

# What to expect in the Early Years (age 3–4)

At this stage of their learning, your child will be mainly learning through play-based activities. They will also be learning about routine and developing early literacy and maths skills, learning about the world around them and learning social skills.

## The importance of play

This year your child will begin to learn by doing things for themselves, by exploring and investigating, watching and listening, talking and discussing, creating, and communicating – in other words, playing.

Play is children's work and playing hard is very tiring! Play can also be very messy as your child will be learning both inside with sand, water and paint, and also in the outdoors with mud, leaves and so on, so you can expect some mucky clothes at the end of the day.

## The Early Years Foundation Stage

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) is a curriculum for 3–5-year-old children. This is broken down into three prime aspects and four specific areas of learning. The three prime aspects of learning are:

### Personal, social and emotional development

An important aspect of your child's time at nursery will be their personal, social, and emotional development.

They will be encouraged to develop positive relationships, to play with a variety of friends and to understand the feelings of others. They will have lots of chances to build confidence and self-awareness, and also to manage their feelings and behaviour.

### Communication

Communication is a key area of your child's learning in nursery. They will spend lots of time sharing rhymes, songs, stories, and playing games to develop their speaking and listening skills.

They will be encouraged to learn to listen carefully, to develop concentration, to respond to questions and instructions, to share ideas and experiences, and to take part in conversations.

### Physical development

Your child will be given lots of opportunities to move in different ways, for example, running, jumping, balancing and playing with balls. Another important

aspect of physical development at this stage is learning to hold and use tools, such as scissors, and also to use pencils and pens to draw lines and shapes. Your child will also begin to understand how to look after themselves and be healthy.

In addition to these three prime aspects of learning, there are four specific areas:

### **Literacy**

The 'Communication' section above outlines some activities to develop speaking and listening skills. In addition to sharing lots of stories, your child will probably be encouraged to handle and look at books independently and to start learning how stories are structured.

There will be opportunities for your child to recognise their own name. Your child will be encouraged to draw, paint, and make things, so that they develop control and hand-eye co-ordination. They may begin to learn to copy the letters in their name.

### **Mathematics**

At nursery, your child will be given many opportunities to explore numbers and shapes in their play. For example, they may be encouraged to count objects they are playing with and to compare two groups of objects. They will probably begin to represent numbers using their fingers, marks on paper, or pictures.

### **Understanding the world**

Your child will learn about the world around them and they will be encouraged to use simple technology and equipment.

### **Expressive arts**

Imagination and creativity are explored and developed in the area of expressive arts. Your child will explore different media and materials and will use their imagination in a range of different experiences.

## **Reading: Age 3–4 (Early years)**

The early reading skills your child will learn at this age are an important foundation for starting school.

The focus at this age is on sharing stories, songs, and rhymes together and building talking and listening skills.

### **Linking sounds and letters**

Your child will be getting used to letter sounds by playing lots of fun activities. They may also be beginning to learn that how the speech sounds (known

as phonemes) in the words we say are represented in written form by a letter or letters (known as graphemes).

### **Helping tell a story**

Story time is an important part of any day at nursery! Your child will have plenty of opportunities to hear and enjoy stories together. They might also be encouraged to retell stories in their own words. This all helps build talking and listening skills, which are essential for early reading.

### **Singing songs and rhymes**

Hearing and learning songs and nursery rhymes is an important part of early reading. They can help your child to explore sounds and to begin learning story language and story structures

## **What to expect in Reception**

### **Learning through play!**

In Reception, your child will follow the [Early Years Foundation Stage \(EYFS\) curriculum](#). This sets the standards for the learning, development, and care of your child. The things your child will learn in Reception have been organised into three prime areas of learning:

- Communication and Language
  - Physical Development
  - Personal and Social Development
- And four specific areas of learning:
- Literacy
  - Mathematics
  - Understanding the World
  - Expressive Arts and Design

### **What will my child do in Reception?**

In the EYFS, play is a very important part of your child's development and most learning will be introduced through a mixture of carefully planned play and some adult-led focused activities. There will also be opportunities for your child to choose activities that appeal to them, following their own particular interests. As the Reception year progresses, the learning may start to become more formal, ready for Year 1 and the National Curriculum.

## Reading: Age 4–5 (Reception)

In Reception, your child will be taught phonics, a method of learning to read words. They learn to read letters by saying the sounds they represent. They can then start to read words by blending individual sounds together to make words.

Alongside learning to decode the words on the page, your child will also learn comprehension skills. This helps them to make sense of what the words say and what the text means. Together, these skills will help your child on their way to becoming a keen and confident reader.

### Linking sounds and letters

Phonics involves learning the 44 letter sounds (known as phonemes) and understanding how they are represented in written form by a letter or letters (known as graphemes).

In school, your child will be taught phonics using the systematic phonics programme *Read Write Inc. Phonics*. Phonics programmes map out the order in which the individual speech sounds and the graphemes that represent them will be introduced and learned.

### Blending sounds to make words

Your child will learn to recognise the separate sounds represented by letters and to blend them together to say a whole word. So, the word *cat* has 3 separate sounds – /c/ /a/ /t/. We blend them together to make the word, *cat*.

They will use special phonically decodable books that help children to practise their early reading. These books contain only (or nearly only) words that can be correctly blended using only the sounds and graphemes your child has learned so far.

### Learning tricky words

Some words are trickier to sound out than others. This is usually because the sounds and letters do not match the rules your child has been taught so far. These words are called 'tricky words' in schools. They are often words that your child will meet in the books that they read, such as 'said' or 'the'. Children are taught to recognise these words by sight.