



*Early Years
Curriculum Meeting
Notes*

October 2017

Lets start at the end!

- Early Learning Goals (ELGs); what do they mean?
- Good Level of Development (GLD); does not having this mean a child has not made good progress?

The purpose of this meeting, and therefore these notes, was to provide an understanding of what we do during the Reception year at Wheatfields. Before we look at what we do, we are going to explain why we do it, and in order to do this, we are going to start at the end.

At the end of the year, each child comes out of reception with an 'Early Years Foundation Stage Profile. This breaks down whether they have met the Early Learning Goals (ELG) across 17 different areas of learning.

ELG: These are statements related to how the children should typically be performing at the end of the year and examples of what we would be looking for in a couple of areas are;

Social development: Being able to follow 2 or more part instructions, reaching compromises with friends

Literacy: Reading and comprehending phonic books at Yellow B/Blue A level, Clear recognition of name and name writing. Writing a sentence using their phonic knowledge to write phonically plausible words. Using tricky words and HFW's in their writing.

Maths: Recognising and using numbers 0-20 with confidence i.e. numeral recognition and ordering. Addition and subtraction using counting on method..

Along with the Profile, you are told whether your child has made a Good Level of Development (GLD).

GLD: This means that they have met the ELG across PSE, CL, PD, LD and MD (see page 5 for more on these areas). This is a 'yes' or 'no' and is required by the government to be reported on. But does this mean that a child who has not made 'GLD' has not made good progress?

Answer: No! Each child in Reception will make progress throughout the year in all of the learning areas, and it is our job to provide the right environment and learning opportunities for them to make the best progress they can. If a child misses getting their ELG in literacy because they are not confidently writing a sentence, they will have undoubtedly made significant progress in their literacy development, but they would not get GLD.

Regardless of GLD, each child will have made progress from where they have started – and it will be huge progress for them...each child is an individual!

Measuring children's progress; why and how do we do it?

- What we do
- How you are kept informed of progress

In order to reach the final profiles we assess the children's progress throughout the year.

We use 2 main ways of assessing this progress: firstly spending some time assessing different areas, such as a writing or mark making task or checking their phonic knowledge; this is something we will do periodically to provide a snapshot at that time.

The second is by constantly working with an alongside the children throughout the day. Getting to know them, talking to them, sharing ideas, providing them with challenge – all of these things help us to build up a picture of the level of development they are working at, and where we need to help them take their learning in order to make progress.

We will set 'targets' specific to each child at two points in the academic year (at the start of both Spring and Summer Terms) These targets are put into the Reading response books, providing information on the next step the child will be working on to help progress in one of the Prime areas, a reading, writing and a maths area. Parent consultations are also a great opportunity for us to share the progress made by each child.

How do we at Wheatfields help each child achieve their own best level of development possible?

‘The ways in which the child engages with other people and their environment – playing and exploring, active learning, and creating and thinking critically – underpin learning and development across all areas and support the child to remain an effective and motivated learner.’ *Early Education, 2012*

This quote is from the EYFS Development Matters guidance and refers to the Characteristics of Effective learning; what skill they are displaying in order to engage with others and the environment in the moment of learning.

These underpin the development of each child, and this development is split into 7 different areas. The following page explains what these 7 areas are.

3 Prime Areas

Personal, Social and Emotional Development
Physical Development
Communication and Language

4 Specific Areas

Specific areas include essential skills and knowledge for children
Literacy
Mathematics
Understanding the World
Expressive Arts and Design

The levels of development are split into 7 key areas in the EYFS:

3 Prime areas – Personal, Social and Emotional Development (PSED), Physical Development (PD), Communication and Language (CL)

4 Specific areas – Literacy (LD), Maths (MD), Understanding the Word (UW), Expressive Art and Design (EAD).

These areas were reconfigured into this format in 2012 from a previous set of 6 areas of development each given equal status. The reconfiguration, and the focus of the 3 prime areas that underpin the 4 specific areas helps focus the importance of the foundation skills within the prime areas.

It is important to remember that it is not possible for a child to develop in the specific areas without utilising some of the skills in the prime areas. For example, writing a label for a picture is clearly linked to LD, but it is underpinned by PD (holding a pen)

Regardless of the development area, we strive to provide the children with an enabling environment in order for them to access resources and explore skills in an engaging way, so next we will explore what happens throughout the day to achieve this.

What each day brings to give the children a chance to grow in these developmental areas

Exploring time

- Lots of time to explore, engage and get involved in different areas of interest!
- Areas of interest specific to the class
- Adults available to co-construct learning, model, provide guidance...'I wonder if...' dependent on needs of individual
- Open ended time for children to immerse themselves in their learning
- The outdoor environment is enhanced to add challenge, focus and provide stimulating and engaging activities.

Adult Led learning

- Short Adult Led sessions periodically throughout the day
- Focussed time to introduce a new skill or enhance previous learning

The day is split into 2 different times in order for us to give the children opportunities to progress. The majority of the day is taken up with 'Exploring Time'. Is this play? Well, yes but it is effectively playing with focussed opportunities planned in the provision both indoors and outdoors.

There are on average 3 Adult Led sessions planned each day, giving us the chance to directly teach new skills or build on previous learning covering all 7 of the areas of learning.

One of the daily sessions is dedicated to teaching phonics, generally there are 2 literacy, 2 maths, 1 handwriting and 1 PE session planned for each week, the rest of the available sessions are used to explore Technology, the Natural World and Science, Art, D&T, Music and Circle times. Circle times are a really important session where we can focus on a number of different social issues – saying sorry, sharing etc with links to our BLP and Rainbow Code.

Most of our Literacy and Maths sessions are cross curricular and quite active by nature to enhance engagement.



Forest School

“Children who are given longer opportunities to participate in Forest School sessions exhibit play that is progressively deeper and more meaningful, and the benefits can be felt when they are back in their usual environment.” (Knight, S., 2009)

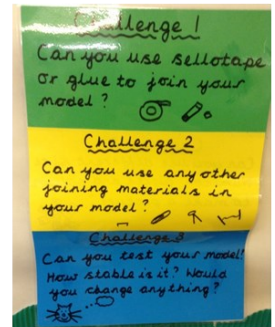
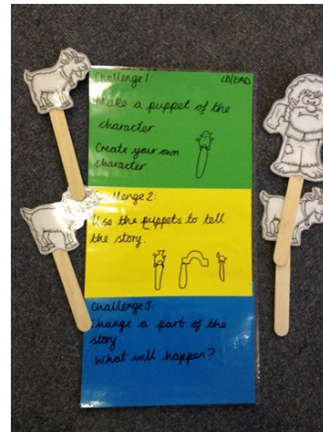
Forest School takes place in all weathers, barring high winds, and in order for the children to benefit from the activities they need to be suitably dressed; there is no such thing as bad weather, just bad clothing!

The children go out half a class at a time and by spending one exploring time session in Forest School every 2 weeks, they get to try skills and experience a wider range of opportunities to secure their personal, social and emotional development and encourage greater risk-taking. Forest school gives children the opportunities to make connections with the natural world. Outdoor Learning allows for plenty of time for self-reflection and to share their learning with others.

Every area of development of a child can be accessed through exploration of the Forest School environment, in ways that can't be replicated in the classroom environment.

Providing challenge

How do we do this....



Giving **all** children a chance to achieve more

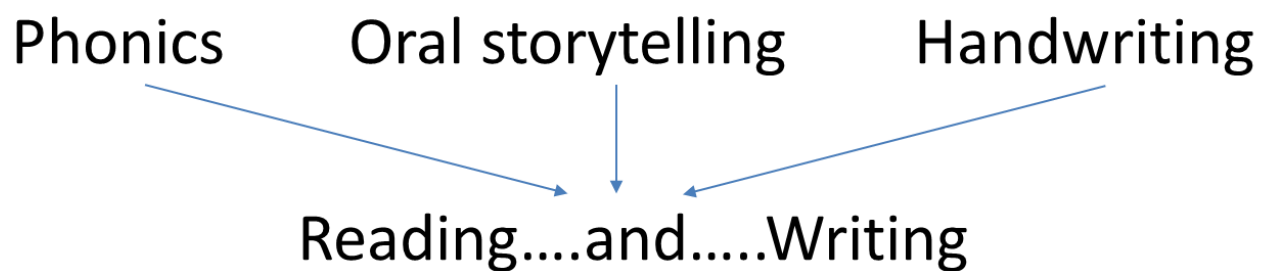


So if most of the time per day is spent with the children being in control of how they spend their time, how do we ensure they are stretching their learning and making the most of the time they have to help make those all important steps of development?

One of the ways we do this is to put challenges in the learning environment. These are activities that have been set out on 3 different levels – the last of which is as open ended as possible to ensure that children can have a go at a relevant challenge and everyone is able to access them regardless of their current ability. The challenges are linked to either a current interest or to practise a skill that has been taught in a recent adult led session.

Challenges do require the children to show some self-motivation and a level of perseverance, something that we model and encourage.

Literacy: what does this involve?



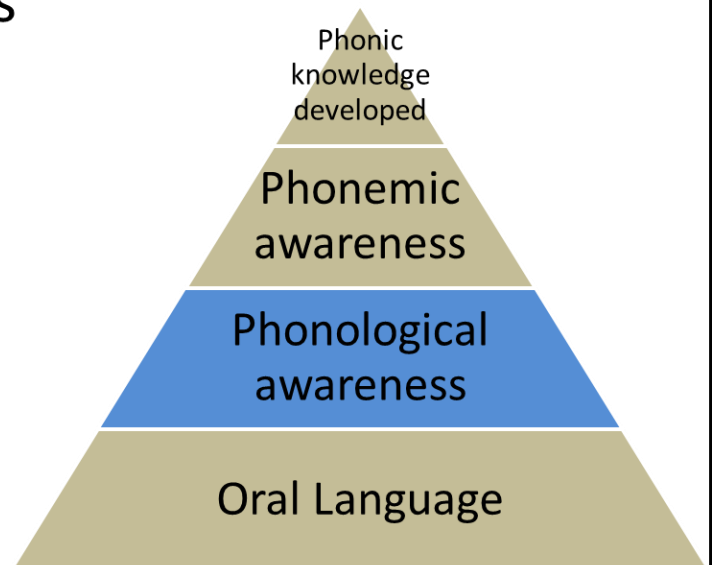
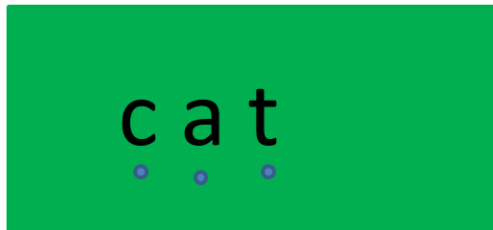
As highlighted earlier one of the aims for the end of Reception is for the children to have made significant steps in order to read and write. The next few pages briefly touch on 3 ways we enable these skills to be developed; Phonics, Oral Story Telling and Handwriting.

Phonics

Phonological Awareness



Song of Sounds



On entry into Reception most children are secure with Phase 1 phonics e.g. listening, imitating sounds, rhyming, oral blending e.g. c/a/t and alliteration e.g. i-spy something beginning with 'p'. **This Phonological Awareness is continued throughout Reception as it is a crucial phase that underpins literacy skills.**

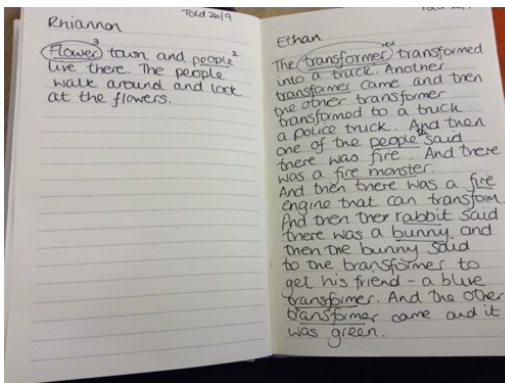
Phases 2 and 3 of phonics are taught by using the first 'Song of Sounds'. All sounds shown on the sound mat sent home 2 weeks ago, from ants on an apple, a, a, a to hairy fairy, air, air, air are taught in Reception along with the initial tricky words the children will come across when first exposed to phonic reading books.

The Song of sounds captures all types of learners: Visual from the pictures related to each grapheme, Auditory through the song and Kinesthetic through the action for each sound. The song is useful to all children regardless of their current ability: the children are exposed to all sounds up to the trigraph 'air' right from the start as the song is sung in its entirety at the start of each phonics session. This exposes children to a large number of sounds, and focus sounds to be taught are looked at in more detail; how to make the sound with your mouth so that it is a 'pure' sound, what the corresponding grapheme/digraph looks like, how to write the grapheme using cursive font and practising blending the sound into words using our phonic fingers.

Oral Storytelling

‘Talk 4 Writing’

‘Helicopter Stories’



Children have fantastic imaginations and can tell stories before they are able to write and we want to capture this and build on this ability. We use 2 main teaching methods to do this:

Talk 4 writing: retelling a familiar story using actions for some of the story language and repetitive refrains, finding different ways to retell the story using pictures, role play and adapting it to add in our own imaginations

Helicopter or Stage Stories: the children have their stories scribed by an adult and then they and others act out their story. As more stories are told, more ideas come out!

Handwriting



Turning a squiggle into a letter



When we start to teach children to form letters, they are immediately exposed to cursive handwriting. Learning to form letters is a complex process and involve creating motor memory patterns. By teaching children cursive handwriting from the start, they are spending less time ‘unlearning’ a pattern they have associated with a letter (for example a circle and a stick to form an ‘a’).

Before forming small, intricate cursive letters, we start by ‘squiggling’ with our whole bodies to form 7 different movements as shown above. Each large movement is relevant to making the basic shapes found in lower case letter formations :

Up and down- i, l, t, u

Circles- c, o, a, d

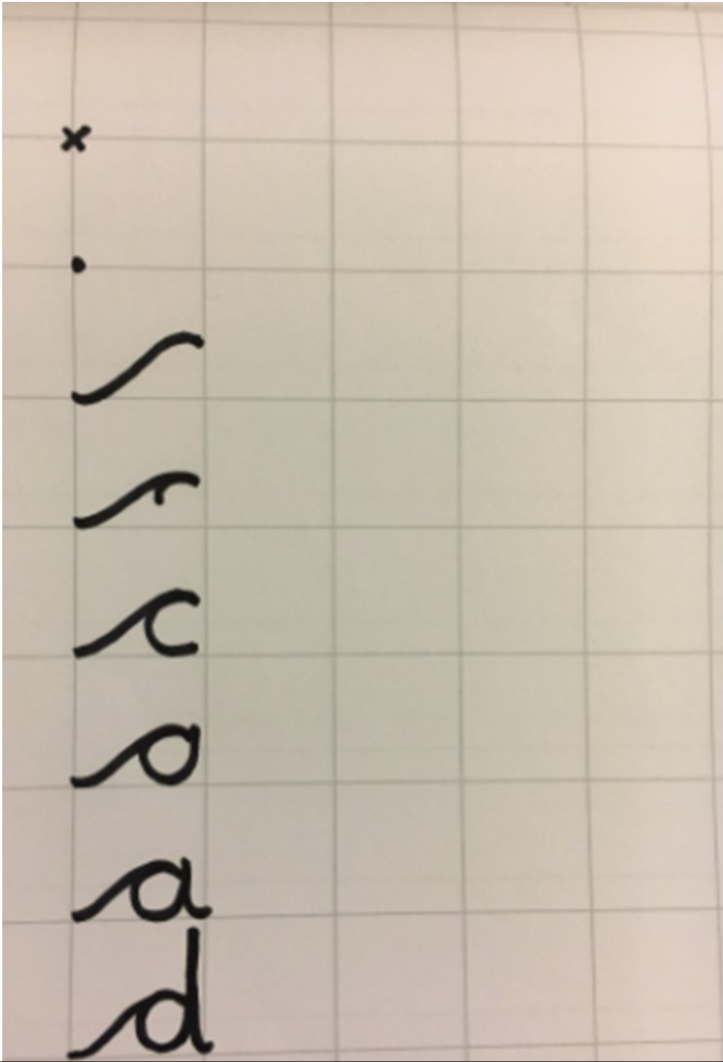
Humps- n, m, h, r, b

Snail shells- k, p

Twist- g, q, e

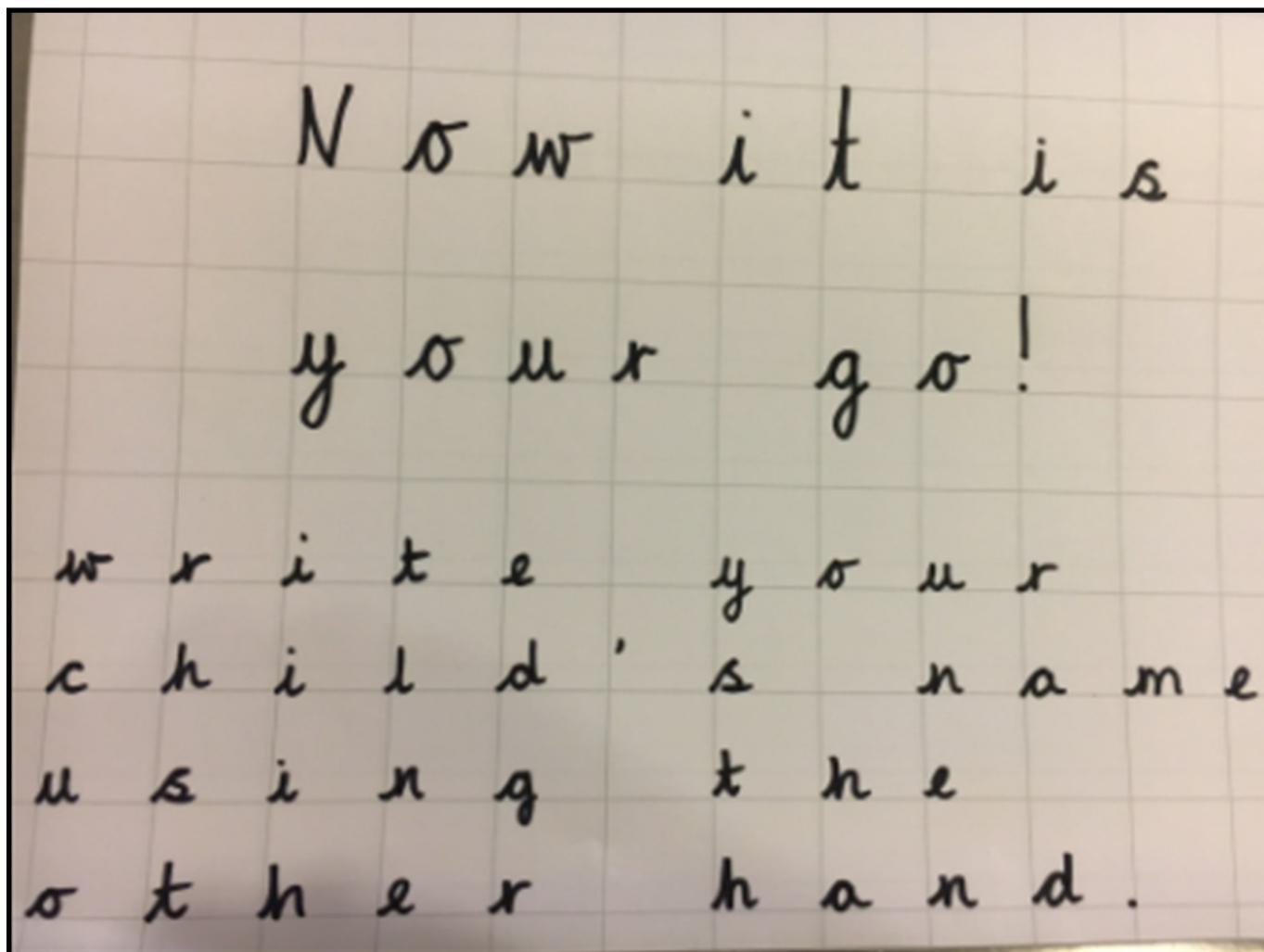
Laid down 8- j, y, f, s

Straight line drawing- j, y, f, s



- Find the bottom left hand corner
- Put your pen on the corner
- Rock the clock- over and back
- Rock the clock and come around
- Rock the clock and around to make a 'c'
- Rock the clock, around for a 'c' and up
- Rock the clock, around up and down with a flick
- Rock the clock, around, up to the top, down the same line and flick.

Once the children are showing good whole body control then we begin to transition them into writing cursively using squared paper and 'rocking the clock!' Initially the squares are quite large, and the idea is that the motion is repeated and built on in order to gain the motor memory of how each letter is formed.



Practice in your reading response book- each child has their cursive name to practice. Ask your teacher if you don't have one!

Reading



‘Understanding cannot be separated from reading; it isn’t an extra. It’s the sole purpose of the activity and without it, reading is nothing more than making noises in response to squiggles’

Brien, J. (2012) *Teaching Primary English*. London, Sage

When is a child is ready for reading books?

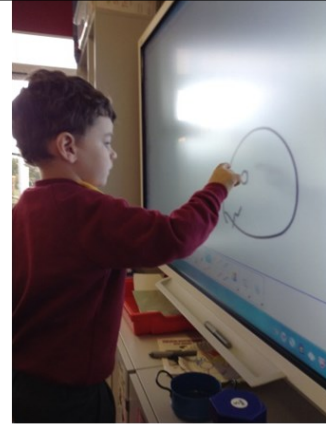
Some of your children may already be bringing home phonic reading books, some are not quite ready yet! We start giving children reading books when they first of all recognise enough of the first sounds, satpin, and are beginning to show the ability to blend these sounds together to make a word.

Once on reading books, the children read at least once a week in school with an adult. It is important to remember that it is not just about being able to read the words, we look at the comprehension element too.

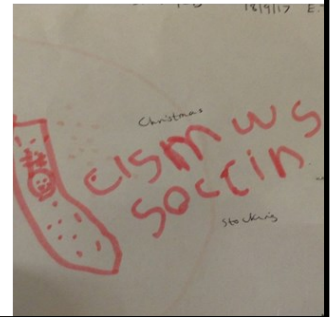
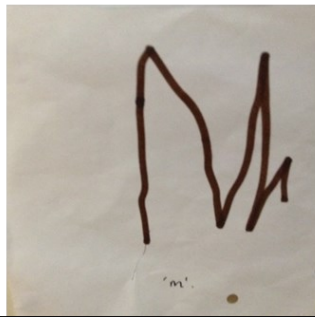
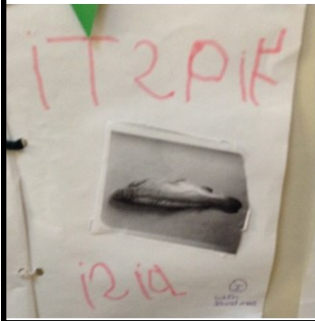
It goes without saying that the complexity of books increases as the reading levels progress. This is not just on a phonic basis, there will be more tricky words (those that cannot be sounded out phonically) and different examples of punctuation, such as speech marks, commas, ellipsis etc. In order for the children to progress onto other reading levels, we look for a certain amount of fluency in their current reading level, and recognition of some high frequency words as whole words—for example not needing to sound out ‘and’ or ‘at’ every time.

We do assess children’s reading levels frequently and the children are moved on when we feel they are ready for further challenge, this is not based purely on how fluently they can read the words though!

Writing



Rome wasn't built in a day. Neither
was a sentence!



Writing is a complicated process but generally children progress in the following way:

Hearing and writing the initial sound

Writing the initial and end sound

Writing all the sounds they can hear in a word in a phonically plausible way, writing a caption (a red car)

Writing a sentence. Within this, the children have to learn the rules of a sentence; finger spaces, then full stops then a capital letter at the beginning.

Naturally, not all children follow this sequence and we have a weekly focussed writing task where we support each child at their current level of ability, encouraging them to progress from their current level of development.

Maths: but my child can count to 1000!



Right at the start we mentioned that our focus in Reception is on numbers to 20. Currently, we are not even looking in depth past 10. There is a good reason for this! Really understanding amounts to 10, and then to 20 and how they can be made up, partitioned, provides a really solid foundation to understanding mathematics in general.



Just a small selection of
resources..

We spend a lot of time looking at how numbers can be represented. Yes, it is important to recognise the numerals of course but in addition to this, we use a variety of resources to embed the idea that numbers can be represented in a number of different ways;

Numicon, 5 and 10 frames, Rekenreks, fingers, dice... we can apply different strategies to help identify what number is represented through these different resources and give the children a chance to explore 'how they know'... explaining their process.

Supporting your Child

- Talking to your child and explaining the meaning of new words.
- Reading stories or making up stories together.
- Reading rhyming stories and nursery rhymes and having fun with them – let your child complete the rhyme or change it!
- Playing i-spy, rhyming games, alliteration games
- Play games linked to numbers and sounds e.g. number pairs, sound hunt around the house.
- Singing songs: number songs e.g. 5 little speckled frogs, song of sounds.
- Support with pencil control and for your child to see you writing
- Encourage them to use their name cards with cursive script to practise writing their name
- Ask open ended questions, giving your child chance to think before they respond.
- Reading Response Books: communicating with class teacher about when you read with your child and how you feel they got on. This book is also for your child to use to draw pictures from the story or another story from home alongside practising sounds and number work based on our learning in school.
- Praise for effort and having a go.
- Show yourself making mistakes! We want your child to keep on trying!

These are just some of the ways you can help support your child outside of school.

A final plea!!

At Wheatfields Infants we really value parent support and welcome parent volunteers...Can you help?

This is not limited to coming in as a parent volunteer and reading with children in the class (although this is something we really value!)

Do you have time to come on class visits? Have you got a talent you could share with the school? If a festival is coming up: can you share your family experiences in this? Do you have a job in a field of interest?

Please do talk to your class teacher if you think you can provide us with some support!

Thank you!



If you have any questions please speak to your class teacher!