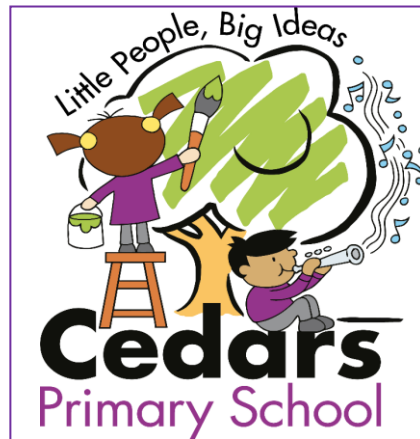


# Cedars Primary School



**READY TO START  
EARLY YEARS**

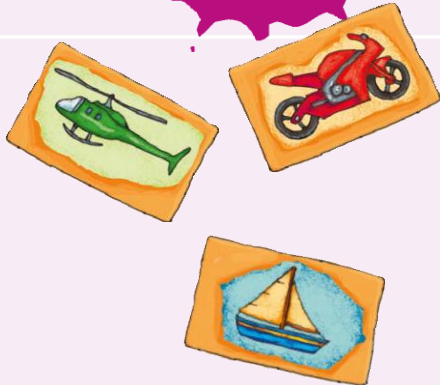
# HAPPY

**Good communication** is essential for learning. As well as being the foundation for reading and writing, it's also vital for children's social and emotional development. Most early years teachers agree that, for a child starting school, being able to talk about what they think and explain how they feel are more important than any academic skills.



Good communication has a positive impact on behaviour too. Children who can't communicate their wishes, feelings and concerns are more likely to become disruptive or withdrawn in the classroom.

## GET STARTED



## MAKING DECISIONS

Give your child lots of opportunities to make decisions, give opinions and discuss their feelings. Would they prefer cereal or toast for breakfast? Which toy would be the best present for their friend? What are they most looking forward to about starting school?

## READING TOGETHER

Research shows that children who are read to daily do better in all areas of learning. Don't limit reading to bedtime stories – magazines, websites, catalogues, signs and recipes all provide opportunities for reading and discussion all day long.

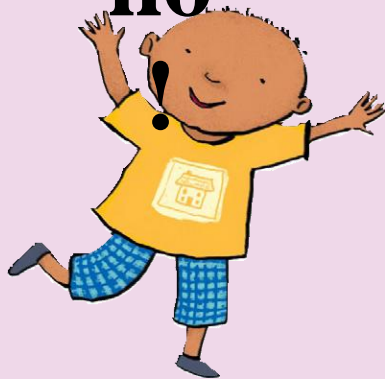
## ROLE-PLAY

Encourage role-play. Whether it's fantasy dressing up, acting out real-life roles such as doctor or teacher, or small-world play with little figures, role-play helps children develop their language and social skills, empathy and cultural awareness.

## PLAYING WITH FRIENDS

Playing with other children is also important, especially as they get closer to school age. Spending time with their peers teaches children about cooperation, collaboration and negotiation – all vital skills if they are to become good communicators.

# GET TALKING



## FAMILY PHOTOS

Looking at photos together is a great way to get conversation flowing.

Your child will be fascinated by pictures of themselves when they were little and old family albums from before they were born.

## PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT

Encourage your child to talk to 'safe' adults when you're out and about, for example greeting friends' parents, paying for something in a shop, or asking for something at the supermarket.

## PLAY BACK

Use a phone, tablet or dictaphone to enable your child to record and listen to their voice.

## DISCUSSIONS

When you read a story or watch a TV programme, ask them how the characters are feeling, and why.

## PUPPET PLAY

Try some puppet play. Speaking to or through a handpuppet can encourage children (especially those who are shy or troubled) to voice ideas and feelings they might otherwise find it hard to express.

## PICTURE BOOKS

Picture books that are particularly good for promoting discussion include: *You Choose* by Pippa Goodhart and Nick Sharratt and *Would You Rather?* by John Burningham.



## TALKING TOGETHER

At the end of the day, encourage your child to talk about what they've done and perhaps to recount it back to someone— Mum or Dad coming in from work or Grandma on the phone, for instance.

## COPING WITH 'WHY?'

If your preschooler's favourite word is "why", turn it back at them with: "Well, why do you think?"

TOP TIPS

# MAKE A MARK, MAKE A START

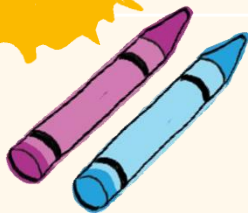
**Before letters**, numbers or pictures come simple marks. Mark-making is a great start to writing and art. Marks are how children learn to express themselves and portray the world around them. So, get mark-making and have some fun along the way.

Use hands, fingers and feet. Squishing dough, swirling colours together or making footprints in the snow— there are lots of ways to experiment with marks.

Encouraging your child to experiment with confidence will mean they are well on their way to being prepared for when those marks start to form into letters and numbers when they start school.



## GET STARTED



### OUTDOOR MARK-MAKING

- Use brushes or squeeze bottles to 'paint' with water on a patio, fence or wall.
- Draw with sticks in damp sand or mud.
- Zoom bikes and toy cars through a puddle to make track marks.
- Sketch with chunky chinks on tarmac.

### MESSY MARK-MAKING

- Mix table salt with glitter in the lid of a biscuit tin, then make letter shapes and patterns in the 'sparkle dust'.
- Draw with fingers in a tray of flour, shaving foam or 'gloop' (cornflower and water).
- Trickle different colours of icing onto fairy cakes.
- Let children decorate themselves, each other or you(!) with facepaints or bath crayons.

### MESS-FREE MARK-MAKING

- Try magnetic drawing boards and water drawing mats.
- If you have a tablet, there are lots of free children's art apps available such as PaintSparkles or Pixie Dust.

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### GREAT ARTISTS NEED TO EXPERIMENT

Try to gather different kinds of art materials, and allow your children to explore them and see what happens. Ask them to tell you about the picture afterwards.

### GREAT ART NEEDS TO BE SEEN

Let your children know you value their efforts. The best way is with a gallery on the wall or fridge.

Or why not make their creations into cards, or take photos.

## STARTING TO WRITE



### PENCIL CONTROL

As children get closer to school age, you'll probably notice their mark-making becoming more purposeful.

Now's the time

to encourage a three-fingered 'tripod' pencil grip and introduce activities to help them learn pencil control— so try dot-to-dots, tracing and colouring-in.

Let your children see you writing

Give them opportunities to try their own pretend writing, perhaps by adding some scribbles to the bottom of your shopping list.

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### LITTLE HANDS

Little hands need strength and dexterity to control a pencil. Help them develop this through everyday tasks such as cooking, gardening, moulding play dough, using scissors, picking up objects with toy tweezers and even popping bubble-wrap.

### NAME THAT MARK

The first writing mark that most children recognise is the initial letter of their name. Help them spot it in books and on signs and posters when you're out and about.

# LISTEN AND LEARN

**Great pupils** are great listeners. School involves a lot of listening – to their teacher and other adults – so practising good listening skills before your child starts school will help them get off to a great start. If your child attends a childcare or preschool setting, they're probably already used to listening to and taking instruction from other adults. Other good opportunities include attending a sports or dance class or story sessions at your local library.



## GET STARTED



### GOOD LISTENERS

Encourage listening skills by being a good listener yourself– so give your child plenty of opportunity to talk to you. Chat about their play or their day and ask for their views.

### ON THE SAME LEVEL

When you are talking to your child– make eye contact. Get down to their level whenever possible.

### ATTENTION PLEASE

Minimise distractions by turning off TVs and stereos and ignoring phones and computers– especially during meals, stories, baths and bedtime.

## LISTENING SKILLS

### DO YOU RECALL?

When you finish reading a book or watching a TV programme together, ask your child if they can recall the storyline.

### WHAT HAPPENED NEXT?

Make up a joint story, where you say one sentence, your child gives the next, and you keep alternating.

### MEMORY GAMES

Play games such as 'I Spy' or 'I Went to the Shops and I Bought...' to boost memory as well as listening skills.



# LISTENING GAMES



## SIMON SAYS

Play 'Simon Says' – try replacing 'Simon' with your child's favourite toy or character.

## WHAT CAN YOU HEAR?

Ask your child to close their eyes for one minute and list everything they can hear: a clock ticking, birdsong, cars...

## TRAFFIC LIGHTS

In the game 'Traffic Lights', you say a colour and children do an action. Once they've mastered red for stop and green for go, introduce new colours and actions, such as orange for turn around and blue for touch the ground.

## DELIBERATE MISTAKES

Get nursery rhymes deliberately wrong – "Humpty Dumpty sat on the sofa" or "Jack and Jill went up the escalator".

Children love to spot the mistake and put it right.



## LISTENING TRAINING

Sometimes your child may seem not to hear you – probably because they're completely absorbed in what they're doing and don't want it to end. If this often happens with your child, call them by name and give them a five-minute countdown to playtime ending. If they get angry or frustrated, discuss their feelings with them. It's all good practice for having to stick to an adult-led routine at school.

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## SHARING CONCERNS

If you suspect there may be a genuine issue with your child's hearing, have a chat with their childcare, preschool teacher or health visitor. If they share your concerns, go and see your GP so the issue can be investigated before they start school.

Early Years  
Information Booklet for Parents

