they falling behind?". I always tell parents that we should focus on hand strengthening and hand-eye coordination first. This will provide their child with the foundation skills they'll need to hold mark-making implements and one-handed tools. It will also

help with control over zips, fastenings and other actions that require fine motor manoeuvres.

I encourage all parents to allow messy play, from cornflour play to hand printing or finger painting. If indoors is too much, suggest to families that they venture outdoors – to the garden, local park or green spaces. Messy play develops and strengthens children's fine and gross motor skills through the repetitiveness of the different actions and manoeuvres required to manipulate or interact with the chosen activity.

Mixing mud with a stick or spoon to create pies in the mud kitchen requires a full hand grasp. Plucking

It's important that we give children the space to find their preferred grasping pattern

flower petals and placing them in a pot requires the use of a pinching motion, which is a fine motor skill. Using a stick to make marks in the soil requires both fine motor and gross motor movements.

Even without cutting tools and mark-making implements,



children can pull play dough apart and prod, twist, roll and flatten. These fine motor and gross motor movements can help to strengthen the hands and upper body, and help children to develop the hand-eye coordination skills needed to use different grasps and manoeuvres.

PALMER TO TRIPOD

The full hand grasp, also known as the palmer grasp, is the first grasp that infants use to hold different objects. As children mature, they gain more control over the objects they hold and may shift between the full hand grasp and the tripod grasp, which is the finger and thumb grasp. We see this as the ideal way to hold pencils and pens.

Play dough can be used for cutting activities with scissors, pizza cutters, pokers and dough cutters, allowing children to really explore how tools work and how to hold each tool effectively. Mud, sand, clay and cornflour can be used in the same manner.

Professor Robert Winston once said, "Humans learn new skills by repetition. Each time we complete a

task, new neurological pathways are built which strengthen with time". This is the same for the muscles and nerves around our bodies. The repetition required for messy play helps children to explore different types of movements and develop their fine motor skills.

Jamel C Campbell is an early years educator, consultant and children's author. Jamel is passionate about the early years, and the importance of having a balanced, diverse and inclusive workforce, curriculum and pedagogy.

Follow Jamel on
Twitter: @JamelCarly or
Instagram: @jamel.carly



MESSY PLAY IDEAS

Edible paint: Stick a sheet of plain wallpaper to the floor. Blend a bowl of blueberries for blue, strawberries for red, spinach for green, and mix some corn flour and turmeric for yellow. Then allow children to mark make freely.

Cornflour play: Pour cornflour in a tray then lightly pour water over it a little at a time until it turns gloopy. Add different objects into the cornflour like child-friendly plastic forks, or toy animals and other small world toys.

Bubble play: Purchase a bottle of no tears, sensitive skin bubble bath. Fill a basin, tray or bucket with water then allow children to mix up the bubbles. Add straws, spoons and other toys. If you're feeling adventurous you can add food colouring.

GREAT WAYS TO PLAY on a budget

Fantastic, sustainable resources that won't break the bank...

Balancing buttons

TICKIT NATURAL WOODEN BUTTONS

These wooden buttons are made from smooth solid wood with a natural finish. They're perfect for stacking and balancing, promoting hand-eye coordination, and great for supporting children to develop mathematical language such as "larger", "smaller", "tall", "short", "high", "low".

There are seven buttons in a pack.

£37.99 ex. VAT, hope-education.co.uk



Colourful creations

RAINBOW SHEER FABRIC

Part of the Cosy rainbow range, this strong, translucent and versatile fabric comes in a variety of colours. Children might use this fun rainbow fabric as a canopy for a secret den; a curtain for a cosy reading corner; or a colourful cape for superhero play. There are six rolls in a pack – great value at just over 60p a metre.

£31.99 ex. VAT, cosydirect.com



Count and collage

BRIGHT ASSORTED PASTA SHAPES

A bumper pack of coloured pasta shapes ideal for decorating, collaging or threading during craft sessions. You can also use these assorted shapes to encourage discussion around colour and texture, and to learn maths concepts – sorting, counting and pattern recognition – through play. £5.94 ex. VAT, gompels.co.uk

STACK AND SORT

PASTEL BUILDING BLOCKS

A classic set of building blocks in contemporary colours, this 50-piece set includes a wide variety of shapes to spark creativity. These high-quality blocks promote fine motor skills and hand-eye coordination as children stack, sort and build their creations.

£21.99 ex. VAT, earlyyearsresources.co.uk



MUDDY MIXING

GIANT MUD PIE TOOLS

Perfect for group work, giving plenty of space for multiple children to access mud piles. Wonderful for sparking children's imaginations and a great prompt for speech and language development, and storytelling. Kids will love digging and making mud pies, just like a giant!

£29.99 ex. VAT, cosydirect.com



Perfect pals

TICKIT WOODEN ANIMAL FRIENDS

A beautifully made set of solid beechwood animals, with simple printed features and faux leather detailing. Perfect for encouraging storytelling, developing descriptive language, using fine motor skills, and exploring creativity in small world play.

£21.99, commotion.co.uk



teach
EARLY YEARS
AWARDS
2021
★★★



Rain or shine

WEATHER STONES

Use this set of ten weather stones to inspire weather-themed craft creations with the children or print the stones' weather symbols into dough. They're also perfect for supporting conversations about the weather at different times of year, or to record changes in weather.

£20 ex. VAT, yellow-door.net

NATURAL HABITATS

GARDEN BUGS ROLLERS

With these robust rollers, little learners can discover more about the natural world while developing fine motor skills. Children will love using the detail on each stone to create prints in dough or clay. Why not count the bees on the honeycomb or match the ladybirds to the flowers? The set includes four bugs and their habitats: butterfly, bee, spider and ladybird.

£15 ex. VAT, yellow-door.net



INCLUSIVE PLAY

FRECKLED FROG PEG PEOPLE OF THE WORLD

These high-quality peg people are gender neutral with five skin tones, encouraging diversity and inclusion, and providing an ideal open-ended resource for imaginative small world play.

£19.99 ex. VAT, hope-education.co.uk



Sensory fun

MESSY PLAY ECO GELLI

Turn water into eco-friendly gelli – perfect for sensory play and creative fun as children mould the gelli in different shapes and sizes. Contains 12 sachets of colour powder and 12 sachets of dissolver powder.

£13.32 ex. VAT, gompels.co.uk

Rainbow reflections

SENSORY REFLECTIVE SOUND BUTTONS

These tactile buttons are made from stainless steel with a gold, silver and colourburst finish. Each button's mirrored surface provides a fish-eye lens reflection and different contents produce a range of sound effects – they're sure to fascinate young children.

£18.89 ex. VAT, earlyyearsresources.co.uk



Hands-on maths

Get counting with these fun resources...



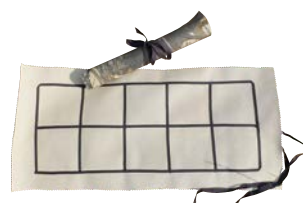
BAMBOO STICKS

Bamboo sticks can be used for counting, mark making, crafting, painting, sensory trays – an ideal natural open-ended resource. Includes 15 bamboo sticks. £3.66 ex. VAT, gompels.co.uk



WOODEN NUMBER DINOSAUR PUZZLE

This bright and engaging jigsaw puzzle offers a fun way to focus on number sequences. Made from rubber wood and hand painted. £20.39 ex. VAT, earlyyearsresources.co.uk



FOREST SCROLL TEN FRAME

This sturdy ten frame made from water resistant cotton canvas is ideal for outdoor maths. £12 ex. VAT, outdoorclassrooms.company.site

More ideas!

Read *How to Recognise and Support Mathematical Mastery in Young Children's Play*, which explores young children's fascination with all things mathematical. £22.99, routledge.com





EMMA DAVIS IS AN EARLY YEARS LECTURER, PHD STUDENT AND FOREST SCHOOL LEADER.

Empowering children to say 'no'

Picture books are a valuable way to open up discussions around autonomy and consent, says Emma Davis...

WE KNOW THAT PICTURE BOOKS have multiple uses, offering more than storytelling. They can act as child-friendly conversation starters, through text or illustrations, giving educators a way to introduce key concepts. An example of this is the subject of body autonomy.

WHAT IS AUTONOMY?

When children develop an understanding of autonomy, they recognise that they are unique, independent and capable. They begin to develop a sense of self, understanding that they are free to express their thoughts and feelings.

In having autonomy over their body, children are empowered to express their own boundaries in relation to touch and are able to say 'no'. This links to the United Nations Conventions on the Rights of the Child, 1989. In particular, Article 12 states that children have the right to express their views, feelings and wishes and that these must be taken seriously.

Similarly, Article 13 enforces the right of expression. As these rights are enshrined in legislation, we have a responsibility to ensure children have the opportunity to have a voice and be heard.

In early years, we can begin to encourage children to have autonomy over their own bodies. It gives them control, building confidence and self-esteem, influencing their personal, social and emotional development.

POSITIVE MESSAGES

We are lucky to be educating and caring for children in a time when so many

books are available to us which promote positive body images and messages. These are a powerful tool in initiating conversation and engaging in talk about our body parts, touch and feelings.

We can use books to help children develop language around their body, perhaps naming body parts, giving them the vocabulary to express themselves, their feelings and preferences.

THE EDUCATOR'S ROLE

As with any book in early years, we need to be able to bring it to life. This might mean using different voices, sound effects or using body language. If we are animated and having fun, children are more likely to engage and focus.

When choosing a book related to body autonomy, remember to ensure that it's relevant and accessible to the children you are reading to. If it's too in depth and wordy, children will disengage. Instead, we want children to be tuned in, interested and ready to ask questions.

During the process of reading, remember to focus on the illustrations as much as the text. Illustrations can prompt rich discussion as children begin to make meaning of them.

You can engage in sustained shared thinking, a valuable strategy in facilitating thought and talk. This is a method of encouraging children to engage, share ideas and discuss their feelings in a way which is open and without the pressure that comes with questions.

For those in the younger age bracket of the EYFS, language might be very simple, with short sentences as well as introducing new words.

Older children will access the books and discussion on a different level, so encourage them to share their thoughts on what's happening, why, how the characters feel and what might happen.

Although books can open up discussions which prompt children to think about their own boundaries, they are also a valuable way of considering how others feel. As we know, all children are unique. They join us in settings with a previous history which we are not always aware of, and will have had different experiences which impact on their holistic learning and development.

In being mindful of this, we can ensure we are taking the feelings of all children into account. Some might be happy with hugs, climbing up on to a lap or holding onto the leg or hand of an adult. Others might feel uncomfortable with touch, whether that be from an adult or another child, and would prefer to be touched on their own terms.

Through our discussions, we can support children to develop the confidence to make their own decisions about touch – we can enable them to experience control, understanding that it is okay to say 'no'. Books can help us instil in children the message that we need to be respectful of the boundaries of others, encouraging them to understand that not everyone is the same.

SELF-EXPRESSION

All children deserve respect and to feel in control of their bodies. However, it's important to point out that expression is more than just verbal communication. Some children

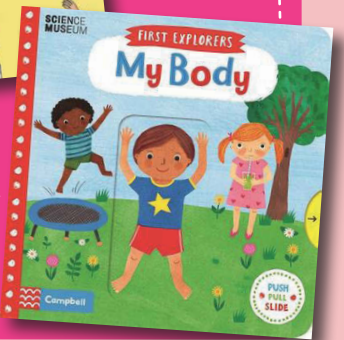


BOOKS TO SHARE



Don't Touch My Hair
by Sharee Miller

First Explorers – My Body
by Rebecca Jones.



in settings will be nonverbal or speak English as an additional language (EAL). These children can still be supported to develop autonomy over their body. The first step in this is in accepting that communication can take many forms.

Just standing back and observing children will illustrate a myriad of ways in which they make their feelings known. As educators, it's our role to ensure all children have a voice. This means tuning in to body language, gestures, facial expressions and changes in behaviour. Young people can tell us so much without even using any words.

The rights of children in relation to body autonomy can be embedded in the culture and ethos of the setting, recognising that children can consent, just as we, as adults, do. Sometimes key concepts, such as this, need to be taught.

The value in promoting body autonomy in early years lies in children feeling respected in relation to their bodies, learning to be respectful to others but also understanding why this is important. In supporting children to understand body autonomy, we can facilitate an environment where they feel safe, heard, valued and accepted.

Emma Davis is an early years lecturer, PHD student and forest school leader. Follow Emma on Twitter: @EmmaDee77



**CHARLOTTE HACKING IS LEARNING PROGRAMMES DIRECTOR
AT THE CENTRE FOR LITERACY IN PRIMARY EDUCATION (CLPE).**

Exploring the world through poetry

*National Poetry Day provides an opportunity to engage children in a love of language and the world around them, says **Charlotte Hacking...***

CHILDREN NATURALLY DELIGHT in song, rhythm and rhyme, which are key building blocks in becoming a reader. In our earliest years, we are introduced to language and reading through the songs and rhymes we hear and join in with; that's where our journey into poetry begins. However, poetry can often be the poor relation in the book corner, library, and even in bookshops. It's a shame when there is a wealth of incredible poems from a range of new and well-established poets, which can support children to build a love of language and reading, as well as developing essential literacy skills.

JOURNEY GAME

The Journey Game by Joseph Coelho provides an excellent way in to natural adult/child interactions focussed on looking at and describing the world. It encourages children to join in with the response in the lines: When you see a tree say...Treetreetree / When you see a cow say...Moomoomoo. After reading the poem, play at making up your own lines with the children. What could you say when you see a bus? A dog? This kind of wordplay introduces children to the shapes and sounds of words, essential precursors to forming, articulating and recognising speech sounds, as well as connecting words with meaning.

The final verse: When you see a cloud say / What'cha doing up there? / What'cha doing up there? / How did ya get so high / High up in the air?, invites adults and children to play at asking questions of objects around them. Choose objects from around you such as a tree, a plant pot – what

would you want to ask them? Children can then experiment with the prosody and phrased expression needed for questioning, modelled by the adult reading aloud the original lines in this way.

ZANY ZOO

Animals in the environment are a popular topic of interest for young children. Zany Zoo by Matt Goodfellow is an engaging counting rhyme that children will love to join in with. The lines offer alliterative descriptions of animals, from the 5 crazy crocodiles, to 2 moody monkeys and 1 fat frog, tuning children in to the sounds of words and developing their early phonological awareness.

Performing and acting out verses will bring the language and its meaning to life

The use of adjectives supports early language development, encouraging detail and description. Can the children think of other animals that could be found in the zoo, and come up with their own alliterative phrases to describe them, like 10 hot hippos? Inviting children to illustrate these will focus them on the meaning of the text, as Krina Patel-Sage's excellent depictions do in the original poem.

BUMBLEBEE AND BUTTERFLY

Encourage the children to take magnifying glasses, spotter's guides and sketching equipment outdoors to hunt for and observe minibeasts. The poems Bumblebee and Butterfly, and Snail by Michael Rosen paint a glorious image of a child taking time to stop and closely look at these creatures in the wild. They introduce descriptive language related to the subjects, like flutter, trail and shell, as well as playing with language through rhyme.

Lines like Bumblebee rumble / Bumblebee tumble / Buzzy bee bumble / Give me apple crumble focus children on the sounds at the ends of words, and show that language can be fun, playful and experimental. Together, explore, investigate and play with rime

patterns for other minibeasts they find, putting them into verses of their own, like: Caterpillar crawl, Caterpillar fall, Caterpillar tall, Roll up into a ball! Performing and acting out verses will bring the language and its meaning to life.

SENSORY PLAY

Sand, water and mud play encourages children to work together, communicate and share, as well as to explore natural elements. The poems Mudlarks, Sand and Water by Shirley

Hughes offer a fabulous opportunity to encourage children to engage with and describe these elements as they play. The poems all open with the phrase I like... and go on to communicate the experience of play through the eyes of a child. Lines like The slippy sloppy, squelchy kind and Stir it up in puddles / slither and slide, engage children in the visceral experience of handling the elements and expand their descriptive vocabulary.

After reading the poems, open up play with mud, sand and water, engaging children in purposeful talk to describe the sensory experiences they go through as part of the play.

CONNECT AND EXPLORE

Part of becoming a writer is being able to activate your imagination, connecting with things you've seen, learned or experienced. Writing is a way of learning about yourself and your connection with the world. Poems like Plane Spotting by Jane Newberry, The Stars by Michael Rosen, The City is Growing and Pigeons by Joseph Coelho and My Shell by Matt Goodfellow, all encourage children to take time out to observe the environment, or a single feature of it.

In an increasingly busy world, with an increasingly fragile environment, this is important.

Poems like these provide children with supportive structures and patterns to compose for

POETRY COLLECTIONS

Essential poetry collections for early years settings, where the poems mentioned can all be found:

- *Blow a Kiss, Catch a Kiss*, Joseph Coelho, illustrated by Nicola Killen (Andersen Press)
- *Caterpillar Cake* by Matt Goodfellow, illustrated by Krina Patel-Sage (Otter-Barry Books)
- *Ready for Spaghetti*, Michael Rosen, illustrated by Polly Dunbar (Walker Books)
- *Out and About*, Shirley Hughes (Walker Books)
- *Big Green Crocodile: Rhymes to Say and Play*, Jane Newberry, illustrated by Carolina Rabei (Otter-Barry Books)

themselves, learning how to describe what they think and feel about elements of the environment. Provide time, space and licence for children to stop, be still and stare, more generally at the world around them, or at objects, elements and creatures within it. Support them in making sense of and describing what they see, and how it makes them feel. Help older learners to choose and use language and structure their thinking, learning from what they have seen and read. Allow them to record these thoughts in words, digitally or on paper, if they wish.

On National Poetry Day and beyond, poetry should be a regular part of a child's experience, not just in the early years, but throughout their lives. It supports the development of language, vocabulary and comprehension. It gives ideas, inspiration and motivation for writing, and most importantly, helps to connect children with the world around them.

CLPE is a National Poetry Day Partner. Find resources for teaching poetry on their website at www.clpe.org.uk

National Poetry Day 2022 takes place on Thursday, 6 October. The theme this year is The Environment.

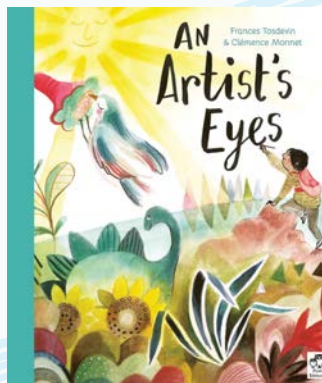
The Book Corner

GREAT TITLES TO SHARE WITH YOUR BUDDING READERS



THE STORY THIEF (Andersen Press, paperback £7.99)

Olive is a shy girl who prefers reading about adventures to having them herself. When returning from the library by boat, one of Olive's library books falls overboard, sinking "down, down, down into the murky depths". A huge octopus finds it and follows the scent of Olive's other library books back to the island where she lives. Gradually, the octopus steals every last book on the island. But he doesn't know what to do with these mysterious objects – "He even tried sleeping on them (which was a disaster)." No one is brave enough to find the Octopus and retrieve the books, except for Olive. She uses all of the things she's learned in stories and decides to go on an adventure! *The Story Thief* features vibrant, striking illustrations, including a pirate ship made of books – "BOOKS AHOY!" – and there are fun details to spot throughout. A humorous and endearing story full of adventure from author/illustrator Graham Carter.



AN ARTIST'S EYES (The Quarto Group, paperback £6.99)

When Mo and Jo go for a walk, Mo sees with an artist's eyes – shades of "dazzling duck-egg blue", "the springy zinginess of moss" and the "pale pastel of primroses". Jo feels frustrated – he desperately wants to see those things, too. As they continue their walk, Mo encourages Jo to trust his own eyes. He soon realises that he can see like an artist in his own unique way – noticing not shades of colour, but patterns, swirls and sparkly squiggles. When they spot some leaves, Mo sees "every shade of autumn"; Jo sees tiny dinosaur footprints! This delightful story, written by Frances Tosdevin and illustrated by Clémence Monnet, is perfect for introducing conversations about how we all see from different perspectives and experience things in our own unique way. *An Artist's Eyes* is about the power of imagination, building confidence, and the beauty of the world around us, offering plenty of scope for discussions and activities with the children at your setting.



OUT TO SEA (Thames & Hudson Ltd, paperback £7.99)

This beautiful story is about riding the waves of grief and coming out the other side. Lara sits in her bedroom missing her Nana, "thinking sad thoughts that had no name or shape". As Lara cries, her tears spill out and fill her bedroom until there's no space left – eventually her tears sweep her out to sea. Lara's grief grows and the sea swirls around her, filling the pages of the book. Stunning illustrations play with darkness and light as Lara is lost in her grief and then finds hope in the form of a glowing pearl. After finding the pearl, Lara notices all of the sea creatures surrounding her and realises that she's not alone after all. With thoughts of light and love, and memories of her nana, Lara heads home. This heartfelt story sensitively explores anxiety and grief, showing that Lara has the strength to find her way back. *Out to Sea*, by award-winning author/illustrator Helen Kellock, was shortlisted for the 2022 Waterstones Children's Book Prize.



ONE TINY DOT

(Templar Publishing, paperback £6.99)

In this feel-good story, KINDNESS begins as one tiny dot. When the dot meets a young boy, his act of kindness causes the dot to grow a little bit bigger. A young girl is kind to the boy, and KINDNESS grows again. We follow an increasing number of characters throughout the book as they walk along, with KINDNESS leading the way. *One Tiny Dot* is an uplifting story that explores the power of kindness – as kindness spreads through the town, the dot grows and grows. This book is also perfect for opening up conversations about different emotions – we meet “an ANGER” that rumbles around like a big thundercloud. As ANGER grows bigger, it turns into flickering flames of fire. “It must be put out, but was kindness enough?” This inspiring rhyming story is written by Lucy Rowland with bright illustrations from Gwen Millward.



THANK YOU FOR THE LITTLE THINGS

(Bloomsbury Children's Books, paperback £6.99)

In this uplifting book, we're taken through the main character's day as she pauses to “say thank you for the little things” that make her smile, from ladybirds and playground swings, to yummy noodles and bubbly baths. *Thank You for the Little Things* is a reassuring and heart-warming story, ideal for sharing with children who may be feeling anxious. It also has a lovely focus on outdoor play: “Thank you mud down by the wood, your squishing squelching feels so good. And thank you puddles BIG and small, an upturned world inside you all”. Written in energetic rhyme by Caryl Hart and featuring bold, engaging illustrations by Emily Hamilton, this book offers a wonderful way to introduce mindfulness – encouraging children and adults alike to stop, look around and notice the little things in life that make us feel happy.



SUNSHINE AT BEDTIME

(Storyhouse Publishing, paperback £7.99)

Introduce science discussions and activities with *Sunshine at Bedtime* (Storyhouse Publishing) written by Clare Helen Welsh and illustrated by Sally Soweol Han.

- Miki thinks the sun has forgotten to go to bed. She calls out, “It’s past your bedtime!” Mummy explains that the sun sets later in the summer. Ask the children at your setting – is it always dark when they go to bed? What do they know about different seasons?

- Dreamlike watercolour illustrations by Sally Soweol Han take us on Miki’s journey as she flies “to all the places the sun shines”. Why not get some paints out and encourage the children to create their own Sunshine at Bedtime pictures?

At the back of the book, there are facts about the Earth spinning, the changing seasons and the passing of a year. For the above activities and more from Clare Helen Welsh, visit tinyurl.com/SunshineBedtime

READ ALL ABOUT IT!

Have you seen these fantastic publications?

Queen of the Classroom

(Sallywag Press Ltd, paperback £7.99)



As MJ gets ready for her first day at school, Mama gives her a tiara – ready to be “Queen of the Classroom”. Mama says that Queens brighten up the room, are caring and kind, and help others. We join MJ as she remembers Mama’s words and helps her classmates throughout the day. An empowering story written by Derrick Barnes and illustrated by Vanessa Brantley-Newton.

The Midnight Fair

(Walker Books, paperback £7.99)



In this wordless book, wild animals break into the funfair at night to have fun on the rides. They clean up as dawn approaches, leaving a few acorns, berries, flowers and leaves as payment. With a whimsical storyline by Gideon Sterer and atmospheric illustrations from Mariachiara Di Giorgio, *The Midnight Fair* is sure to ignite children’s imaginations. Winner of the 2022 Kate Greenaway Shadows’ Choice.

The Boy with Flowers in His Hair

(Walker Books, hardback £12.99)



One day, the petals begin to fall from David’s hair until he loses every last one. David becomes quiet and starts to wear hats, but his best friend finds an inventive way to give David his colour back until his real flowers start to grow again. This heart-warming book is about friendship and kindness, and being there for someone when they’re feeling vulnerable.

Finger Phonics Books



Jolly Phonics

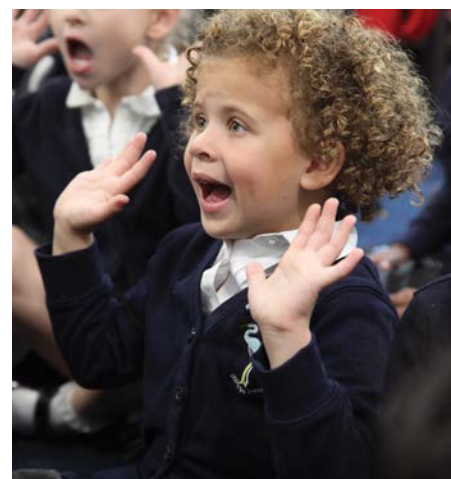
Visit: jollylearning.co.uk

A thoughtfully refreshed version of a key resource in the popular Jolly Phonics programme.

AT A GLANCE

- Part of the DfE-validated Jolly Phonics synthetic phonics programme
- Introduces the sounds used in written and spoken English
- A progressive series of seven books
- Promotes a fun, multi-sensory approach to learning letters and sounds
- Newly upgraded with a fresh look, enhanced feel and new activities

REVIEWED BY MIKE DAVIES



LEARNING TO READ AND WRITE takes quite a few mental leaps. Somehow, young people have to connect the sounds they hear and make with abstract squiggles on a page.

In order to embed those connections, they need all the help they can get. Of course, a number of phonics programmes are available. Not all of them, however, explicitly include a tactile dimension. That is where, if you'll excuse the pun, Jolly Phonics makes more sense of this complex learning challenge.

Jolly Phonics is a world-leading English literacy method based on the teaching of synthetic phonics. It is also one of the most well established.

One of the key elements of the Jolly Phonics programme is the Finger Phonics series of books. These have been created to introduce young children to the 42 sounds of spoken English rather than just the letters of the alphabet. These phonemes are then linked to their relevant graphemes, whether they are single letters or digraphs such as ie, ch and er.

Over seven, durable, board books, this series explores these letter sounds

one at a time. For each sound, there is a double-page spread consisting of a large, engaging image containing many objects that feature the target sound. The idea is that the pupil listens to those words being read aloud, then finds those objects within the picture.

The sensory part comes in the suggested hand actions that accompany each sound. The relevant grapheme is also depicted, showing where your pencil would start and stop when writing it. Small details can make all the difference, though, so I was particularly taken with the way each grapheme has been debossed within the page, creating a groove to keep little fingers on track. I can think of many children for whom this clever little feature would be a massive help.

This is just one way in which the new edition of the Finger Phonics series represents much more than just a makeover. The refreshed artwork gives these books an attractive, modern look and there are updated activities at the end of each one. Furthermore, the group of letter sounds covered by each book has been colour-coded to align with other Jolly Phonics resources.

It's great to see a product upgraded so thoughtfully. I suspect even existing fans of Jolly Phonics will want to get their hands on a set.

THE VERDICT

- Thoughtfully updated and refreshed
- Robust, durable books
- Attractively presented
- Dedicated double-page per sound
- Promotes kinaesthetic learning

UPGRADE IF...

... you want to give your pupils a more engaging, multi-sensory introduction to the graphemes and phonemes of written and spoken English.

£46.55 per set of seven Finger Phonics books.
www.jollylearning.co.uk

Baarmy Bethlehem Nativity

Visit: outoftheark.co.uk

A fun and lively new nativity show for younger children from Out of the Ark.



Out of the Ark Music

AT A GLANCE

- An entertaining, crowd-pleasing musical nativity
- Detailed book including script, lyrics, music, tips and instructions
- Easy-to-learn songs with backing tracks
- Suitable for children aged 3-6

REVIEW BY MIKE DAVIES



EVER SINCE ST FRANCIS OF ASSISI introduced the nativity scene as we know it in 1223, it has remained a key feature of Christmas celebrations. As a result, nativity shows have become a much-loved tradition.

For parents and children alike, they often mark the moment when the festive season really kicks off. Expectations are high, which, in turn, places great pressure on those charged with putting on these productions.

For the early years teacher, this poses two main problems: first, finding a new spin on a very familiar tale and, second, having a script and score that young minds can cope with. Fortunately, the experienced school-show-writers at Out of the Ark have come up with a very enjoyable solution, titled “Baarmy Bethlehem”.

When it comes to setting the mood, there are probably two approaches for nativities: reverence or exuberance. Baarmy Bethlehem unapologetically opts for the latter. This lively and jolly jaunt through the Christmas story skips along as playfully as a lamb. And no wonder: its main characters are three irrepressible party animals – a trio of sheep named Rascal, Cheeky and Scamp.

As the story gambols through all the essential nativity elements – star, shepherds, wise men and so on – all that our ovine heroes really care about is having a noisy party. After the requisite moment of solemnity around the crib, the sheep get their wish.

As those familiar with Out of the Ark would expect, the script is very well pitched for the target age-group. What’s more, it is punctuated with a selection of charming songs, specially written for the show. “Bethlehem is Barmy Tonight!” gets the production off to a wonderfully lively start but I think the real show stealer will be “Baa Baa Boogie”, especially when the cast gets wiggling.

Creative content aside, it’s the care that Out of the Ark put into practical considerations that always impresses me. As ever, there is a flexible range of speaking and non-speaking parts so that all children, regardless of ability, can enjoy their moment in the spotlight. They even have parts for budding percussionists to provide sound effects.

Teachers will also welcome all the extra guidance, such as costume, staging and prop suggestions. And, of course, there’s a CD of all the music to help with both learning and performing

the songs. In fact, there’s everything you need to make this year’s nativity a resounding success.

THE VERDICT

- Well-pitched, humorous script
- Simple, catchy songs
- Range of speaking, non-speaking and percussion parts
- Reduces the stress of staging a nativity

UPGRADE IF...

...you’re looking to stage an upbeat spin on the traditional nativity that is tailored to the needs and abilities of younger children.

RRP £22.95 for book and CD. Other options are available to view online. Performance licence £19.80. www.outoftheark.co.uk

Childcare & Education Expo

Childcare & Education Expo returns to the Midlands at Coventry Building Society Arena from 23 to 24 September 2022 – the home of early years and primary education inspiration. With special guests, interactive workshops, panel discussions, seminars and activity zones, what more could you want? Explore the exhibition and shopping village to discover new products and services that can be put to the test! Take advantage of networking opportunities with like-minded childcare professionals. Can't make it? Don't worry! Childcare & Education Expo will also be at Olympia London from 3 to 4 March 2023. Discover more and register for free – childcareeducationexpo.co.uk or email info@childcareeducationexpo.co.uk



HAVE YOU

TEY's look at the latest early years tools, toys, books and activities...

Seeh...

Outdoor ideas

Time outside is crucial to early development – it gives young, growing children access to one of the most enriching environments in which to access key areas of learning, from language, literacy and mathematics, to PSED, physical development and understanding the world. Timotay Playscapes has a free inspiration guide to outdoor play spaces and play equipment, packed with innovative and engaging educational ideas, which can help you bring your outdoor space to life. For your copy, email enquiries@timotayplayscapes.co.uk or call **01933 665 151**.



MARGOT AND THE MAGICAL PLANT

Follow Margot's exciting plant adventure and watch as the mystery seeds grow and change along the way – as if by magic! You can even finish the story with a photograph of your very own magical plant. Getting children excited about gardening has plenty of benefits. It's not only fun, but can also strengthen their connection to food, help them eat more vegetables and set them up with a healthy hobby for life. *Margot and the Magical Plant* is written by Jane Rhodes and illustrated by David Gregory. To find out more, visit margotmagicalplant.com



CONNECT WITH THE COMMUNITY

The Schools & Academies Show will return to NEC, Birmingham on 17 November, bringing the education community together to connect, network with like-minded peers and discuss the latest sector developments. As the UK's leading education policy event, this is a fantastic opportunity for attendees to source solutions for their schools, gain best practice insights, meet innovative education suppliers and hear directly from the most influential policy and decision-makers in education. Visit schoolsandacademiesshow.co.uk



LOST PROPERTY SOLUTION

My Nametags is a fun and colourful solution to help end lost property in schools and nurseries. With personalised labels, the parents of children in your class will be able to label everything, from clothing, to toys and bottles. Nothing gets lost or mixed up again! My Nametags' labels are high quality, durable and dishwasher, washing machine, sterilisation and microwave safe. And while your nursery is decreasing lost property, they can boost their funds too! To learn about the My Nametags fundraising scheme, visit MyNametags.com



AN OUTDOOR KIT THAT DOES GOOD

Spotty Otter designs high-performance outdoor clothing for children. As well as being a great choice for outdoor learning settings, every purchase from Spotty Otter's Forest collections supports UK National Parks. As a company besotted with the great outdoors, Spotty Otter loves the UK's 15 National Parks and donates 15% of all profits from their Forest clothing and footwear ranges to the UK National Parks Foundation. This goes towards protecting and enhancing the Parks, and running programmes and activities to help people and communities discover and enjoy them. Visit spottyotter.co.uk/teach



Digital literacy tool

Polyino is a market-leading online literacy tool from Sweden. The user-friendly digital solution provides instant access to hundreds of books, selected by children's literature expert Jake Hope, and aligned to the EYFS Framework. As all the books can be listened to in English and many can be listened to in over 60 languages, it consistently receives excellent feedback from practitioners looking to include all children at storytime, including children with learning differences and children with English as an additional language (EAL). Visit polyino.co.uk for more information.

educational
advantage



People, Culture

and Communities

Discover our range of sustainably sourced, open-ended wooden resources that will seamlessly integrate into the **Understanding the World** framework. Immerse these resources into small world and imaginative play and use them as teaching tools!



HE1674905

Children of the World

Helps children learn acceptance of different cultures, languages, families, appearances and lifestyles.



Our Community Wooden Blocks

Features people from a range of ethnic backgrounds and professions who are found in our communities.



HE1674903

Homes Around the World

Encourage discussion about inclusion and communities representing different cultures of homes around the world.



The Natural World



Seasons Trees

A must for all small world creative playsets! Perfectly illustrates the effects the seasons have on both evergreen and deciduous trees.



Life Cycle Wooden Blocks

Different size blocks aid children in deciding the order of the life cycle stages of a moth, butterfly, chicken and frog.

AVAILABLE FROM **HOPE**

Hope Education, Findel House,
Gregory Street, Hyde, Cheshire, SK14 4HR
www.hope-education.co.uk

NURSERY BUSINESS

Practical support and comment for owners and managers of early years settings...



Have you seen our Brilliant Teacher Box Sets? Get free CPD sent to your inbox, including 56 top tips from Kathy Brodie – sign up at teachwire.net/free-teacher-cpd



This issue...

62 OUR SUSTAINABLE JOURNEY

It doesn't work to frighten people; choose what you're passionate about to tackle sustainability, says Cheryl Hadland...

65 WORLD'S WORST BOSS

Advice on how NOT to manage in early years, from James Hemsall...

66 SHIFTING CULTURE AND ETHOS

Kelly Hawker and Simon Wright from Cherry Garden School share their journey into anti-racist practice...

69 FINANCIAL PLANNING

Theresa Johnson shares advice on making your business sustainable...

70 Q&A: LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT

Fiona Bland answers questions on how to promote early language skills...

72 UDESKOLE QUALIFICATION

Rhiannon Scott tells how a Danish nursery in the forest inspired a whole new way of life for Kids Planet nurseries...



CHERYL HADLAND IS THE FOUNDER AND MD OF TOPS DAY NURSERIES.

TOPS DAY NURSERIES: *Our sustainable journey*

Everyone's sustainability journey is different. For me, it's personal – I'm a scuba diver as well as a mum and grandparent. During a scuba dive one day, I saw so much rubbish under water. I realised that if we carry on the way we're going, my children, grandchildren and nursery children won't get to see the things I've already seen.

If your drive for sustainability comes from passion, you've got a better chance of getting not only yourself engaged, but also your friends, colleagues, families – everybody.

It doesn't work to frighten people, but it does help to tap into what's important to others. It might be that a member of staff is asthmatic, in which case you could look together at air pollution – what would help to clean your air inside the nursery? How can you stop parents idling their cars outside?

Escalating costs

Another angle to look at is reducing energy consumption to bring down your utility bills, particularly at the moment when costs are escalating. If we don't do what we can to control these, our whole finances are affected.

With my financial director, we do metre readings on electricity, gas and water. You can cut 20 to 30% off those bills by finding out where the high spots are – where and why are you clocking up so much money?

It might be that someone



400 million

THE APPROXIMATE AMOUNT OF PLASTIC WASTE PRODUCED EVERY YEAR.

SOURCE: UN Environment Programme

turns the thermostat timer off when they're cold. We found out that one nursery had the air conditioning on, windows open and the heating on, all in the same day. It was just because one member of staff was hot and another was cold. As well as providing guidance to staff, you can use window sensors that turn off air conditioning if a window is left open.

Insulating is crucial. We have butcher curtains on the doors so that children can go to and from the garden whenever they like, but we're not heating the whole of Hampshire at the same time.

Different settings will be on a different part of their sustainability journey, and some will have a longer journey than others. One of our nurseries is in an old Victorian building, but I was able to insulate it, put solar panels on the roof and put a car charger on it so we could charge our vehicles.



Working efficiently

We deliver our washable laundry by vehicle and have a central laundry with economic washing machines and drying cabinets. We then transport the clean laundry to our nurseries using electric cars.

It's the same with our catering: we have a central kitchen with a really good chef who prepares freshly cooked food, and we drive meals out to the local five or six nurseries every day. You don't have to do that if you have a large nursery, but when you have a few little ones, it's efficient and works really well.

Impacting the planet

We're passionate about reducing our environmental impact across all of our nurseries and have been working on our sustainability journey for 12 years now. The advantage of having a fairly big team is that we have a range of interests and can attack sustainability from the many different directions there are. But one thing I know is that you can't attack all of it at once.

If we all do little things, we can make a big difference. Try to think, "If I carry on doing this particular activity for the next 20 years, will it negatively impact on the planet?" And if it will, do something different.

Don't use plastic pom-poms or balloons when you can use hole-punched leaves or petals. Build relationships with local businesses – will your local florist let you have flowers that they can't sell anymore? Walk to your local shop if you've got one and ask what they do with their waste products. Can you help in any way? Those local relationships can be really important.

Some members of staff might be great at planting and growing. Even if you're not green-fingered, just about anybody can grow cress with the children or grow spider plants – they only need watering once or twice a week and can really help clean the room from toxins.

Can you take part in litter picks? When you've picked up rubbish, have a look at who made the product.

“When it comes to sustainable resources, the trick is to talk to suppliers and keep asking”

Write to those people and say, "We're finding your rubbish on the streets, what are you going to do about it?" If one person does that, big deal, but if lots of nurseries and schools all around

the country did that, perhaps people would listen.

We can't do it all. Choose what you're passionate about and role model it. And hopefully someone else in the team will have ideas about an area of sustainability that they care about, too.

If you don't ask...

When it comes to sustainable resources, the trick is to talk to suppliers and keep asking. Sometimes they can't make changes straight away; it might even be over a couple of years. For example, our toilet paper was being delivered in plastic, inside a cardboard box. I said to the consortium, "Ideally, we don't want the plastic bag, but we certainly don't need a plastic bag and a cardboard box." They couldn't get rid of it straight away, but in the end, they did drop the plastic. We didn't stop all relationships just because they couldn't do that immediately.

Meetings with suppliers are a wonderful opportunity to ask those questions: "What's your CSER (Corporate Social Environmental Responsibility) policy?", "What are you doing about one-use plastic?", or "Can you please mark the carbon footprint of your products in your catalogue?"

Gompels and a few other suppliers are beginning to state the carbon footprint of their products. Cosy makes a lot of its resources from recycled materials and uses local suppliers. Bambino Mio makes reusable nappies. So, people are on the sustainability journey.

Sustainable activities

Consider some sustainable activities that you can do with the children, too. They'll love filling up the compost bin or sorting food waste for the wormery.

Do the recycling with the children, rinse out the milk bottles with them, plant fruit and veg, create a bug

IN PRACTICE

There are many things we do on a day-to-day basis to ensure we are being sustainable in practice.

- Try reusable nappies - Each child at nursery uses around 1,000 nappies per year (full-time equivalent) which is costly for parents and the environment.
- Use natural resources - Not only are they environmentally friendly, but they are often much more interesting to toddlers than plastic toys.
- Taste home-grown goodness - children love growing herbs and vegetables, and get to taste their own produce.
- Switch to food composting - children love filling up the compost bin or sorting food waste for the wormery.

For more information and ideas, visit tinyurl.com/sustainabilitypractice

hotel, put up a bird box. It's all part of providing sustainable education.

Parents are definitely choosing us because our nurseries are sustainable and they want their child to be healthy and happy in 50 years' time. Staff are proud to be working for an organisation that cares – we care about the environment, we care about people, and that makes us a nicer place to work.

Lots of nurseries are very short-staffed and people are going to higher-paid jobs in retail. But in childcare, we can really make a difference for the children – not just in our lifetime, but for the children's futures.

Cheryl Hadland is the founder of Tops Day Nurseries and author of *Creating an Eco-Friendly Early Years Setting: A Practical Guide* (Routledge).

Tops Day Nurseries was recently awarded a Queen's Award for Enterprise in Sustainable Development, for providing inspiration and driving change in the early years sector. Follow them on Twitter @topsdaynursery



FIND OUT MORE:
www.spottyotter.co.uk/teach

Kids Waterproof Clothing & Footwear

“Having used the Spotty Otter range at Foresteers Outdoor Preschool for 3 years I can honestly say they are fab! Durable, adaptable fit, easy to clean, waterproof and adventure ready I think they are a must have for a Forest School”

Hayley, Foresteers Outdoor Preschool

f t i
@spottyotter



SCHOOL STORAGE

BiGDUG's shelving and storage helps you stay organised.

The trusted experts in space utilisation.

See our full range of Gratnells Trays online.



BiGDUG®

WWW.BIGDUG.CO.UK

0333 200 5295

World's worst boss

How NOT to manage in early years

In a change of tack this issue, I've ditched the approach of sharing advice on best practice in leadership and management. Instead I've decided to focus on what you'd need to do to be the worst boss ever. These ideas can really help you by looking at things from an alternative, negative perspective – trust me, it works. How many of the following traits do you recognise in others and, perhaps, in yourself once in a while? Don't blame yourself, but use this as a learning experience and make changes if they need to happen. So, deep breath, here is the leaders' job description from hell...

Nitpicking and oversharing

Firstly, make sure that no decision is allowed to be made without your direct input, even if your view changes like the wind. One day you want one thing, the next (maybe because you forgot what you said yesterday) you prefer another option. Don't allow anyone in the team to decide for themselves at whatever cost.

Never make the mistake of giving feedback, whether positive or negative. Stay silent at all times and keep people speculating. Force everyone to second guess your body language, or to attempt to analyse 'how' you said things, rather than 'what' you said.

Never fail to miss an opportunity to correct even the smallest mistakes. I mean, how could someone not notice that misplaced apostrophe in

that 5,000-word report? Even if you're happy with things, make sure there is always something you can express your disappointment about. Develop a culture where nothing is right.

Always be unreliable when it comes to time management – be late, be early, generally never be on time. Don't wear a watch. Bring deadlines forward at a moment's notice. Set deadlines, then forget about them – and leave all of that hard work hanging. Be predictable in your unpredictability.

Build a barrier around yourself that makes you unapproachable and makes everyone around you think you are too busy to be interested in them or their work. You are much more important than anything and anyone else, after all.

Create a boundary-less culture and expect everyone else to be the same. Over share your personal and professional dilemmas.

Ask too much of colleagues and don't respect their privacy, private lives or timetables. Ask them to work early, over the weekend or



79%

WORKERS WHO REPORT A GOOD RELATIONSHIP WITH THEIR BOSS

SOURCE: CPID

when they've booked holidays. Invade people's personal and professional spaces at work, at home, online, on social media and on the phone. Email people at all times of the day and night, and expect an immediate reply. And never, ever say sorry. Why should you? What have you got to be sorry about anyway?

Follow all this advice and you will achieve the status of becoming one of the worst people to work with. And in reward, you will find plenty of opportunities to be working on your own, and then you can do what you like for a while, although perhaps not for long. Alternatively, do none of this and become a pleasure to work with.

James Hemsall
OBE is director of Hemsall's training, research and consultancy. Visit hemsalls.com or follow on Twitter: [@jhemsall](https://twitter.com/jhemsall)



Train Online



GET SCHOOL-READY WITH MUSIC

Have fun and learn with 25 catchy songs to boost listening and speaking skills in line with the UK's phonics guidance Letters and Sounds Phase One. Boogie Mites' School Ready Programme will boost children's phonological awareness, confidence, physical coordination and social and emotional skills. With songs about lions, trains, banging drums and shaking shakers, there is plenty to keep pre-schoolers engaged.

Find out more

Boogie Mites' School Ready Practitioner Pack includes everything you need to deliver engaging music activities as part of your daily schedule. This includes songs, training videos linking each song to Letters and Sounds Phase One and EYFS, videos of songs in action in a setting and teacher notes to support your planning. This self-paced online training starts at £216. Visit boogiemites.co.uk



KELLY HAWKER IS THE HEADTEACHER AT CHERRY GARDEN SCHOOL.

“You have to be prepared for difficult conversations”

Cherry Garden School is an outstanding special school for pupils aged 2-11 years, who have severe learning differences. The leadership team have worked closely with trainer and consultant Liz Pemberton to begin their anti-racist journey. Here, headteacher Kelly Hawker and Assistant Headteacher Simon Wright from Cherry Garden School share their journey into anti-racist practice.

“I attended a free webinar that Liz was running through Tapestry”, says Simon. “Some of the things she talked about felt relevant for us, and so I met Liz in person after being introduced to her by Stephen Kilgour (SEND Advisor and Outreach Teacher for Tapestry). She then visited the school and really took time to understand Cherry Garden.”

BRIDGING THE GAP

“We didn’t want to create an action plan,” explains Simon. “The problem with action plans is that you complete them and then say, ‘Okay, we’re done now’. With work around anti-racism, you can never say, ‘We’re finished, we’ve achieved it’.

“There are 85 children and 80 staff at Cherry Garden – 165 people in this building and everyone’s life experiences are incredibly different. The range of cultural and religious backgrounds is vast.

“The long-term aim for us is that when people walk through the door, they feel completely comfortable to be who they are and don’t feel they need to keep quiet about anything,” adds Simon. “We’ve

found that people are more open since we began our anti-racist journey – we’re having better conversations.

“One of the challenges we had, which you have in every setting, is that there was a gap to bridge between our leadership team and our wider staff team. We’ve found that staff now feel more comfortable to come and speak to us and share their thoughts and ideas.

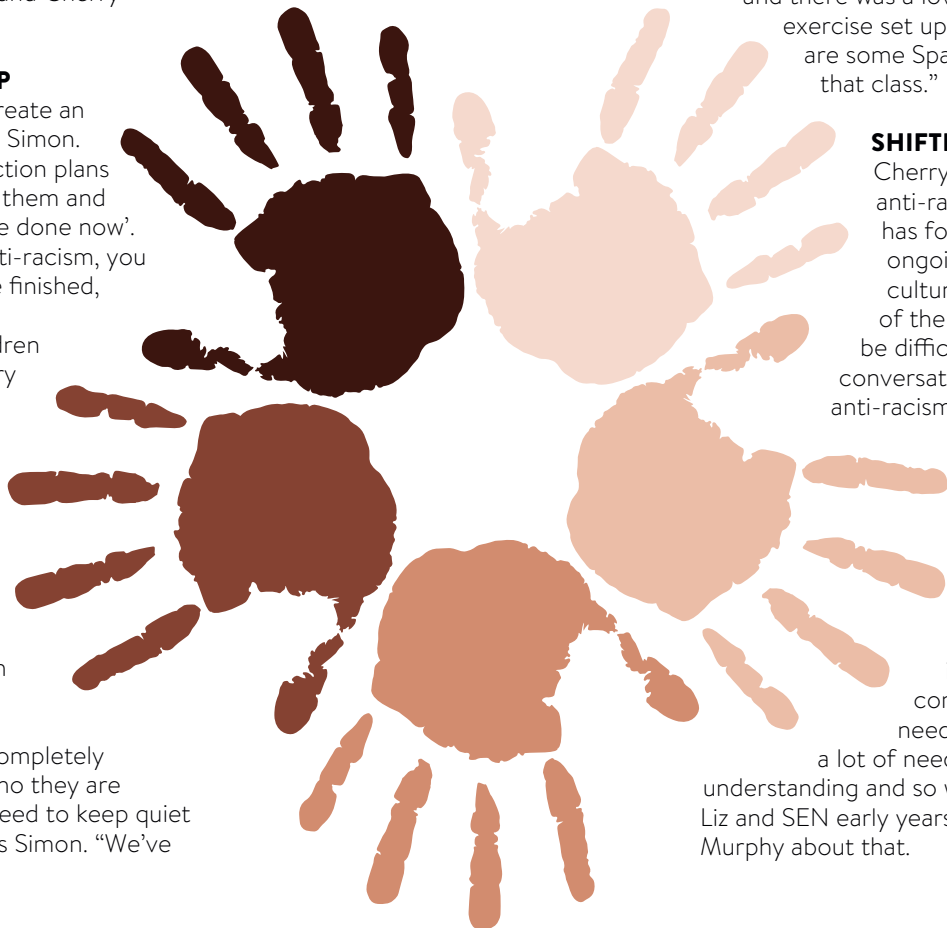
“As an example, lots of our staff and pupils celebrate Eid, so it’s a big event here. Quite a few members of staff were really forthcoming this year with ideas and ways we could celebrate. I think in the past we would’ve guessed and maybe got it wrong. That’s where you can get yourself into difficulty.”

It’s really important that we teach and model anti-racism. We owe it to children up and down the country

The staff at Cherry Garden consider carefully whether to explore a subject or celebration as a whole school, as part of an assembly, or as a class activity, explains Simon: “At the moment, our teachers are looking at individual countries each week, focusing on the countries their children are from. I just went into a classroom and there was a lovely Spanish exercise set up, because there are some Spanish children in that class.”

SHIFTING CULTURE

Cherry Garden’s anti-racism work has focussed on an ongoing shift in the culture and ethos of the school. “It can be difficult to have conversations around anti-racism directly with our pupils because you have to pitch it at the right level. The children here have learning differences, including communication needs. There’s a lot of need around understanding and so we’ve talked with Liz and SEN early years leader Kerry Murphy about that.





SIMON WRIGHT IS THE ASSISTANT HEADTEACHER AT CHERRY GARDEN SCHOOL.

“If our culture’s right, it naturally affects how we communicate with the children and what we deliver – from thinking about assemblies and the way we set up classrooms, to lots of play activities focussing on particular countries or cultures.”

Kelly and Simon have also reflected on how they communicate with parents and carers. “Our staff really care about and understand the pupils, and we now have more of an understanding of their families, too. “Kelly and I have that level of white privilege, which I’d never considered before I met Liz – and now I think about it a lot in school. I can’t put myself in the shoes of our parents and carers, for lots of reasons – I’m not a parent, I’m not a parent of children with learning differences and I’m white British, so there are different factors that mean I can never fully understand what it’s like for them. But at the same time, we now have more of an open door and we’ve thought a lot about parent/carer engagement.

“For example, we’ve been looking at our home visit process for new children. We’ve always perceived that to be a really nice, supportive way to introduce ourselves. However, some parents/carers might find our visits intrusive.

“Previously, we would ask a lot of questions about the child – how their child eats and drinks, how they do things. It’s useful knowledge for us, but the parent might feel that we’re judging them if they say they feed their child. We’re not. We totally get it – some parents do just need to feed their child and that’s fine. We’re just asking so we know what to expect in September. But on reflection, we can work that out on the first day. You can tell if a child’s usually fed, because they’ll wait for you to feed them.

“We want to reframe home visits as being an optional chance for families to meet staff and ask us questions. We understand that for six hours a day, families are handing over their extremely vulnerable child to us, and we want them to know their child is going to be safe and they’re going to be okay.

“We’re also planning to intersperse our virtual school tour with staff speaking about our setting and

explaining things. For some parents, English is their second language, so having a video to watch may be more helpful than us telling them everything in one go during home visits.”

FRANK CONVERSATIONS

Cherry Garden’s anti-racist journey involves continual reflection on their practice. “At times, I’ve thought, ‘We’ve got this badly wrong, we’ve made a mess here’,”, says Simon. “But when we reflect and speak about it with Liz, we haven’t. We’ve reached the point where we are having these really good conversations and we’ve come a long way.”

“You have to be prepared for difficult conversations,” says Kelly, “particularly at the start of your anti-racism journey. You have to be open to feeling quite awkward and thinking, ‘I didn’t know that? Why don’t I know that? Okay, fine – I know it now. So, what can we do about it?’”

Simon agrees, “As a leadership team, you have to hear things you don’t like hearing about your school, because everyone sees their own setting through rose tinted glasses. There’s a level of uncomfortableness, but that’s so important because that’s how you get out the other side.”

GETTING IT WRONG

“We’re always learning and we don’t always get things right,” Simon tells us. “But we’re human – we make mistakes and we learn from them. Admitting that and moving forward is really important.

“I feel strongly that work around anti-racist practice is what the sector needs. We know Liz well for her work in the early years sector, but it’s not just the early years; the whole education sector needs anti-racism work. I know there are some schools that aren’t ready for that yet, but wherever your school is, in whatever part of the UK, this is relevant because it’s a massive global issue.

“When I moved to London, I was 25 and had been brought up in a very white British background,” says Simon. “I went to a very white British school. I’ve learned more in my six years at Cherry Garden by far than in my previous 25 years of life. It’s really important that we teach and model anti-racism. We owe it to children up and down the country.”

THE FOUR E’S OF ANTI-RACIST PRACTICE

- **Embrace** all children’s racial, cultural and religious backgrounds, especially when they differ from your own.
- **Embed** a culture of belonging and value amongst practitioners and children.
- **Ensure** that your practice is culturally sensitive and places the child as the expert of their cultural, racial and religious identity.
- **Extend** learning opportunities for the child by showing interest, expanding conversations and using diverse resources.

By Liz Pemberton,
theblacknurserymanager.com

POSITIVE IMPACTS

“Anti-racism needs to be embedded in education settings,” says Kelly. “It isn’t tick box statutory training or a standalone training session. It’s about a cultural shift.”

“The impact on our school has been phenomenal in what has been a fairly short space of time,” Simon tells us. “It’s had a really positive effect on wellbeing, and children are exposed to a much broader curriculum now.”

“The staff feel empowered,” adds Kelly. “And if you have happy staff, you have happy children – it’s a continuous circle.

“It’s now about how we continue that journey year after year. I don’t quite know exactly where we’re heading next with our anti-racist journey; I just know that we’re in a much better place.”



To find out more about
Cherry Garden, visit
cherrygardenschool.co.uk,
Follow Cherry Garden on Twitter
[@cherrygdnschool](https://twitter.com/cherrygdnschool) or Instagram
[@cherrygardensch](https://www.instagram.com/cherrygardensch)
For more information about
Liz Pemberton’s anti-racist
training and consultancy, visit
theblacknurserymanager.com
or follow Liz on Instagram:
[@theblacknurserymanager](https://www.instagram.com/theblacknurserymanager)

SUBSCRIBE TO

PAY ONLY

£9.18

for the year!*



GREAT REASONS TO SUBSCRIBE!

Subscribers to Teach Early Years receive:

- ✓ 2 Issues a year
- ✓ **Outstanding Advice**
- ✓ Activity Ideas
- ✓ **Management Support**
- ✓ News & Views



“The first five years of a child’s life are crucial, and we understand the important role you play in nurturing their health, learning and development. Teach Early Years is here to support everyone committed to giving young children the best start in life.”

Michelle Tempest, TEY Editor

BEST PRACTICE TIPS FROM EARLY YEARS EXPERTS

Each issue we share easily implementable ideas that will help you boost your children’s development and wow the inspectors when Ofsted comes to call.

A DEDICATED NURSERY BUSINESS SECTION

Owners and managers will find everything they need to run an outstanding setting here – from lessons in leadership and HR, to advice on cost-effective marketing and CPD.

CREATIVE ACTIVITIES THAT SPAN THE EYFS

For a bottomless well of hands-on learning ideas, look no further. Teach Early Years is always packed with practical suggestions to grab your children’s interest and develop their skills.

INSIDE ENGLAND’S LEADING SETTINGS

Looking for inspiration? We visit the country’s most successful nurseries, preschools and Reception classes to reveal what makes them tick.

2 EASY 2 WAYS to subscribe...

1 www.teachearlyyears.com/subscribe

2 **0800 904 7000**
PLEASE QUOTE 2112

2 issues FOR JUST £9.18*

Lines are open Monday-Friday 8am-8pm

*Terms and conditions apply, see online for details



TERESA JOHNSON IS HEAD OF PARTNERSHIPS AT PACEY.

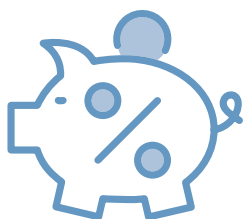
FINANCIAL PLANNING

Making your business sustainable

All businesses need some form of budget and financial plan to track income and outgoings along with a plan for the future – and childcare and early years businesses of all sizes are no different. Understandably, many people are concerned about how to sustain and grow a business in the current financial climate. Respondents to a recent PACEY survey said that the increased cost of living is currently having the most significant impact on their mental health and wellbeing.

Keep it simple

Sometimes it can help to go back to basics to see where savings – or opportunities to increase income – can be found. Build your business budget plan by gathering your most recent bank statements, bills, receipts and other payments, including invoices from your childcare clients. Keeping track of your income and outgoings – and making sure you've collected all the monies owing to you – will help you identify any areas where you could make savings by cutting back on non-essential spending. There are plenty of free budget templates available online, or you may choose to use managing accounts and tools specifically designed for early years and childcare businesses.



23%

Adults reporting it's difficult to pay usual bills

SOURCE: ONS.GOV.UK



Budgeting for providers

All practitioners will take a different approach to budgeting based on their own circumstances and setting, so there is no 'one size fits all' solution. Annette, a PACEY member and childminder based in London, says "I have attended many business planning and budgeting courses for childminders over the years and I still fall back to a simple principle. For every pound received, a quarter is allocated to expenses, another quarter to HMRC and National Insurance contributions and the remaining half is my 'wage'. It is then quick and simple to adjust this on a monthly basis due to fluctuations and changes in income or outgoings."

Self-employed providers, like childminders and some nannies, are unlikely to be entitled to employee benefits such as sick pay, so it is essential to consider how to incorporate a contingency to cover any unexpected drops in income. Annette says, "Ideally some money is put aside to cover circumstances such as unplanned closures, a family giving notice or replacement of essential equipment."

Maintaining business resilience

Increasing hourly rates to accommodate rising costs can sometimes feel like a point of challenge between provider and parent, but it needn't be. PACEY always

encourages settings to be confident in making justifiable increases according to factors like cost of resources, outdoor visits, staff training and salary increases. It is essential to maintain open communication with parents and allow them enough notice of increases to plan ahead. An annual increment, for example, would be easier to communicate and plan for.

What help is out there?

There is financial support out there to help people who are struggling, if you know where to look. You might be eligible to claim or increase your benefits or approach your local council for support through various funding streams. You could also speak to your bank, and the companies in charge of your bills and insurance to see if there are payment plans they can suggest to help manage rising costs.

If your budget indicates you have less coming in than going out each month, you are in deficit and at risk of falling into debt. Organisations such as The Money Advice Service, National Debtline, StepChange and Citizen's Advice offer free independent debt advice to help you get back on track.

Specific support

The government in England recently hinted at possible funding for childminders as part of their plans to support the sector and 'make it easier to be a childminder'. While we have not had any confirmation of what these plans are, PACEY has long been urging the government to put in place financial support for new and existing practitioners to counteract the underfunding, low pay and financial worries that so many are dealing with.

PACEY provides training, practical help and expert advice to early years professionals. As a member you can get Money Worries resources and free finance training, plus other exclusive offers. Visit pacey.org.uk



FIONA BLAND IS AN EARLY YEARS ADVISER AT NDNA.

Q&A:

Language development

Why focus on children's language acquisition?

A child's earliest years are critical for developing the skills they need for future success. In the early years, language and communication skills underpin all other areas of learning and development. They are fundamental skills used to identify and express feelings, share thoughts and ideas, socialise and make friends, and take part in everyday society. Research tells us that a child's language development at the age of two years can predict their performance on entry to primary school and their future educational success. It also tells us that by the age of five, 75% of children who experienced poverty persistently throughout the early years are below average in language development, compared to 35% of children who never experienced poverty, and that up to 50% of children starting school in the most disadvantaged areas will have speech, language and communication needs (tinyurl.com/communication-trust).

We also know that there can be significant differences in the quality of language children are exposed to in their home environment.

Has the pandemic affected children's language development?

A When children experienced isolation through lockdowns and restrictions, they were unable to interact with a range of people, and crucially other children, which has had a significant impact on their communication and language development. Other contributing factors included increased screen time, reduced attendance at early years settings and, in some cases, greater parental stress and anxiety. Some children flourished due to an improved quality and quantity of parent involvement, while other children's opportunities declined.

According to another study, the proportion of children reaching their expected levels of development in language, literacy and numeracy dropped from 72% in 2019 to 59% in 2021 (tinyurl.com/EEF-study).

“A child's language development at the age of two years can predict their performance on entry to primary school”

what they hear with what they are seeing and doing and is excellent for supporting them to understand and use action words such as 'pouring', 'feeding', 'washing'. Providing experiences linked to children's interests (found out by talking to families) is particularly valuable for children. Try and give young people opportunities to share their cultural knowledge and experience, too.

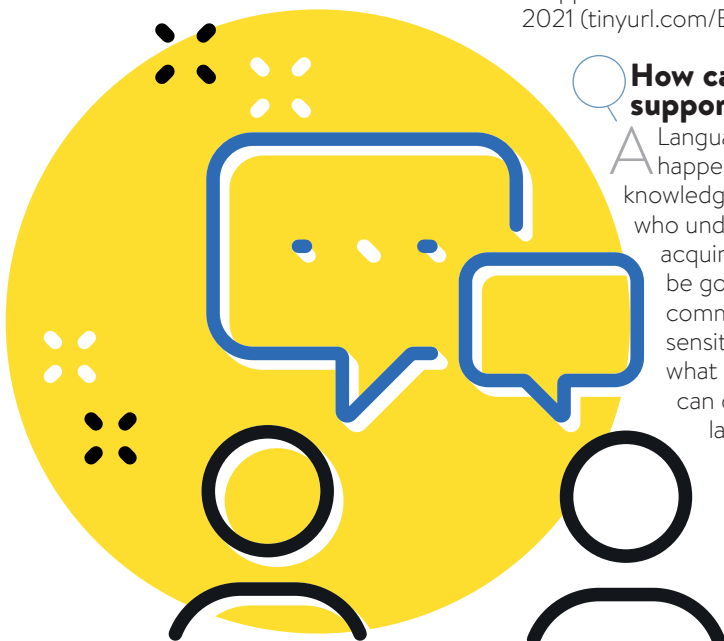
Displaying visual timetables helps children to understand what is happening and when, developing their memory and recall. As well as developing mathematical concepts such as sequencing, the concepts of 'first', 'next', 'then' and 'last' are valuable pre-reading skills.

Make stories interesting and exciting by using different voices, tones and expressions. Include props for children to help them to engage and understand the story, then make the props available for them in continuous provision so they have opportunities to practise the language. Stories tend to use words which the children wouldn't otherwise hear, so they are essential for developing vocabulary. Also make sure to offer plenty of songs, rhymes and stories with lots of opportunities for repetition. While adults quickly tire of repetition, children thrive on it. Hearing the same rhymes and stories repeated regularly, perhaps in different ways, helps them to develop understanding,

How can practitioners support children?

A Language doesn't 'just happen'. It needs skilful and knowledgeable practitioners who understand how children acquire language, who can be good role models for communication, who listen sensitively and carefully to what children say and who can demonstrate using language through play.

Try providing a commentary and describing what is happening during play. This allows children to link



NURSERY MANAGEMENT

confidence and learn to master new words so that they can use them in their speech.

Support children whose first language is not English by asking families to translate favourite rhymes or record them to share in nursery. Favourite stories, such as *Dear Zoo* by Rod Campbell, are often available in other languages and can be presented alongside English versions in the book area. Acknowledging and celebrating children's home languages encourages their communication in nursery.

Make sure to value routines as communication opportunities, such as singing nursery rhymes during nappy changing time, making up tidying up songs, singing hello or welcome songs in the morning and goodbye songs at the end of the session.

Communication is crucially about social cues, which are skills to be mastered, as well as speaking and language. Children need to learn when to talk and when to listen, how to take turns and how to notice if someone is not listening or bored with what they're saying – this requires skills in looking,

listening and noticing people around us. Children learn from adults by watching how they interact with other adults and with children. Therefore, how practitioners act and interact with children, parents and other practitioners is important for developing children's communication skills.

How can families help at home?

It's important to keep home learning environment activities as time efficient as possible and to plan them around family routines, so they can take part regardless of other commitments. Encourage families to talk about what they see and hear on a walk, provide a narrative during household tasks such as doing the laundry, make up stories, follow a recipe when baking and sing songs during car journeys.

Alternatively, organise opportunities for parents to engage in home learning. Research has found that the most effective home learning strategies for supporting children's long-term outcomes are those which include

59% Reception children meeting expected levels in 2021

SOURCE: EEF

shared book reading and playing with letters.

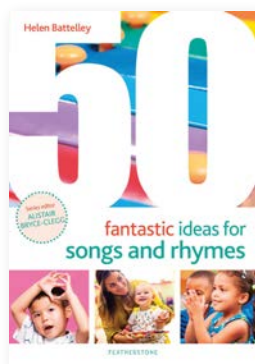
In order for you to be able to support families with practical and valuable home learning ideas, you need to be confident in the knowledge and skills required for language acquisition, which can be gained from engaging in relevant professional development.

NDNA's new vocabulary and early language skills course helps practitioners to promote the knowledge and skills needed to support vocabulary and early language skills. Find out more at ndna.org.uk

CPD BOOKSHELF

THREE READS THAT WILL IMPROVE YOUR PRACTICE...

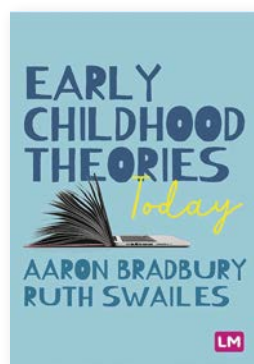
50 Fantastic Ideas for Songs and Rhymes (Featherstone)



Adults will feel confident singing and moving to music with children, whether one-to-one or in groups, and children will love the repetition, rhymes and rhythmic movements of these activities. Drawing on developmental research to compile the very best musical activities, this title by Helen Battelley will boost practitioners' confidence and improve children's cognitive abilities and movement skills.

Visit bloomsbury.com

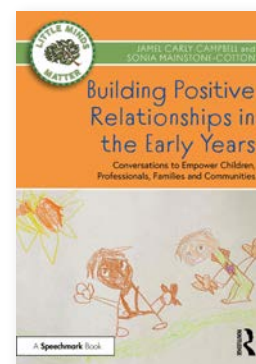
Early Childhood Theories Today (SAGE Publishing)



If you work in the early years, you have probably heard of Montessori and Bronfenbrenner – but have you heard of Bavolek or Fisher? This book, edited by Aaron Bradbury and Ruth Swales, introduces early years practitioners to some contemporary theorists and explores their work alongside more well-known thinkers. It also demonstrates how these theories relate to everyday practice in the early years.

Visit us.sagepub.com

Building Positive Relationships in the Early Years (Routledge)



In this book, Jamel Carly Campbell and Sonia Mainstone-Cotton have open and honest conversations about developing positive and responsive relationships in the early years. It's divided into three main chapters – building positive relationships with children; with other professionals; and with families and the wider community – and explores key themes, from building trust and listening to the voice of the child, to diversifying practice. Visit routledge.com



RHIANNON SCOTT IS THE OUTDOOR LEARNING LEAD AT KIDS PLANET NURSERIES.

OUTDOOR LEARNING

Kids Planet's Udeskole qualification

After running a busy pre-school room with Kids Allowed, I wanted a different challenge. I spoke with my former CEO, Jenny Johnson, about my interests and how I love training and coaching.

Jenny came up with the idea of forest school and gave me free rein. She said, "You've got six months, try and make a success of it – I'm going to completely leave this up to you."

I would go to a National Trust Park called Dunham Massey every day and the different nurseries would come to me for a two-hour forest school session. That's how I got my role as Outdoor Learning Lead – a role which has continued to develop since we were acquired by Kids Planet.

Danish inspiration

At the time we worked in partnership with Doncaster College. I went on a trip with the college to Denmark, where we visited loads of nurseries and outdoor settings.

One particular nursery, the Bonsai Institute, was absolutely amazing – they had an old converted building that backed onto a forest.



SOURCE: The Natural Connections Demonstration project

90%

CHILDREN WHO REPORTED FEELING HAPPIER AND HEALTHIER THANKS TO OUTDOOR LEARNING.

There were two-year-olds whittling with knives and sitting around a fire, children climbing trees.

When the parents arrived, they didn't just pick up their kids and leave; they would sit around the campfire and get involved; the children would take them into the forest, they'd play – it's a very different way of doing things and Denmark is ranked as one of the happiest countries in the world, so it makes you think.

The owner of that nursery told me that it's a way of life. Every staff member is a pedagogue; an expert in what they do.

They didn't seem to have that hierarchy that we have in UK settings and it wasn't that children went to forest school then came back to nursery; they spent all day out in the forest – from babies up to pre-school.

The indoor space was there, but it was basic and homely with salt lamps everywhere and the children took their shoes off when they came in.

Udeskole qualification

The Danish word 'Udeskole' translates as 'outdoor school' and we wanted to make this concept an

integral part of our day-to-day practice – an authentic culture shift within the company, so that when you walk into a Kids Planet nursery, you know this is a part of everyday life for the children.

That's why we decided to set up an Udeskole qualification, which I'd love every Kids Planet nursery to complete. I hope that when the first cohort have completed the training, there will be some trailblazers who can deliver Udeskole training alongside me.

It's a practical course and the team are required to show their collaboration – how they've worked with parents, families and the local community.

The biggest boundary can be parents' expectations of what an outdoor space or outdoor learning should look like, so we need to bring them on that journey with us.

We can also use the skills of families in the community to support projects. There might be a keen gardener or a tree surgeon who has spare logs that you could use. It's bringing back that tribe that humans need, but that's been lost in our society.

Reconnecting with nature

This generation of children spends more time indoors than any before it, but we're meant to be out in nature – that's where children learn best.

Children have a lot going on in their lives and there's so much screen time and information. Being outside in nature gives them that chance to breathe, take time and just go at their own pace.

A few years ago, as part of Persil's Dirt Is Good campaign, they made a Free the Kids video (tinyurl.com/Free-the-kids), which looked at how much time children spend outside compared with US prison inmates. It's really shocking.





ABOUT THE UDESKOLE APPROACH

- inspired by Scandinavian approaches to learning outdoors
- involves using what nature provides, with minimal resources
- supports children to follow interests and learn to assess their own risk
- values the involvement of families and the local community

For me, Udeskole is about taking children back outdoors and doing those things that we loved doing when we were younger.

I always start my training by asking, “What did you enjoy doing when you were young?” People say the same things every time: making perfume from petals, mud pies, building dens. We need to give this gift back to today’s children so they can have these lovely memories.

The health and wellbeing benefits of being outside are just huge. Cortisol levels drop by 40 per cent; you produce more serotonin; then there’s all the good stuff you get for your immune system from mud.

Challenge and freedom

Children love risk, challenge, and doing things that are a bit scary. They get more opportunities for this outdoors. We’ve become so risk averse in the UK, but we may be making our children less safe by not giving them any exposure to risk at all.

They need to learn how to assess their own risk, and children are so much more capable than we give them credit for.

There’s less expectation outdoors, too – fewer boundaries and rules. Children love freedom and sometimes it’s about giving them a perception of freedom: places where they feel in ownership of that space; stepping back

as a practitioner so that children are absorbed in their own play.

Staff can often feel under pressure to ask lots of questions when children are playing but, especially outdoors, the most effective thing you can do is step back and observe. The children will take the play and learning where it needs to go.

“We may be making our children less safe by not giving them any exposure to risk”

We need to know when to gently get involved but not overstep the mark and burst their play bubble or take away the adventure and excitement. They know you’re there, that they’re safe.

Tailoring outdoor learning

Udeskole looks at children’s individual interests and development rather than a one-size-fits-all approach. The role of the Udeskole pedagogue is to observe and to know where each child’s at on their individual journey.

If a child enjoys crafting, you might introduce tools with them; if another

child’s into fire lighting, talk about wood collection and which type of wood is good for the fire. Don’t get hung up on budgets or fancy resources. Nature is free and resources can be very low-cost.

If your setting’s outdoor space is quite artificial, see what you can bring in. Plant some herbs, bring in some fallen branches and twigs from local areas so that children can build their own dens – there are ways to work around it.

If a child starts to create something, allow it to stay until the next time they come out again – this helps to give them ownership of their space. A big part of the Udeskole qualification is about how you can evidence the children’s voice in what you’re doing. What input have they had? What do they say about their space? What do they love about it? Where don’t they like playing so much? Is this space everything that the children want it to be?

We need to remember that this is their space, and children need to have a say in where resources live and what they want in their environment.

If the Udeskole training goes as well as I hope it will, we’ll be looking to offer the training externally to support other nurseries. We want to help as many children – and families – as we can to get back that connection with nature.

Rhiannon Scott is the Outdoor Learning Lead at Kids Planet Nurseries. Visit kidsplanetdaynurseries.co.uk



SARAH SEAMAN IS THE FOUNDER OF THE MUDDY PUDDLE TEACHER APPROACH®.

SUSTAINABLE OUTDOOR activities

Sarah Seaman, AKA The Muddy Puddle Teacher, offers outdoor inspiration with these nature-based ideas...

WHETHER YOU'RE A FULL-BLOWN forest school enthusiast or an outdoor learning newbie, we all get stuck for ideas from time to time. These sustainable activities will help you create engaging lessons full of cross-curricular links.

BAMBOO SHAPES

Bamboo canes are a great outdoor resource because they're equal in length and perfect for outdoor maths. Ensure you remind children before using bamboo canes that 'Sticks stay low, they tickle our toe – if they go high, they poke us in the eye!'

Ask the children to create a triangle. How many sticks will they need? How many sides does a triangle have? Once they have made the triangle, can your learners identify how many corners it has by placing a fallen leaf on each corner?

Invite the children to look around their outdoor space and fill the triangle with any bits of nature that also have a similar shape to a triangle. Repeat this with other basic 2D shapes such as a square, rectangle and circle.

Store your bamboo outside to save you time. Use three tyres stacked up, one on top of the other and store the bamboo sticks in there.

NATURAL PHONEME FRAMES

Ask the children to make a three-box phoneme frame using bamboo sticks. Fill the first box with sand and ask them to draw out the initial letter for the word c-a-t in the sand.

What letter comes next? What's the last sound we hear? Can they jump on each sound, segmenting and blending as they go? Try more CVC words then move on to a four-box frame.

This can make a great outdoor continuous provision activity for children to play with and create their own words.

Although this activity appears to be a literacy

task, it also embeds PSED and physical development, as outdoor learning generally does. The children engage in fine motor and gross motor work as well as negotiating, turn-taking and sharing as they work together. Plus, we know playing with nature and being outside is all good for self-regulating and feeling great.

RAINY DAY CHALLENGE

Start collecting bottles and containers, such as yoghurt pots of various sizes, then invite the children to get in their

waterproofs and venture outside with a yoghurt pot each.

Place a bucket in the middle of your outdoor space. This will be your 'main' container which learners will pour their water amounts into. Ask them to catch rain droplets and pour what they have collected into the main bucket.

Next, try asking for different amounts. For instance, 'Bring me your yoghurt pot when it is half full/nearly full/full/just a little full.'

At the end, introduce millilitres and litres to the children by measuring how much you collected in the main bucket altogether. Record this on a chart then try and beat your score every time a rainy day comes.

Recycling waste not only shows the children that you are a great green educator but these items can be left outside and if they weather, it has been no cost to you.

WATER BOTTLE BOWLING

Gather up lots of water bottles of a similar shape. Fill them halfway with water and add colour just for fun. Write one number on each bottle, using a permanent marker. Use numbers you are working on – between one and ten, for example.

Place the bottles in a triangle formation, like skittles at a bowling alley. Provide a ball and decide with the children where they should roll from. Then start bowling! When everyone has rolled, count how many points were scored by adding up the numbers on the fallen skittles.

Keep a record by using chalk on the floor. To simplify the game more, just give each bottle the number one.

Sarah Seaman is a former teacher of 12 years and is trained as a Level 3 Forest School Leader. Sarah is the founder of The Muddy Puddle Teacher Approach®. To find out more, visit themuddypuddleteacher.co.uk



THE UK'S LEADING EDUCATION POLICY EVENT!

**SCHOOLS &
ACADEMIES
SHOW 2022**
BIRMINGHAM NEC
17TH NOVEMBER



**30+ HOURS OF CPD
CERTIFIED CONTENT**



**100+
SPEAKERS**



**16 HOURS OF
NETWORKING**

SAVE THE DATE!

17TH NOVEMBER | NEC BIRMINGHAM

WWW.SCHOOLSANDACADEMIESSHOW.CO.UK



Start the reading journey with Lift-off



Wordless
and first
words books for
early readers



From the
publishers
of Rocket
Phonics



risingstars-uk.com/Liftoff