

Literacy, and Communication and Language in the Early Years at Fairfield's

The development of children's spoken language underpins all seven areas of learning and development in Foundation Stage, and is the bedrock of future success in reading and writing. In Early Years at Fairfield's, we value and promote children's back-and-forth interactions. This lays the foundations for language and cognitive development. Our environment is language-rich and we focus on maintaining plentiful high-quality conversations between adults and peers throughout the day.

By commenting on what our children are interested in or doing, and echoing back what they say with new vocabulary added, staff in our Early Years build children's language and vocabulary effectively. We read frequently with our children, and engage them actively in stories, non-fiction, rhymes and poems. We provide them with extensive opportunities to use and embed new words in a range of contexts. We teach new vocabulary through our 'Word of the Day' and key words are planned into adult-led activities to develop understanding and widen our children's vocabulary.

Through conversation, storytelling and role-play, our children share their ideas with support and modelling from teachers. We use questioning that invites them to elaborate and children become comfortable using a rich range of vocabulary and language structures. Chatter really does matter to us at Fairfield's as we lay the important foundations of communication, reading, and writing for Key Stage One.

In our Foundation Stage at Fairfield's we develop a life-long love of reading in our children right from when they join us in Nursery. Story times are an integral part of our day where we enjoy sharing carefully chosen stories and learning traditional Nursery Rhymes. Our children are encouraged to read at home every day. All children in our Early Years visit the library once a week and choose books to take home and share with their family. These visits are popular and as soon as the children join us, they are introduced to our school Library. We also have 'Little Libraries' in each classroom where familiar and key texts are placed for children to access. Children in Early Years investigate wordless picture books to develop language skills and progress to reading decodable books and participating in weekly guided reading sessions. We listen to all Reception children read three times a week in our reading practice sessions and have strong parental links to re enforce our teaching of early reading.

Reading consists of two dimensions: language comprehension and word reading. Language comprehension (necessary for both reading and writing) starts from birth. We place emphasis on adults talking with children about the world around them and the books (stories and non-fiction) we read with them. We enjoy rhymes, poems and songs together on a daily basis. All of our topic learning starts with a book or a poem.

Skilled word reading, taught in Reception, 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). Our daily phonic sessions, right from Nursery, allow our children to cement these early Literacy skills and become well equipped for Key Stage One Literacy. We also have daily adult led sessions in which we teach specific Literacy skills. The children then have the opportunity to practise newly acquired skills during Child Initiated Learning time.