



home
school
connect
"start smart, stay smart"

Helping your child at home

Parent Activity Guide to support Early Reading and Phonics

Early Years Foundation Stage: Reception Age 4-5 yrs



4-5
YEARS

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1. Introduction

What the research tells us about the family influence on early childhood learning

Research indicates the critical importance and extraordinary development of a child's brain during the first five years of life (Halfon, Shulman & Hochstein 2001; Shonkoff and Phillips 2000). Recent brain development research reveals that children cultivate 85% of their intellect, personality and skills by age 5. Given this, the role of parents as children's 'first educators' is critical.

Recent research has shown conclusively that for school aged children, parental involvement and participation makes a difference to children's engagement in their own learning, and educational achievement (Desforges & Abouchar, 2003; Siraj-Blatchford et al., 2002; Schoon and Parsons 2002; McWayne et al., 2004). A huge body of literature acknowledges the importance of 'parenting' and the creation of home conditions which promote child readiness for school (Luster and Rhoades, 1989; Raikes et al., 2006; McIntyre et al., 2007). In fact, 'at home good parenting' has been found to be the most powerful influence on child achievement outcomes even after all other factors impacting attainment have been taken out of the equation. Even though factors such as social class, income, parental levels of education all have an impact upon child outcomes, 'at home good parenting' has been found to have the biggest impact for primary aged children than any other factor. Parents may live in disadvantaged circumstances and/or may not have achieved well educationally, however if they regularly engage in activities to stimulate their child's minds, they can greatly enhance their child's development and accelerate progress. The five year longitudinal Effective Provision of Preschool Education (EPPE) study clearly demonstrated that what parents do is more important than who they are (Sammons et al 2002, 2003). In fact the power of the home learning environment is such that its impact is bigger than differences associated with school quality. It is even more profound, that these differences exist across all social and ethnic groups (Desforges & Abouchar, 2003).

Key educationalists have similar views on what 'at home good parenting' involves. Broadly speaking, they advocate that a good parent would (1) Protect and take care of their child's physical/health needs (2) Ensure secure bonding and attachment (3) Use a responsive parenting style where the child is positively affirmed (4) Encourage exploration and

provide developmentally appropriate learning experiences within a stimulating home environment (5) Provide opportunities for rehearsal & practice of basic skills (6) Ensure structure & consistency, to guide behaviour so that the child learns self-regulation and self-control (7) Teach the child how to be emotionally competent (8) Provide rich, interactive language experience (Powell, 1991; Ramey & Ramey 2004; Brazelton & Greenspan, 2000; Cameron, 2005; and Edie & Schmid 2007).

Parents engaging in educational activities and 'at home good parenting' were all associated with higher intellectual and social/behavioural scores in their children (Sylva et al, 1999; 2004). Examples of these activities included, reading with their child; teaching songs and nursery rhymes; playing with letters and numbers; visiting the library etc. Children besides from receiving skills, knowledge and intellectual stimulation at home, also absorbed a positive learning approach and 'can do' attitude, resulting in having a strong self-image as a successful learner (Sylva et al, 2004). It was further found that after age, the home learning environment was the variable with the strongest effect on cognitive development and that its effect was stronger than that of either socio-economic status or mother's qualifications (Melhuish et al., 2002).

Getting off to a good start, in pre-school and the first few years of schooling has lasting effects upon children's later school outcomes (Sammons et al, 2007; Feinstein & Duckworth 2006; Sylva et al, 2004; Halfon, Shulman & Hochstein 2001). Research shows that the earlier parents become involved in their child's literacy practices, the more powerful and long-lasting the effects (Mullis, Mullis, Cornille et al., 2004). Furthermore, of all the school subjects reading has been shown to be the most sensitive to parental influences (Senechal & LeFevre, 2002).

In summary, parents can contribute towards children experiencing a good start by the early home learning environment and the experiences they provide (Ramey et al. 2002; DfES, 2007). Children who start off school well seem to maintain that advantage throughout their future school years. Clearly, success in reading opens up the gateway to success in other academic subjects as well (Jordan, Snow & Porsche, 2000).

Benefits and unique aspects of the guide and the associated resources

The following points summarise the main advantages of using the pack: -

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The materials are multi-sensory, practical, fun and hands-on.
The majority of items in the pack are not worksheet based (or available on the high street). Particularly in the early years foundation stage (EYFS), children learn best with hands-on practical & multisensory materials. Children also learn most creatively with parent involvement, dialogue and social interaction.
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Resources are aligned to the curriculum and matched to age expectations.
The materials have been carefully selected, matched to curriculum expectations for the EYFS and brought together as one resource. For parents, this is a huge advantage and takes away hours of searching or wondering what to buy (i.e. what is relevant, curriculum related and fun for their child).
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Parents use at home the very same type of learning materials their children use and experience at school.
The resources/materials in the pack reflect learning materials typically used in the classroom, therefore keeping the connection between home & school, and use of consistent teaching approach across contexts.
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Materials can be used with all children, matched to their personal starting point
It is a resource intended to be used with children of all abilities. No matter what the starting point or level of ability of the child, the activities can be used flexibly to move his/her understanding on..
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No fuss 'pick up and go' approach. Parents can support their child without a great deal of specialist knowledge.
The parent activity section has been designed to fulfill a 'pick up and go' approach so that any parent or adult leader can implement short activities easily with all necessary resources to hand. There are essentially five key reading activities that any parent can do which are clearly explained in section 5 of this guide.
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Parents can use the resources flexibly according to their own agenda and time availability
Parents have flexibility to implement in their own time and work around their own and children's busy schedules e.g. not restricted to attending a particular place at a regular time such as after school maths/reading clubs.
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Individual or small group priming/reinforcement of key reading skills supported by an interactive adult can have a powerful impact upon the rate of reading progress.
Academic research is unequivocal about the benefits of parental involvement, the impact on learning by having priming and reinforcement opportunities mediated by an interactive adult.
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Shared responsibility and joint effort between home and school enhances children's reading skills.
Use of the pack by home and school over an academic year allows for shared responsibility of the child's learning and simultaneous enhanced reading abilities in the child.
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This resource supports parents to focus on the early years: Children who start smart, tend to stay smart.
Children who are early readers gain a massive head start to their schooling career, as reading is fundamental to access all areas of the curriculum. School readiness research clearly indicates that children who start school ahead tend to maintain this advantage far into their future schooling years.

2. Purpose and how to use the pack



The purpose of the guide and reading resources

This pack has been designed for use by adults who are in a key position to work with young children individually or in small groups but who are not necessarily qualified teachers. The pack is mainly designed for use by parents and other family members within the home setting (including grandparents, older siblings, uncles/aunts or nannies). Adults working within schools, and early years settings (such as teaching assistants, early years practitioners, nursery nurses, or key workers) may also find the materials useful when working with individual children or small groups. The aim of the guide and resources is to enhance oral understanding, as opposed to an over-reliance on paper/pencil methods. This is achieved by parents engaging in quality adult-child interaction, talk, modeling, hands-on practical learning and having fun (e.g. through playing games and multisensory learning). Parents can now access, through this pack, similar resources to those used by teachers in the classroom.

As children learn through the Reception year, parents may wish to use the reading pack for the following reasons. To:

- Reinforce curriculum learning simultaneously as it is being covered in school (e.g. the high frequency words, letter sounds of the week)
- Check on their child’s understanding/skills cross referenced to the reading curriculum. This is so that gaps in understanding/skills can be focused upon and strengths/areas of interest extended
- Introduce new areas/material to children so that they are more confident when they first experience it in school (priming).
- Extend/challenge children who are more able – some children are ready early to learn how to read and respond positively to reading instruction activities.

Teaching Materials

Within the Reception Reading Pack, there are seven core teaching items which help children learn to read at home. They complement the school Reception (age 4-5) reading curriculum. In addition, there are appendices at the back of the guide which will also support the implementation of the activities, which correspond to the Letters and Sounds Phonics Programme (DfES 2007). The guide also includes a useful section on developing reading comprehension and how to support children to read aloud.

The physical resources that accompany this guide are listed in Table 1 below.

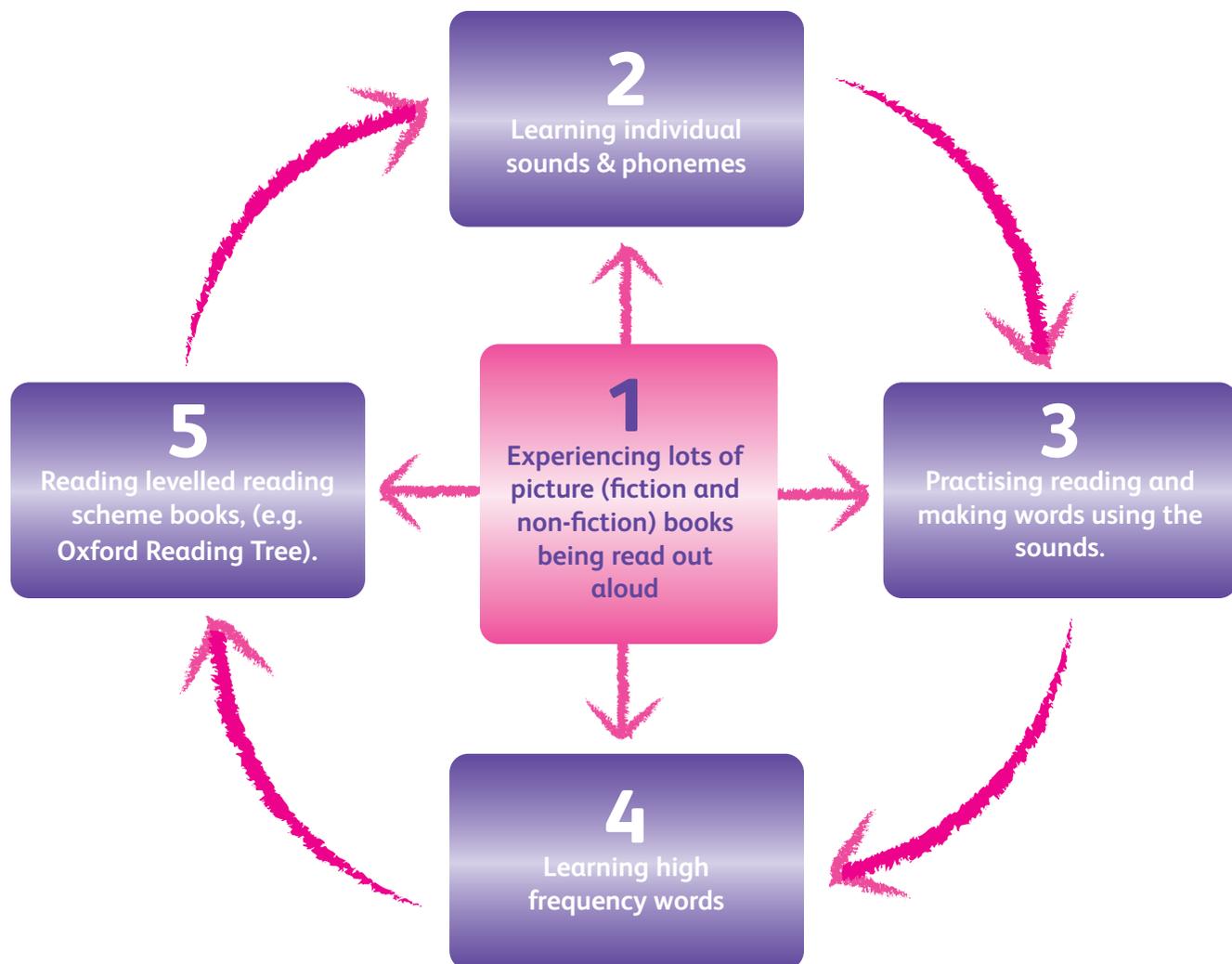
Table 1.

Reception Reading Parent Activity Guide	1. Parent activity guide to support early reading and phonics.
Reception Level Phonics Resources	2. Magnetic Board, Pen & Eraser 3. Phase 2-4 Sound Flashcards 4. Magnetic Tiles (phases 2-4) 5. Phase 2 cubes 6. Phase 3 cubes
High Frequency Words	7. Phase 2-4 High Frequency Words

5. Five ways to help teach your child to read at home

In Reception (or earlier for a few children) there are 5 main reading activities parents can do at home to help teach their child to read. These, as shown in the diagram are: -

1. Reading aloud lots of picture books
2. Teaching or reinforcing the 40+ phonemes (there are approximately 44 sounds).
3. Helping your child to blend sounds by making/reading words & sentences
4. Teaching or reinforcing the high frequency words
5. Supporting your child to read a levelled reading scheme book



Pink Parent leads and shares books with children (mainly to develop listening skills, comprehension, vocabulary; and knowledge of how books work)

Purple Parent leads to teach child how to read individual words through phonics and high frequency word recognition. As a child learns to read individual words, parents support their children to read aloud. Activities 2, 3, and 4 are consolidated through activity 5.