

## Early Years Information Booklet

2019-20



We have created this booklet based on questions, advice and experiences parents and carers have had in previous years. Home and School relationships are so important to us in Nursery and at St John Fisher. These recommendations and areas are things that have come up in the past with parents and carers and others may be wondering themselves. They are not meant to target or patronise anybody but are just useful bits of advice to consider. Some of the information may or may not be relevant to you. Lots of the things you will be aware of and already doing anyway 😊

If you do have any further questions or anything you would like more advice on, or to discuss further about your child we are always here. Just catch us on the door or arrange an appointment.



We thank you for your continued support 😊

## Least Help First

### Independence and Learning Powers

In Nursery, one of the greatest skills we are teaching children is to learn to become as independent as possible. This does not mean not giving children help when needed but it does mean giving them the skills they need to approach tasks. Most children automatically come to adults and say, 'I can't do it...can you do it for me?' And we may do it because it's quicker and easier. There are times when we need to be somewhere quickly and we appreciate the need for speed on these occasions but we need to look at opportunities to teach children to do things for themselves. Young children are able to do much more than we may think.

In Nursery, we work on a system of 3 before me. We think about breaking down tasks into the smaller steps.

For example, putting on a coat, shoes.

**Step 1: Have you actually tried first?** Think about the support they may need such as removing tucked in sleeves, putting the hood on their head so they can access the sleeves more easily and then watch children as they try. We may see children getting a little frustrated at first because it doesn't work straight away and normally an adult would jump in if we see struggle but this is about building perseverance, a learning power much valued at St John Fisher. It is ok to let children struggle for a little while as they figure this out. Then you offer the next level of support.

**Step 2:** In school this may be to **ask a friend** to help. At home this may be **teaching them what to do**-look for the arm, bend your arm into the sleeve, use your hands to open the shoe etc. Teaching children these skills will make them more independent. We see children so proud when they can do it themselves and we praise them for this. **Children will always ask adults first.** By **teaching them** that they need to at least have a try first will build perseverance and give children much more of a sense of achievement. It will also make little tasks at home more quicker once children are able to do things more on their own.

**Step 3:** Help children do what they are not able to but praise them for the process and how they tried. As they keep trying and become more able, the help you need to give will reduce.

Children access the nursery classroom environment independently and we have to teach them the skills to do this. Children may want to paint and present us with the apron saying, 'You do this!'. We have to go through each stage every time asking them, 'Have you tried first? Have you asked a friend? How do you think it might go on?' They may then ask us to get them paper and we have to remind them, 'Can you remember where it is? How do we hang it up? Where do we put the painting once it's finished?' Children do need reminding of these simple steps often if not daily at this young age until they become more familiar and then independent. It can feel tedious at times, but the outcomes are marvellous!

I can SHINE!

## **Age appropriate expectations of children:**

Children all develop at different rates and will have their own skills that they arrive to nursery with and their own rates of development as they progress through their school years. In Early Years we follow Development Matters as a guide of children's progress and match what we see in school against age bands. We may see areas where children need more support and target these skills. We may see areas where children are very strong and work hard to challenge these skills. By the end of Reception, the government aims for children to reach a 'Good Level of Development GLD'. The document attached gives you guidelines on the age bands and you may be able to look yourself to see what you think your child is able to do, and where you could support them further. Children's skills will be different for different areas of the Early Years Curriculum. It is important to remember that all children are different and unique and have their own journeys, styles and ways of learning.

A few FAQ's or comments that come up:

- **My child can't write their name-** Development matters states that up to 48months, children should be able to ascribe meaning to marks which may mean drawing pictures, making squiggly lines and saying, 'That's my name'. This is not to say that we do not want children writing but children must be physically ready for this stage of learning. Lots of children as they learn sounds will want to start representing them and they will be very interested in writing their names and we encourage and fully support this. But do not worry if it does not look well-formed yet. By the end of nursery, it is wonderful if children can write their names or several letters within their names and does help them to be well prepared for reception but it is not expected of children. Ways you can support at home:
  - Colouring supporting children to hold their pencil with more control using 2 fingers and thumb.
  - Drawing lots and lots helping children develop skills of drawing shapes such as circles to enable them to draw people. As they develop more control over the pencil, their drawing skills will develop with this.
  - Building up strength in hand muscles through physical play: Play dough, clay, pegs, squeezing balls, chalk writing on the floor.
- **My child cannot recognise numbers-** Basic number skills are key to securing understanding of numbers later in children's education. **The skills we look for in nursery are:**
  - **Can children confidently count out loud** in order correctly in a wide range of experiences? Join in with number songs? Count forwards to 20? backwards from 10?
  - Can children touch objects and count them 1 at a time slowly?
  - **Can children represent numbers-** Showing amounts on their fingers? Count using their fingers? Draw 5 lines and know that is 5? See up to 5 in different ways and know without counting that shows 5?
  - **Can children count claps, jumps?** Can they count when they cannot see the action through listening? Can they talk about amounts being bigger, smaller, more, less.
- **Resources:** Jack Hartman has some brilliant counting songs if you search Jack Hartman Kids Music Channel. He has lots of songs related to all kinds of different things also. There are lots of good quality counting songs online also that show children numbers. These really help embed number recognition skills in simple but fun ways.

## FAQ's Other areas:

- **It is okay that my child still uses a dummy?** The NHS recommends that dummies not be used after 9-12 months. It is every parents choice to decide when is best for their child to stop using a dummy however we strongly recommended that children at 3 year old nursery provision do not use a dummy. Dummies can be detrimental to children's speaking skills and can have long lasting effects on the quality of children's speech. Communication and language is one of the most important areas of our early years teaching as with the increase of technology, much less time can be spent communicating. It is vital that children are free to talk and develop their communication skills whilst they are young and at all times of the day. It can also have long lasting impact on children's teeth which again can have an impact on speech. Children are without dummies throughout their full day at nursery and do not ask for them. Consider if they really need one at home?
  - <https://www.nhs.uk/video/Pages/when-should-we-ditch-the-dummy.aspx>
- **It is okay if my child still uses a pram?** Again, every choice is a parent's own and parents may feel different needs for prams dependant on how far they are travelling and for different occasions. Our recommendation is that children need to be as physically fit as possible to ensure their body and core strength is ready for learning. Lots of children talk about coming to 'Big School' and walking to school is a big part of this. Children are in nursery all day or half day standing up for most of that time and do not tire. They are very physically active jumping, running and climbing and still have bundles of energy. Consider do they really need to use a push chair to get home or to nursery?
- **Toileting-** All children will have different toileting needs and we support each individual child based on this. It is essential that we teach children strategies to clean themselves especially after having a poo talking about hygiene and best ways to do it. We offer wet wipes to ensure children are fully clean and then support them as necessary. We recommend this teaching at home also so children become more able to do this independently more quickly. If children are in pull-ups, we recommend continuing to work hard toilet training so that children can move to underwear as quickly as possible and become independent at toileting.
- **Sleep-**The NHS recommends that children aged 3-4 get between 11 and a half to 12 hours sleep each night. This is vital for brain development and to ensure children have the energy they need each day. It is always worth considering what time children need to get up to plan what time they need to be asleep. A recommended routine for children such as a shutting off electronics, bath or bedtime story to provide familiarity before bed each night. If you have trouble getting your child to sleep, there are lots of recommendations on the NHS website <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/pregnancy-and-baby/sleep-problems-in-children/>
- **Pack Lunch-** Change 4 Life NHS has lots of recommendations for healthy lunches and food guidelines. One useful motto is- 100 calorie a day snacks, 2 a day max. It states that most of children's sugar comes from sugary drinks so children should only be bringing water into school in their water bottles.

## Useful Information of teaching at St John Fisher

- **Phonics- Read Write Inc-** <https://www.ruthmiskin.com/en/find-out-more/parents/>

Phonics is one of the main strategies we use to teach children how to read. We begin by developing children's awareness and skills of:

- Rhyme and rhythm- playing rhyming games, noticing rhymes in stories and poems, listening to nursery rhymes, songs.
- Hearing initial sounds- Modelling and involving hearing sounds into everyday life- 'Let's go to c c car.' 'Can you catch the b b ball.'
- Saying initial sounds- 'What's the day today...it's Mmmmmmonday.' 'It's T t t Tuesday.' Offer children words and ask them if they can say the first (initial) sound.
- Learning and recognising individual sounds- o o orange, b b boot. (See sound mat for all Set 1 sounds).

This for most children is what they will achieve during their time at nursery. For children who have spent longer at nursery or may have a good ear for sounds may move onto other stages:

- Orally segmenting words- c a t and then blending them together 'cat'. Segmenting simple means breaking down each individual sound and blending means putting them back together. Children must be able to hear it first before they move onto writing.
- Children will then read the letters using this technique and blend them so they can read the words on paper.
- Reading simple words and building to reading short sentences.
- Learning 'red' sight words from memory using strategies taught. Examples; be, he, my, the, I, go.
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We will offer workshops throughout the year to help support you with this so keep an eye out for this.

- **Communication and speaking skills-** Communication and the ability for a child to be able to articulate their thoughts, ideas and opinions is so important in early years. Children express themselves through play and this is how we teach. Much of our day is focused on focused communication with children.
  - **Conversational skills-** Can children really engage in full back and forth conversation or do they jump from topic to topic? Can children offer an idea or opinion, listen to what another person is saying and respond appropriately? Do they use new language learnt? Do they listen for new words and want to find out what they mean? Do they listen and talk about what they see in stories?
  - **Story Language-** Do children have stories they know off by heart and love to retell? Repeating the same stories again and again is essential to give children the ability to retell the stories themselves, talk about what happens next, tell you off when you skip a page 😊 Fairy Tales- repetitive language helps allow children to improve and develop their story telling again and again. Making up own stories using pictures as a guide. Noticing new details on a page.
- **Modelling and demonstrating-** You are the best teachers of children. Children listen attentively to what adults say and want to copy them. Talking out loud can be the greatest teaching tool for children. For example, when drawing a picture, draw beside children talking about what you are

doing, 'I am going to draw a picture of a house today so I'm going to draw a big square...hhmmm now how do I draw a square. Well it needs 4 sides.' 'Now I'm going to draw the roof..hhhmm I need a triangle for the roof and I know that has 3 sides.' 'Ooopps I wasn;t holding my pencil correctly, I need to hold it like this.'

- **Correcting-** Correcting children is something that needs to be done delicately and appropriate to the age and stage of children's development.
  - If a child uses incorrect grammar for example, 'Me want to have a go,' we may repeat it back to them saying 'I want to have a go.' We may do that several times each time they use the word. However, if a child continues to use the word '**me**' instead of '**I**' may need to directly address this and ask children to repeat, 'Can **I** go to the toilet please?' Without correcting this early, children may go on using this in their speech much longer than is age appropriate.
  - Other examples that come up a lot in early years is word endings or incorrect tenses-'I **goed** to the park.' Hearing it for the first time you may repeat after them, 'Ohh you **went** to the park.' If it continues then we delicately address it with children, 'Remember we say we went to the park...you try it.' The balance is ensuring that you are not stopping the child from continuing their train of thought and that the engagement in conversation is the most important but these things are important to consider and identify for children so that misconceptions do not arise.

*Any further advice, questions or queries feel free to speak to us at the door or arrange an appointment.*