

## **The Home Learning Environment**

The home is the single most significant environmental factor in enabling children to develop the trust, attitude and skills that will help them to learn and engage positively with the world. A good home learning environment provides the love, security, stimulation, encouragement and opportunities that help children to flourish- a process that begins at birth, if not before.

Roberts, 2009

It is widely recognised that *'All parents have the power to change outcomes for children no matter what their background'*

(Improving the home learning environment. A behaviour change approach. November 2018)

### **Seven key activities that can stretch a child's mind**

To support parents in providing a good home learning environment research in the Effective Provision of Pre-school Education (EPPE) study (Sylva et al, 2004) has shown that the following seven key activities 'stretch a child's mind' and have a marked impact on children's learning. These are:

#### **Going on visits**

Take time to really listen to what your child is trying to tell you. Tune into their non-verbal gestures as well as their language. Talk to them and use language with a high information content to develop their vocabulary.

Top tip... create 'phone free time': put mobiles away and concentrate on interacting with your child.

Have you tried... joining in with local community activities, e.g. school fair, carnivals, village fete, open days.

#### **Reading to and with children**

Use a variety of books and repeat favourite stories.

Provide opportunities for storytelling and using props to make stories come alive.

Top tip... include all family members, make story time part of your family routine.

Have you tried... bedtime stories with Dad? Using props with stories, e.g real fruit with 'The Very Hungry Caterpillar'?

#### **Painting and drawing**

Encourage children's own ideas, provide choice and encourage independence.

Top tip... praise children's early attempts at mark making and writing.

## **Going to the library**

Give your child time to choose books about things they are interested in, and involve them in the process of taking them out.

Borrow a mix of fiction and non-fiction books.

Top tip ... many libraries organise story-telling sessions

## **Creating opportunities to play with friends**

Make use of 'stay and play' type sessions

Top tip... arrange for children to have friends round to play.

Have you tried... meeting friends at the park to play group games like 'tig' or 'duck duck goose'?

## **Playing with letters and numbers**

Make numbers and letters part of daily life. For example looking at house numbers on the way to the park, spot letters whilst shopping.

Top tip... play with underwater crayons at bathtime, or add foam numbers to the bubbles.

Have you tried... including your child when you write a shopping list?

## **Singing songs, poems and nursery rhymes**

Find songs and rhymes to match experiences as they happen, e.g. 'Dr Foster went to Gloucester' when you are splashing in puddles.

Top tip... get the whole body moving by using action songs and finger rhymes.

Have you tried... making up your own silly rhymes and songs?

## **USEFUL LINKS:**

<https://hungrylittleminds.campaign.gov.uk>

This is a really useful website with lots of good ideas arranged according to age and stage of development.

<https://www.pacey.org.uk/working-in-childcare/spotlight-on/2-year-olds/home-learning-environment/>

Another excellent website. **Five small things** is definitely worth looking at. It consists of 5 short videos and other information about supporting children's learning at home.