

# English in Early Years



A guide to this subject  
in our school



# 1 - Introduction

English in the Early Years falls within the Literacy area of learning with the addition of spoken language elements in Communication and Language. The characteristics of Effective Teaching and Learning are threaded through all aspects of learning and are the fundamental ways in which children within EYFS learn. During the Early Years children should be developing knowledge, skills and understanding which will prepare them for the Year One curriculum.



# English Early Learning Goals

## Communication and Language— listening, attention and understanding

- Listen attentively and respond to what they hear with relevant questions, comments and actions when being read to and during whole class discussions and small group interactions
- Make comments about what they have heard and ask questions to clarify their understanding

## Communication and Language— Speaking

- Hold conversations when engaged in back and forth exchanges with their teacher and peers
- Participate in small group, class and one to one discussions, offering their own ideas using recently introduced vocabulary
- Offer explanations for why things might happen, using recently introduced vocabulary from stories, non-fiction, rhymes and poems when appropriate
- Express their ideas and feelings about their experiences using full sentences, including use of past, present and future tenses and making use of conjunctions, with modelling and support from their teacher

# EYFS Literacy Early Learning Goals

## Literacy—word reading

- Say a sound for each letter of the alphabet and at least ten digraphs
- Read words consistent with their phonic knowledge by sound—blending
- Read aloud simple sentences and books that are consistent with their phonic knowledge, including some common exception words



## Literacy—comprehension

- Demonstrate understanding of what has been read to them by retelling stories and narratives using their own words and recently introduced vocabulary
- Anticipate, where appropriate, key events in stories
- Use and understand recently introduced vocabulary during discussions about stories, non-fiction, rhymes and poems and during role play

## Literacy— writing

- Spell words by identifying sounds in them and representing the sounds with a letter or letters
- Write simple phrases and sentences that can be read by others
- Write recognisable letters, most of which are correctly formed

EYFS  
Literacy  
Early  
Learning  
Goals



Physical development—fine motor skills

- Hold a pencil effectively in preparation for fluent writing — using the tripod grip in almost all cases

# Communication and Language

The development of children's spoken language underpins all seven areas of learning and development. Children's back and forth interactions from an early age form the foundations of language and cognitive development. The number and quality of the conversations they have with adults and peers throughout the day in a language rich environment is crucial. By commenting on what children are interested in or doing, and echoing back what they say with new vocabulary added, practitioners will build children's language effectively. Reading frequently to children and encouraging them actively in stories, non-fiction, rhymes and poems, and then providing them with extensive opportunities to use and embed words in a range of contexts, will give children the opportunity to thrive. Through conversation, story telling and role play where children share their ideas and with support and modelling from the teacher, and sensitive questioning that invites them to elaborate children become comfortable using a rich range of vocabulary and language structures.



# Literacy

It is crucial for children to develop a life-long love of reading. Reading consists of two dimensions, word reading and language comprehension. Language comprehension (necessary for both reading and writing) starts from birth. It only develops when adults talk to children about the world around them and the books (stories and non-fiction) they read with them, and when they enjoy rhymes, poems and songs together.

Skilled word reading, taught later, involves both the speedy working out of the pronunciation of unfamiliar printed words (decoding) and the speedy recognition of familiar printed words.

Writing involves transcription (spelling and handwriting) and composition (articulating ideas and structuring them in speech, before writing).



## 2 - Child Initiated Learning

We know that there are key indicators and examples of effective practice that can be seen when monitoring Design and Technology in the Early Years, in relation to child initiated learning in an enabling environment. We know what we want to see children doing.

### Block play and construction

- Listening to what other children say and responding appropriately
- Expressing thoughts and sharing ideas
- Demonstrating their understanding when talking to others
- Using a growing vocabulary to describe their buildings and structures
- Creating and retelling stories that have a setting, characters and a plot
- Describing what they have built and how they built it





## Writing

- Using a variety of marking making materials to draw, make patterns and write
- Creating stories, responding to past experiences and how they are feeling
- Selecting their name card and writing their name
- Asking adults to scribe their ideas or help label their pictures
- Noticing their friends' names and words, making observations and comments about the letters and sounds that are different and the same as their own
- Writing for a variety of purposes as part of play scenarios
  - Using a range of resources to create their own books
- Practising what they have been directly taught in adult-led sessions

## Books

- \* Retelling familiar stories in their own words
- \* Using key words and phrases from familiar stories
- \* Talking to others about their favourite books, making predictions or describing their favourite parts
- \* Discussing illustrations and using them to predict what stories might be about
- \* Using puppets and props to support retelling of favourite stories as well as making up their own narratives
- \* Using phonic knowledge to decode texts
- \* Reading high frequency words from memory



## Art and Design and making

- Providing a running commentary of what they are making
- Describing in advance what they plan to do
- Using associated vocabulary, including accurate terms to describe tools and techniques
- Drawing or writing a plan of what they intend to do
- Creating pictures and models in response to favourite stories





Imaginative and role play

- Providing a running commentary of what they are doing
- Acting out familiar stories and creating their own narratives
- Role playing characters and using associated language and vocabulary
  - Writing in role, such as a shopping list or a letter
- Playing alongside others, communicating, sharing ideas, negotiating and cooperating

## Small World

- Giving characters a “voice”
- Playing alongside others, communicating, sharing ideas, negotiating and cooperating
  - Planning and communicating their ideas
- Expressing their thoughts and ideas to others, adults and children
- Creating imaginative and real world scenarios
- Retelling stories and sharing story ideas with an audience



# Adults scaffolding learning during child initiated play

Adults will be

- \* Observing children and responding to their fascinations
- \* Responding to the physical skills presented
- \* Suggesting possibilities to extend their ideas and provide physical challenge
- \* Offering other instruments and resources when appropriate
- \* Playing alongside children to take learning forwards, suggesting ideas and showing what's possible
- \* Playing alongside or in small groups to model, correct and extend vocabulary
- \* Sharing their own experiences and making suggestions
- \* Modelling how to use equipment and resources
- \* Posing questions and ponderings to stimulate ideas and add challenge
- \* Introducing and using language and vocabulary linked to key learning such as key phrases from core books



### 3. Adult led Learning

We know that there are key indicators of effective practise when monitoring English in the Early Years,  
in relation to adult led learning.

- \* Adults setting an intention for learning that is well matched to the developmental stages of the children, building on the physical skills children already have
- \* Adults guiding learning through playful, experiential activities which are presented in imaginative ways, are hands on and require participation from the children
- \* Activities and experiences that are as open ended as possible to allow for children to respond in different ways, following their own ideas
- \* Activities that are delivered to individual children, small groups of children depending on the activity and the age of the children.
- \* Adults using resources and materials that the children are familiar with and have access to in child initiated play
- \* Sensitive interaction through open questioning, modelling, thinking aloud and genuine interest and curiosity