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# Newsletter

## August 2025

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**Welcome to the August newsletter.** We are delighted to let you know if you haven't heard that Early Years Stronger Practice Hubs will be doubling from 18 to 36 and will be funded for the next three years.

'Giving Every Child the Best Start in Life'. Was published on **Monday 7 July 2025**

The publication makes specific reference to Stronger Practice Hubs:

***Expanding Early Years Stronger Practice Hubs:*** *We're doubling the number of Stronger Practice Hubs from 18 to 36, enabling even more early years settings and childminders to access free, evidence-based, resources and training to help improve their practice. Nearly 10,000 settings are already part of these networks.*

This confirms that the hubs programme will continue for at least a further three years and we will recruit more hubs to be able to expand the reach of the programme even further. Stronger Practice Hubs will be involved in the following:

***Tailored support after inspections:*** *When a setting or childminder needs to improve, a Stronger Practice Hub will arrange one-to-one coaching or expert guidance from an experienced early years professional to quickly and effectively address the issues identified. This could include, for example, working with the setting leader to draw up an action plan, supporting leaders to evaluate the quality of their setting, or providing advice and guidance to enable the setting to deliver quality practice.*

**We now have a Leadership Network:**

This will be held the first **Tuesday of each month** on Workplace Zoom

**3.30pm – 4.15pm**

**Meeting ID: 881 3994 7902**

**Passcode: 005369**

**The same ID and passcode for every monthly Tuesday meeting.**

**oAugust 5th**

**oSeptember 2nd**

**oOctober 7th**

**oNovember 4th**

**oDecember 2nd**

**oJanuary 6th 2026**

**oFebruary 3rd**

**oMarch 3rd**

**We now have a SEND/Early Years Network:**

This will be held the first Thursday of each month on Workplace Zoom

**6.00-7.00pm**

**Meeting ID: 874 2439 5942**

**Passcode: 774607**

**The same ID and passcode for every monthly Thursday meeting.**

**oAugust 7th**

**oSeptember 4th**

**oOctober 2nd**

**oNovember 6th**

**oDecember 4th**

**oFebruary 5th 2026**

**oMarch 5th 2026**

Don't forget we have our conference:

**Saturday 16th August 2025 at The Lake House Cambridge Road, Waterloo, Liverpool L22 1RR, 9.30a.m. to 12.30p.m. Face to Face.**

Our Theme for the conference is: **Intergenerational sustainability and early numeracy** with Dr. Diane Boyd, Independent Consultant. Diane will share examples of how young children under five explore early numeracy linked to Intergenerational sustainability.

Email [sphubnw@evertoncentre.liverpool.sch.uk](mailto:sphubnw@evertoncentre.liverpool.sch.uk) if you would like to

attend.

**Look out for our Carbon Action Plan and Audit tool Webinar on Wednesday 20th August 2025 6-7p.m with Dr. Diane Boyd. E-mail if you would like to join the session on**

sphubnw@evertoncentre.liverpool.sch.uk

Are you looking for a new recording on Self Regulation and Executive Function or Supervision for Childminders?? Email sphubnw@evertoncentre.liverpool.sch.uk for more details.

### **RECORDED SESSIONS**

We have a number of recorded sessions online for staff training:

**CELEBRATING DIVERSITY, PROMOTING INCLUSION, AND ANTI-RACIST CULTURES IN THE EARLY YEARS** 25 minutes with Sian Phillips - Anti-Racism Advocate/Researcher/Consultant.

**MAXIMISING THE IMPACT OF PUPIL PREMIUM IN THE EARLY YEARS** 20 minutes with Kaya Doyle, Programme Manager.

### **INSET SESSION 1 TEACHING AND MODELLING LANGUAGE:**

30 minutes with Alex Gower-Jones (Independent Consultant). This has an accompany written sheet of activities to support this recorded Inset session.

### **INSET SESSION 2 TEACHING AND MODELLING VOCABULARY:**

30 minutes with Alex Gower-Jones (Independent Consultant). This has an accompany written sheet of activities to support this recorded Inset session.

### **INSET SESSION 1 EARLY LITERACY – TEACHING SOUND**

DISCRIMINATION 30 minutes with Alex Gower-Jones (Independent Consultant).

### **INSET SESSION 2 EARLY LITERACY – TEACHING SOUND**

**MANIPULATION** 30 minutes with Alex Gower-Jones (Independent Consultant).

**INTERACTIVE READING CONFERENCE:** Conference from 29th March on Interactive Reading re 1 hour, 30 minutes with Alex Gower-Jones (Independent Consultant).

**17 SUSTAINABLE GOALS:** Conference from Saturday 22nd March on the 17 Sustainable Development Goals – An Introduction re 2 hours with Diane Boyd.

**WORKING WITH 0-3's:** An introduction to working with children 0-3 years by Amanda Quirk (Early Years Advisory Teacher).

**SENSORY FUN** Tiny Happy People sensory fun for babies indoors and outdoors with low cost/no cost activities shared by Denise Wright (Independent Consultant). The webinar shows educators how they can inspire parents to undertake sensory activities at home to support their child's learning and development through play.

**INTERACTIVE READING** online recorded session by Alex Gower-Jones (Independent Consultant) explores how early years educators can explore interactive reading in their practice.

**SKILLS BEFORE WRITING** online recorded session by Amanda Quirk (Early Years Advisory Teacher) has put together an online programme for early years educators exploring skills before early writing.

**EMOTIONAL REGULATION** online recorded session by Maria Beale (SENDSCO) and Emma Doran (Early Years Co-ordinator) from Whitefield Primary School, Liverpool. Maria and Emma share how they have worked with children in the early years and their families exploring emotional regulation.

**NURSERY RHYMES** online recorded session by Faye Johnson, Assistant Headteacher from Everton Nursery School and Family Centre has put together a session on exploring Nursery Rhymes with young children.

**COMMUNICATION AND LANGUAGE** online recorded session by Amanda Quirk (Early Years Advisory Teacher) has put together an

Amanda Quirk, (Early Years Advisory Teacher) has put together an online programme for early years educators exploring communication and language.

**OAP (ORDINARY AVAILABLE PROVISION)** – Amanda Quirk, (Early Years Advisory Teacher) has put together a recording on OAP (Ordinary Available Provision) in early years.

**USING MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS** - Craig and Pip from East Prescot Nursery School, Liverpool have developed an online recording on how to use a range of musical instruments. Childminders across our Hub have the opportunity to borrow a musical instruments bag but many early years educators will have these musical instruments in their provision.

**MATHEMATICS RECORDED ONLINE** – Rebecca Morgan (Nursery Teacher) from Everton Nursery School and Family Centre has recorded a practical session online to share with colleagues to explore mathematics with under fives.

**SENSORY CURRICULUM RECORDED ONLINE** - Emma-Louise Scott (Nurture Teacher) from Everton Nursery School and Family Centre shares her experiences and practical examples of a sensory curriculum.

### **EARLY EMOTIONS RECORDED ONLINE**

Kaya Doyle (Programme Manager) shares an introduction to early emotional health, the issues children face and links to socio-economic backgrounds.

If you would like to access to any of the recorded training sessions, email [sphubnw@evertoncentre.liverpool.sch.uk](mailto:sphubnw@evertoncentre.liverpool.sch.uk)

Don't forget to access information from our National Stronger Practice website:

<https://www.strongerpracticehubs.org.uk/hubs/nw/liverpool-city-region-and-beyond-ey sph>

We also have a local website on our lead school website. See here for more information:

<https://www.evertonnurseryschoolandfamilycentre.org/strongerpracticehub>

Also see the following for professionals from Tiny Happy People (BBC) if you haven't seen already:

<https://canvas-story.bbcrewind.co.uk/tinyhappypeople-guide-professionals/>



## **August 2025 issue**

**Welcome, CPD, Publication of Early Years Stronger Practice Hubs Programme Evaluation Report, Carbon Action Plan, Early Years and SEND Professional Development Network, EYFS Leadership Network, Supporting Communication and Language: a whole setting approach, Enabling Environments, Mathematical Development Blog, PACEY / CORAM Regional Childminder Awards 2025, DFE Giving every child the best start in life.**

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## **Publication of Early Years Stronger Practice Hubs Programme Evaluation Report**

*We are pleased to share that the full evaluation report for the Early Years Stronger Practice Hubs programme has now been published.*

*The report brings together key findings and reflections from the duration of the programme and highlights the impact of your collective efforts.*

*The evaluation found:*

- Suitability of the Hub model as a way of supporting the sector, despite initial challenges around set up, processes and timeframes.*
- Effective working relationships were a key strength and driver of programme success. Relationships with local authorities were either a key enabler or barrier to the reach and success of the programme.*
- NCB, EEF and Hubs were proud to have been part of the Early Years Stronger Practice Hubs programme*
- Settings rated the offer highly, and most of those surveyed (74%) reported changing their practice following their participation in Early Years Stronger Practice Hubs programme activities.*
- Most settings agreed changes made to practice would benefit children for all intended outcomes, with this being highest for children's language and communication skills and PSED*
- The programme had good reach into deprived areas, with a greater impact seen and more measures (of confidence, knowledge and skills) showing a positive change after the programme in the most deprived areas*

*You can access the report here: [Early years stronger practice hubs programme evaluation - GOV.UK](#)*

*The success and impact of the Stronger Practice Hubs programme could not have been possible without your contributions, hard work and dedication.*

*You can get in touch with your [local Stronger Practice Hub](#) for*

You can get in touch with your [Local Stronger Practice Hub](#) for further advice and support, or alternatively visit [Support for Practitioners - Help for Early Years Providers](#). You can also access DfE's free online [Early Years Child Development Training](#), which offers practice advice for supporting the children in your setting, including Reception year.

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## Are you looking for inspiration to write or add to your Carbon Action Plan (CAP)?

Have a look at our Sustainable Hub website (designed with content from Highfield Nursery School/East of England Stronger Practice Hub) that has lots of suggestions to help you begin your journey.

**Look out for our Carbon Action Plan and Audit tool Webinar on Wednesday 20th August 2025 6-7p.m with Dr. Diane Boyd. E-mail if you would like to join the session on [sphubnw@evertoncentre.liverpool.sch.uk](mailto:sphubnw@evertoncentre.liverpool.sch.uk)**

<https://www.evertonnurseryschoolandfamilycentre.org/climateactionplanning>

The screenshot shows the homepage of the 'Early Years Sustainable Hub'. The header includes the logo for 'Everton Nursery School and Family Centre' and 'Stronger Practice Hub'. The main navigation menu contains: Home, About Us, Nursery School, Key Information, Parents and Remote Learning, Children's Centre, and Contact Us. There are also social media icons for YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, and a language dropdown set to 'English'. The main content area features a search bar and an email address: [sphubnw@evertoncentre.liverpool.sch.uk](mailto:sphubnw@evertoncentre.liverpool.sch.uk). Below this is a section titled 'The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development' which states: 'The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by all United Nations Member States in 2015, provides a shared blueprint for peace and prosperity for people and the planet, now and into the future. At its heart are the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which are an urgent call for action by all countries - developed and developing - in a global partnership.' The page is divided into two main sections: 'Featured Resources' and 'UNESCO Sustainable Development Goals'. The 'Featured Resources' section includes 'Climate action', 'Case Studies', and 'Curriculum Resources'. The 'UNESCO Sustainable Development Goals' section displays a grid of 15 SDG icons, numbered 1 through 15, with their respective titles and symbols.

# Early Years and SEND Professional Development Network



Liverpool City Region and Beyond Stronger Practice Hub have an Early Years Professional Development Network for the Early Years Sector

The aim of this network is to offer bitesize training, legislation and policy updates, a safe space to ask questions to other professionals and share best practice.

**Audience: Childminders, early years educators and those working in practice with under 5s.**

This will be held the **first Thursday of each month** on Workplace Zoom **6.00-7.00pm**

**Meeting ID: 874 2439 5942**

**Passcode: 774607**

**The same ID and passcode for every monthly Thursday meeting.**

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- **February 5<sup>th</sup> 2026**
- **March 5<sup>th</sup> 2026**



## EYFS Leadership Network

Liverpool City Region and Beyond Stronger Practice Hub have an Early Years Leadership Network for the Early Years Sector.

The aim of this network is to offer, legislation and policy updates, updates on training for your staff teams, a safe space to ask questions to other professionals and share best practice.

**Audience: School leaders, EYFS Coordinators, Nursery Manager, Childminder Leads, LA reps**

This will be held the first **Tuesday of each month** on Workplace Zoom  
**3.30pm – 4.15pm**

**Meeting ID: 881 3994 7902**  
**Passcode: 005369**

**The same ID and passcode for every monthly Tuesday meeting.**

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## Supporting Communication and Language: a whole setting approach

Craig Bolton, Headteacher at East Prescot Road Nursery School explores his school's approach to Communication and Language, with a particular focus on promoting children's oracy, narrative and vocabulary skills.



## **Introduction**

East Prescott Road Nursery School is a maintained nursery school (MNS) for 3 and 4 year olds, attracting children and families from in and around Liverpool. The staff team has developed and refined the school's curriculum offer to prioritise communication and language over many years. The school has Communication Friendly Setting (CFS) status and has also been awarded 'Ambassador School' status for its involvement in the NELI Preschool Programme.

Why is Communication and Language such a priority?

Communication is a basic human right. A child's ability to communicate effectively through speaking and listening is crucial for development. Oracy supports literacy, social-emotional well-being, and academic success. Children with strong oracy skills express themselves clearly, understand others, and participate actively in learning and social situations. Communication and Language underpins all areas of learning and the child's sense of self. A child who has not yet developed age-appropriate oracy skills will find every interaction with the world around them that bit more difficult. They won't have the vocabulary to express emotions, needs or opinions, or to form fulfilling relationships based on shared interests. As early years practitioners, our primary role must be to support our children to become effective communicators.

## What works well in our setting?

### •Planning for language

Being intentional about language in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) means purposefully planning for specific 'target vocabulary' when practitioners interact with children. Practitioners must be clear on the specific words that they want to draw children's attention to and model these words in sentences.



Purposeful planning is vital for ensuring that language opportunities are maximised. This involves planning activities that encourage conversation, introducing novel objects, selecting items that promote curiosity or choosing books that expose children to new language structures and words. Not only is this approach impactful in small group times when children gather together, but throughout the continuous provision, when adults interact with children in the indoor and outdoor environments. Secure practitioner subject knowledge underpins effective interactions by allowing staff to respond knowledgeably in the moment.



- **Making the most of every moment**

‘Every teachable moment’ is the maxim of any setting intending to increase children’s daily dosage of language. Practitioners must identify every opportunity to add more language, use familiar words in a slightly different context or give children the opportunity to hear different language structures. Practitioners seek out opportunities within daily routines and tasks to teach language in context. Tidy up time, changing times and meal times provide times to each language daily.

- **A language-rich environment**

Providing access to a wide range of books, toys, and materials that stimulate language, as well as ensuring that adults model and use language effectively, are all key to high quality interactions. Children are unique. Some will communicate more freely in one area and less in others. Boys tend to communicate more freely “on the go” outdoors, or while working on a task, such as a woodwork creation or constructing with block play. The enabling learning environment needs to be responsive to children’s individual preferences and interests and promote their curiosity and exploration.



- **Observing and responding**

Skilful practitioners observe children's language and respond to their individual needs. This includes paying attention to the words and phrases they use, as well as their non-verbal communication, and responding in ways that encourage further language use.

Practitioners need to be clear about which children are able to communicate sociably with familiar and unfamiliar people, as well as being aware of those children who are more reluctant to talk or whose interactions with others are highly focused on the child's own agenda.

Our setting employs a range of evidence-based tools that help practitioner to build a clear picture of each child in terms of their communication styles and how they use language in different situations and contexts. When observational evidence is then combined with information from language screening and assessment tools, practitioners have a full and comprehensive assessment of a child's stage of language development and speech language and communication needs.

## **What intentional strategies promote language and communication?**

### **Talk about What You Are Doing**

Narrate your own actions and the actions of the children during play, introducing new vocabulary and sentence structures.

### **Open-Ended Questions**

Instead of asking simple yes/no questions, ask open-ended questions that encourage children to think critically and express their ideas and feelings.

### **Repetition and Expansion**

Repeat and expand on children's utterances, helping them to hear correct grammar and vocabulary in context.

## **Back-and-Forth Conversations**

Encourage children to engage in back-and-forth conversations, even if they are just at the babbling stage. This helps them develop their conversational skills.

## **Reading Aloud Regularly**

Read aloud to children to expose them to new vocabulary, sentence structures, and stories. This can have a significant impact on their language development.

## **Dialogic reading**

Use dialogic reading for shared book reading. Engage children in a conversation about the book, rather than just reading to them. Focus on actively involving the child through questions and prompts, fostering language development and early literacy skills. Encourage children to become active participants in the reading process, leading to a deeper understanding of the text and improved communication skills.

## **Sign-Supported Communication**

Communicate using a combination of speech, facial expressions, body language, tone of voice, and signs, particularly focusing on key words within a sentence



## **How does 'NELI Preschool' support Communication and Language in our setting?**

The Nuffield Early Language Intervention for Preschool (NELI Preschool) is central to our school's universal language offer. The impact of NELI is so powerful because it is a whole-school oral language intervention and enrichment programme, which enables all children, regardless of starting points to make additional progress. This underpins our school's culture and ethos of securing the very best start in life for all children.

We were able to integrate all aspects of the NELI programme seamlessly into our existing routines. NELI resources, planning and scripted sessions have supported us to deliver highly engaging whole-class and small group learning experiences. NELI Preschool encourages collaboration between practitioners and a shared understanding about the precise vocabulary to be taught each day.

We have integrated NELI Preschool into our curriculum planning, aligning learning intentions and themes to maximise the potential for language learning, linked to the high quality texts which form the bedrock of the programme. This provides our children with a rich and meaningful context in which to learn new words and explore concepts linked to the 'Special Words'. There has been a hugely positive impact on our continuous provision, with practitioners much clearer about the intended learning and expectations around high quality interactions.

The impact of NELI Preschool on children's oral language skills has been profoundly positive in terms of children's narrative skills, confidence and willingness to communicate and expanding their vocabulary. The programme underpins our universal language offer for all children in the setting, ensuring that all children receive a daily dosage of high quality language input. This means that the school can be assured that children are being taught new vocabulary in a systematic and progressive manner. Wider impacts include supporting reluctant communicators, and higher levels of wellbeing and involvement for all children.

## **Links to further reading:**

<https://oxedandassessment.com/uk/neli-preschool/>

<https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/projects-and-evaluation/projects/neli-preschool-2023-24-trial>

<https://www.elklan.co.uk/Training/Settings/CFSe/>

<https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/early-years/evidence-store/communication-and-language>

<https://speechandlanguage.org.uk/educators-and-professionals/programmes-for-nurseries-and-schools/>

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# ONLINE WEBINAR ENABLING ENVIRONMENTS

Save the Date

Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup> September  
3.45-4.45p.m.



**EMAIL THE HUB TO REGISTER**

[sphubnw@evertoncentre.liverpool.sch.uk](mailto:sphubnw@evertoncentre.liverpool.sch.uk)



Join us as we explore evidence-based auditing tools you can use to develop high quality Early Years provision.

**DELIVERED BY THE LIVERPOOL CITY REGION AND  
BEYOND EARLY YEARS STRONGER PRACTICE HUB**

**Funded by  
UK Government**

# Mathematical Development Blog, written for practitioners working with children aged 2-5

Written by Gemma Callaghan  
Headteacher of Frodsham  
Primary Academy



## Introduction

The Early Years Educational programme for math's states that Developing a strong grounding in number is essential so that all children develop the necessary building blocks to excel mathematically. Children should be able to count confidently, develop a deep understanding of the numbers to 10, the relationships between them and the patterns within those numbers. By providing frequent and varied opportunities to build and apply this understanding - such as using manipulatives, including small pebbles and tens frames for organising counting - children will develop a secure base of knowledge and vocabulary from which mastery of mathematics is built. In addition, it is important that the curriculum includes rich opportunities for children to develop their spatial reasoning skills across all areas of mathematics including shape, space and measures.

Early years foundation stage statutory framework 2024

When we think about teaching maths in the early years, our minds often jump to counting songs, number games, or worksheets. But long before formal teaching begins, children are building crucial mathematical understanding through their everyday experiences, often without even realising it. The environments they explore each day, whether in a childminder's home, a nursery room, or a reception classroom, play a vital role in shaping how they see and engage with numbers, shapes, patterns, and problem-solving.

A well-planned environment doesn't just support learning, it enables it. It offers children the freedom to explore mathematical ideas independently and through guided play, creating the conditions for deep, lasting understanding. Current evidence, including research from the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) and the Early Years Evidence Store, highlights the importance of high-quality environments that make maths meaningful, visible, and accessible to all children.

In this blog, we'll explore what effective mathematical environments look like in different early years settings, what should be available, and how provision can progress to meet children's growing mathematical abilities, including the critical role of the adult.



## **The power of relationships: Building strong foundations for mathematical learning**

Positive, responsive relationships between staff and children are more than just beneficial, they are foundational to effective learning, particularly in mathematics. Research consistently highlights that the quality of interactions between educators and learners can significantly impact children's cognitive development and attitudes toward learning, and mathematics is no exception.



According to the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF), effective early years interventions are grounded in high-quality adult-child interactions. Their guidance on early mathematics underscores that *"mathematical learning is most effective when it is embedded in meaningful, everyday interactions with trusted adults."* This means that when staff engage children in thoughtful dialogue, encourage exploration, and provide timely scaffolding, they are not only supporting immediate understanding but also cultivating long-term mathematical thinking.

Secure, warm relationships create a safe environment where children feel confident to take risks, make mistakes, and engage in problem-solving. All essential components of mathematical learning. These relationships foster trust, which in turn supports language development, sustained attention, and resilience including key traits for developing numerical fluency and reasoning skills. Furthermore, the EEF emphasises the importance of "intentional teaching" where practitioners purposefully use rich mathematical language and structured support in everyday routines and play. When delivered by adults who know the child well, these strategies are more likely to be effective because they are tailored to individual developmental needs and interests.

In essence, the development of early mathematical competence is not just about teaching numbers and shapes, it's about the quality of the learning environment and the relational context in which that learning happens. When children feel known, understood, and supported by the adults around them, their potential for mathematical growth expands dramatically.

### **The Power of Questions: How adult interactions shape early mathematical thinking**

In early years' settings, it's not just what we provide for children, it's how we interact with them that shapes their learning. One of the most powerful tools educators have to support mathematical development in the EYFS is purposeful questioning.

Rather than simply giving children the answers or directing them to the "right" solution, effective questioning encourages children to think, reason, and explain. It helps them to make connections, use mathematical language, and develop a deeper understanding of the

concepts they're exploring, whether they're counting, measuring, sorting, or solving problems through play

## Why questioning matters

Research from the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) and the Early Years Evidence Store highlights the importance of high-quality adult-child interactions. When practitioners use open-ended questions and follow children's interests, it leads to greater engagement, richer dialogue, and improved mathematical reasoning.

Instead of asking, "What's  $2 + 2$ ?", consider asking:

- "How did you work that out?"
- "What do you notice about these shapes?"
- "What would happen if we added one more?"
- "Can you find a different way to solve it?"

These types of questions promote sustained shared thinking, an evidence-based approach where adults and children co-construct knowledge through meaningful back-and-forth interactions.

## Characteristics of effective mathematical questioning

- Open-ended: Encourages multiple possible answers and ways of thinking.
- Reflective: Prompts children to explain and justify their reasoning.
- Developmentally appropriate: Matches the child's level while gently extending it.
- Embedded in play: Arises naturally through exploration and hands-on experiences.

From exploration to understanding

A child pouring water between containers is doing more than just playing—they're engaging with volume and capacity. A skilled adult might ask, "Which one holds more?" or "How do you know it's full?", transforming a simple activity into a powerful learning moment.

It's this blend of child-led exploration and well-timed adult questioning that creates the richest opportunities for mathematical growth

## Creating positive learning environments for the development of mathematical development

The physical and emotional environment in which children learn plays a vital role in shaping their early mathematical understanding. Whether in a childminder setting, nursery, or reception classroom, well-designed environments provide the structure, stimulation, and support children need to explore, discover, and develop core mathematical concepts. But what exactly does an effective mathematical environment look like and how should it evolve as children grow?



## Why environment matters for maths learning

Evidence from the Early Years Evidence Store and the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) confirms that high-quality environments support children's mathematical development by embedding opportunities for exploration and interaction in everyday routines and play. According to the EEF's guidance on early mathematics, rich learning environments that include both child-led play and adult-guided learning are associated with stronger outcomes in number, spatial reasoning, and problem-solving. Mathematical development is not confined to a maths table or specific lesson, it's woven through daily life. A thoughtfully planned environment enables children to encounter maths naturally and frequently, encouraging curiosity and meaningful engagement.

## What will we see in effective environments?

In high-quality early years settings, mathematical learning is visible, purposeful, and seamlessly integrated into all areas. Key features include:

- **Accessible, clearly organised resources:** Items such as counting objects, number lines, shape sorters, scales, measuring tapes, dice, puzzles, and pattern blocks should be readily available at child height.
- **Mathematical language displayed and modelled:** Visual aids such as number posters, shape names, size vocabulary, and positional language (e.g. "under," "next to") help children absorb mathematical concepts and language.
- **Opportunities for exploration and problem-solving:** Open-ended resources like loose parts (buttons, shells, bottle tops), construction materials, and natural objects promote counting, sorting, comparing, and measuring.
- **Mathematics in the daily routine:** Visual timetables, snack-time counting, tidy-up sorting, and outdoor activities like filling and emptying containers all contribute to mathematical understanding.
- **Adult interactions that support thinking:** Skilled practitioners use questioning and dialogue to extend learning, "How many more do we need?", "What comes next?", "How can we make it fair?"



## What should be available and how should it progress?

A progressive approach to the environment ensures that as children grow, the mathematical opportunities grow with them. Here's how this progression might look:

Childminder settings and toddler rooms

- **Focus:** Early number sense, spatial awareness, sorting, and comparison.
- **Environment:** Everyday routines used for counting (e.g. steps, fruits), sensory trays with different-sized containers, simple puzzles, shape and colour matching activities.
- **Adult role:** Narrating play, modelling number language, encouraging comparisons (big/small, more/less)

In Nurseries and Pre-Schools (3–4 years):

- **Focus:** Counting with one-to-one correspondence, early addition and subtraction, shape recognition, understanding size and order.
- **Environment:** Number lines, manipulatives (e.g. counting bears), role-play areas with pretend money, measuring tools, pattern blocks.
- **Adult role:** Introducing early mathematical strategies, supporting sustained shared thinking, using open-ended questions

In Reception Classes (4–5 years):

- **Focus:** Number bonds, subitising, number composition, spatial reasoning, simple operations, problem-solving.
- **Environment:** Numeracy-rich areas with targeted challenges, opportunities for writing numbers, small-world play for problem-solving scenarios, structured and unstructured resources for exploration.
- **Adult role:** Intentional teaching, targeted small-group maths sessions, promoting reasoning and justifying answers.

## The evidence behind the practice

According to the Early Years Evidence Store, creating enabling environments that support mathematical learning is closely linked to improved outcomes. The most effective settings use a balance of direct teaching and embedded learning through play and interaction. The EEF's Improving Mathematics in the Early Years and

Key Stage 1 guidance report also highlights the importance of integrating maths into routines and environments to help children make connections and deepen understanding.

## **Conclusion**

The environment in childminding, nursery, and reception settings should do more than "contain" children, it should inspire them. A rich, inviting, and well-planned space helps children encounter mathematics in natural and meaningful ways. By combining engaging materials with skilled adult support, settings can foster a love of maths and build the strong foundations children need to succeed as confident, curious mathematicians.

## **Next steps**

Join us in the new academic year as we provide training webinars and face to face walkthroughs as we explore the 5 significant areas mentioned in the EYFS evidence store for development of mathematics.

1. Teaching the Association between number and quantity
2. Promoting fluency with numbers and sequences
3. Teaching problem solving skills for maths
4. Teaching and modelling how to make comparisons and connections
5. Facilitating mathematical language

### References

[Improving Mathematics in the Early Years and Key Stage 1 | EEF](#)  
[Early years foundation stage \(EYFS\) statutory framework - GOV.UK](#)  
[Improving early education through high-quality interactions | EEF](#)  
[EEF | Early Mathematics](#)

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# **PACEY / CORAM Regional Childminder Awards 2025**



**In April 2025 Pacey/Coram launched their annual regional childminder awards to recognise and celebrate the very best childminders.**

Those who make a difference to the lives of the children they care for, who set the bar high and are an inspiration to all in the profession.

They had so many fantastic entries, some truly incredible childminders who go above and beyond to support children, their families and local communities. They were blown away by the level of commitment, passion and knowledge shown.

We are proud to announce that the winner from the North of England is from Warrington one of our Local Authority's who are linked with our Stronger Practice Hub.

On behalf of the stronger practice hub, I would like to say congratulations and introduce you to.....

Melanie Louise Han was put forward for this role as part of National Childminding Week in May.

I went to visit Melanie at her home in Warrington to congratulate her and ask her about being nominated and winning the award and what it means to her and her Childminding family.

Melanie said 'I still can't believe it, I was so honoured to be nominated and to actually win I am still in shock!



"I have been a childminder for 20 years this year. I share a lovely home with my partner. I am in a same sex relationship, and we have been together for 18 Years. We have a child through IVF. I have dogs, a tortoise, a parrot that can sing and he learns the names of my children and the newest addition is an axolotl! I also have a few insects that the children are interested in.

At the beginning I wanted to help support families in my area and provide a safe, happy place for children to learn and I wanted to make a difference. This still is very important to me."

"I was given a fantastic opportunity to be a mentor by the DFE to support childminders in Covid recovery. I met lots of wonderful childminders and helped support their settings. I thoroughly enjoyed this experience.

Warrington Borough Council made me a WELLCOMM champion and Childminders come to me to receive a pack when they are needed."

"I have worked hard so far this year on physical development. I have had my garden made into an area where we can develop all areas of learning, however physical development is an area I feel I needed to improve. I have balance beams and stones to jump onto. I now have a climbing frame where children can gain confidence. I now also have a garden room where parents can talk privately or feed their baby. We also sit in there to read stories and have reflective learning time."

Melanie Louise Han.

When I arrived at Melanie's home, the first thought was, this is going to be an amazing setting. Before you walk through the door there is a huge welcome sign, and the garden is so amazingly decorated and makes you want to go and explore!



When I walked through the door, I could immediately see the setting was well thought out and a highly engaging learning environment. The Children self-select from an extensive range of toys and resources and have both indoor and outdoor activities which are provided all year round. Having such an exciting and stimulating environment promotes children's independence very well and I am not surprised she has an OFSTED 'Outstanding grade' to be proud off.

Melenie specialises in caring with children with SEND needs. At present she is looking after a little boy who has sight impairment. The main furniture is strategically placed so the child can work his way around, in each doorway Melanie has put down luminous tape so he can easily see where the doorway is situated, this makes the setting totally inclusive.

Melanie supports children's individual needs by adapting her practice to scaffold their learning by ensuring their sensory needs are met. The sensory room Melanie has made is an amazing space, every inch is exciting and equipped for an optimal sensory experience.

The high-quality curriculum ignites children's natural curiosity, just by talking to Melanie you know she has an excellent understanding of the different ways in which children learn. Learning needs are skilfully woven into the daily routine and free play.

<https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/early-years/toolkit/play-based-learning>

It was evident, the Children present today have extremely strong bonds with Melanie as they are very happy and secure in her care. Her calm, nurturing approach supports them to develop self-regulation skills and be strong confident little learners. The child led approach Melanie is teaching the children support them to develop the skills they need for the future.



All winners from the awards will be automatically entered into the Childminder of the Year awards being held at the PACEY/CORAM conference in Autumn 25 and I would like to wish Melanie all the best and can't wait to visit her soon.



<https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/early-years/toolkit>

<https://birthto5matters.org.uk/inclusive-practice-and-equalities/>

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## [Giving every child the best start in life](#)

The foundations of the stronger society this government wants to build must be laid down from the very start of children's lives.



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### **Liverpool City Region and Beyond Early Years Stronger Practice Hub Feedback Form**

If you have attended any of our conferences or face to face training, please scan the QR code and send us feedback. Many thanks.



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