

Literacy and Communication

Literacy and communication are central to our children's learning and at the heart of everything we do at The Bridge School.

Communication is the passing of meaningful information between two or more people using all available means. At The Bridge we are committed to providing a total communication environment promoting breadth of opportunities for communication throughout every day. We believe in recognising and responding to all forms of communication from pupils.

We use gestures objects, photos, symbols, Makaton signs and the spoken word to provide children with opportunities to understand what is being said to them and express their feelings, needs, wants, choices and answers.

Our teachers plan and personalise learning to give children opportunities to communicate in a way that is appropriate for them. It is the main way for children to develop their thoughts, feelings and ideas as well as their language expertise. Speaking and listening are fundamental to this development and our teachers plan for opportunities for children to take part in speaking and listening activities at an appropriate level as well as through drama and role-play.

Reading

From the Early Years Foundation Stage upwards children experience a range of genres and are encouraged to listen to stories, poems and use non-fiction texts to find out information. Children are read to frequently and where appropriate children are provided with reading books. Children have the opportunity to read every day. Teaching of early reading runs parallel with the teaching of phonics and high frequency words. We use the Read, Write Inc. programme to teach children letter sounds and early reading skills. All classes have the opportunity to visit the school library where children may choose a book to bring home and share with you.

Writing

Children are encouraged to write in a way that is appropriate to them, a range of teaching strategies allow children to write where it is not possible for them to use a pencil. Strategies such as selecting letters to word build or write their own name, using specialised keyboard or symbols to write single words or simple phrases or sentences enable children to develop their writing skills. Children have daily opportunities to write or mark make where appropriate. They experience opportunities to write for a range of purpose including lists, letters and instructions. Writing is not restricted to English lessons but is encouraged across all subject areas where appropriate.

Speaking and Listening and Drama

Our sensory room and classroom role play spaces, provide exciting opportunities for our children to develop their speaking and listening and skills in drama. These activities are very much child led and are always based on our theme for that half term. Children at The Bridge are always listened to and responded to in a way that is appropriate to their needs. Children are encouraged to listen and respond to each other both in class and around school. Being listened to and responded to encourage high self-esteem in pupils.

Reading with your child

All children love a story and this is key to encouraging children's interest in reading. If your child sees you enjoying stories and books chances are they will be interested in books too. Sharing a story after bath time or at bedtime can also provide a quiet calm time to wind down and prepare your child for bed.

The pre-reader

- Likes to look at books and likes to be read to
- Likes to look at and talk about pictures
- Likes to behave like a reader for example holding a book, turning pages, pretending to tell the story
- Learns about words from songs, rhymes, traffic signs and logos on food packaging
- Learns about how text works for example moving from left to right/top to bottom on a page of writing
- Uses pictures to retell a story

The emerging reader

- Begins to understand the relationship between letters and sounds
- Begins to match written words to spoken words
- Begins to experiment with reading and tries to read words when looking at simple texts
- Uses pictures to help understand the text

How can you help your child?

- Read stories to your child on a daily basis
- Make story time a family time
- Language is the foundation for reading so talk to your child, sing with your child and say rhymes and chants with your child
- Ask your child questions
- Encourage your child to tell you what they think or feel
- Read stories that have repetitive parts and encourage them to join in
- Point to words as you read, this encourages children to make connections between the spoken and written word

- Read a variety of material, stories, poems, information books, magazine and newspaper articles
- Visit your local library
- Use interactive sites on the internet or talking books as well as paper books

Developing fine motor skills with your child

Fine motor skills are skills that need to be developed to assist with tasks such as fastening buttons and more complex tasks such as holding a pencil ready for writing. As parents you can help your child to develop his/her fine motor skills at home. Development of fine motor skills requires time and patience. Children will develop their fine motor skills at their own pace and will demonstrate different strengths and abilities. Your child will need to practise a task many times before he/she has mastered it. Some skills may be picked up more quickly than others. Children learn best when they are having fun so try to incorporate fine motor skill development into play activities.

How can you help your child?

- Massage your Childs hands to encourage awareness of touch, their fingers and their hands
- Encourage your child to pick up toys and items for example keys, bracelets, rattles and small toys
- Use homemade play dough to squash and squeeze
- Move fingers through shaving foam or cornflour mixed with water
- Pick up and explore natural materials such as leaves, sticks, pebbles, sea shells
- Pick up pasta and place it in a metal container (makes a great sound as it drops)
- Sing finger rhymes
- Use one finger to touch your nose, ears, another finger
- Find pegs in a tray of sand and peg them onto a paper plate when you have found them
- Dip fingers in paint and make dots on paper
- Isolate 1 finger and make a pattern in a tray of wet sand
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Writing with your child

As parents you can support your child significantly with their writing skills by doing simple activities at home. It takes time and practise for children to learn letter formation and be able to write words and sentences independently. Your child will notice people around them writing and will want to copy them. Children love experimenting with making marks. Mark making is a vital pre writing skill. The more opportunities your child has to develop large and small arm, hand and finger movements the better.

How can you help your child?

- Encourage your child to watch as you make marks/write
- Provide opportunities for your child to make marks with activities such as:
 - ✓ Dipping fingers in paint and dotting on paper
 - ✓ Pressing fingers and hands into wet sand
 - ✓ Isolate 1 finger and make patterns in wet sand
 - ✓ Make patterns in shaving foam or cornflour mixed with water

When your child is ready to hold a pencil and begin to write meaningfully activities should be fun.

Activities to encourage good pencil control could include:

- ✓ Take a pencil for a walk on a page
- ✓ Copy vertical, horizontal lines and circles drawn by an adult one at a time
- ✓ Give your child a piece of paper to write a shopping list as you write yours
- ✓ Encourage your child to colour in pictures – simple at first becoming more complex as your child becomes more proficient at colouring
- ✓ Expose children to print all of the time
- ✓ Show your child his/her name written down