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Newsletter

December 2025



Welcome to our December Liverpool City Region and Beyond Early Years Stronger Practice Hub Newsletter.

Are you interested in becoming a Stronger Practice Hub? The Department for Education are looking to recruit another 18 Early Years Stronger Practice Hubs. <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/apply-to-become-an-early-years-stronger-practice-hub>

Further information can be found on the application process on: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/69298c0e345e31ab14ecf709/Early_Years_Stronger_Practice_Hubs_Application_Guide.pdf

We are looking for settings across our 10 Local Authorities to offer learning walks, be part of training sessions such as communication and language, early literacy, mathematics and personal, social and emotional development. These can be recorded online or live online or face to face.

Please email SpHubNW@evertoncentre.liverpool.sch.uk if you can offer your setting to be involved in sharing practice to other early years colleagues.

Finally remember to check our national website:

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

On this website we provide blogs, professional development sessions and networking opportunities through our monthly online leadership and SEND networks. We look forward to you joining us soon if you haven't joined us already.

December 2025 issue

Welcome, Early Mathematical Development, Climate Action Plan, Early Years and SEND Professional Development Network, EYFS Leadership Network, Mark Making at Duke Street Nursery School, Spotlight on STEM in the Early Years, Maths Champion, CPD, Information to share with families, Early Years Insights, Best Start Hubs, Ofsted Annual Report.

Are you looking for Mathematics inspiration? Unlock the Building Blocks of Early Mathematical Development!

✨ Join us for an exciting CPD training series designed to explore the fundamental skills that spark a lifelong love of maths — tailored for children aged:

👶 2–3 years

👦 3–4 years

👧 4–5 years

What to Expect:

- Dive into the theory behind key mathematical principles with a clear, evidence-based approach
- Explore real-life examples and learning in action through focused learning walks
- Tackle gap tasks in your own setting, then share and grow through group networking and feedback
- Boost your CPD portfolio with enhanced, hands-on experiences
- Share evidence of learning through bespoke case studies, showcasing progress and inspiring practice.

See it. Do it. Master it. Join a community of practitioners committed to making maths magical for young learners! We are offering a network of 5 sessions for you to attend at Evelyn Street Primary Academy and Nursery, Evelyn Street, Warrington, WA5 1BD. See the dates below. Email the Hub to book a place on any of the sessions sphubnw@evertoncentre.liverpool.sch.uk

	Focus	Learning Walk and Face to Face training
January 2026	Teaching and modelling how to make comparisons and connections	Thursday 22nd January 9.30-11.30

February 2026

Facilitating
mathematical
language

Thursday 26th
February 9.30-11.30

Don't forget to join our Leadership Network online:

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

Zoom

3.45pm – 4.30pm

Meeting ID: 881 3994 7902

Passcode: 005369

The same ID and passcode for every monthly Tuesday meeting.

December 2nd

January 6th 2026

February 3rd

March 3rd

We also 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.

December 4th

February 5th 2026

March 5th 2026

Please contact sphubnw@evertoncentre.liverpool.sch.uk to book
place.



Are you looking for inspiration to write or add to your **Climate 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.

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



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.

- **August 7th**
- **September 4th**
- **October 2nd**
- **November 6th**
- **December 4th**
- **February 5th 2026**
- **March 5th 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.

- **August 5th**
- **September 2nd**
- **October 7th**
- **November 4th**
- **December 2nd**
- **January 6th 2026**
- **February 3rd**
- **March 3rd**



Liverpool City Region and Beyond
Early Years Stronger Practice Hub

Mark Making at Duke Street Nursery School

By Alex Gower-Jones



Alex Gower-Jones has over twenty years of experience in primary education, and has worked across a range of roles from a teacher to a leader and now as an early years consultant. She has experience of developing and delivering evidence-based professional development. Duke Street Nursery School is a maintained nursery school in the centre of Chorley which provides an Outstanding Early Education for children aged 2, 3 and 4 years old.

The Writing Framework (2025), tells us that more than a quarter of children are still working towards an expected standard in writing when they leave primary school. These children will then be at a disadvantage because they are unable to access their secondary education properly, and this can have lifelong negative consequences. These gaps open up early in children's lives, so as early years educators, it's important to consider how we build those foundations for writing with the young children in our settings. But how do we do this? Should we be asking young children to sit at tables with pencils in their hands in order to teach the skills needed for mark making and letter formation?

The educational programme for literacy in the **Early Years Statutory Framework** explains that 'writing involves transcription (spelling and handwriting) and composition (articulating ideas and structuring them in speech, before writing)'. In this blog, we are considering the skills needed to teach mark making specifically, which is where young children's first experience on the handwriting journey begins.

At Duke Street Nursery School, the team used physical development strategies set out in the **Education Endowment Foundation's (EEF) Evidence Store** when they were considering how to teach the skills needed for mark making and letter formation. So whilst you read about how Duke Street Nursery put these approaches into practice, consider how these strategies could work within your setting?

Research tells us that developing mark making is a physical skill which begins with large, gross motor movements. Children should be provided with opportunities to build their physical strength and control in the core, upper body, hands and fingers before they are ready to hold a pencil. At Duke Street writing is viewed as a whole body experience where adults **prepare** the children for mark making by providing daily opportunities for them to engage in gross motor activities. Active learning experiences include painting with brooms, rolling big tyres, climbing, digging in the sand and lifting heavy bricks. To develop their fine motor skills, children are encouraged to thread, manipulate dough and peel vegetables. The children are given the time and space to build the strength and control that they are going to need later on in their writing.



Adults regularly **model** how to make marks for various purposes across different contexts, whether this is writing shopping lists, sending cards or writing down orders in the 'cafe'.

The staff will also **demonstrate** how to use different tools and resources in various ways to engage children in mark making.



Narrating the process of mark making is a strategy where adults provide a running commentary of the mark making process, 'Ooh, I can see you've moved the brush up and down to make some lines.'



When adults **comment** on children's mark making the impact is that children feel their marks are valued and writing is something they are good at doing. 'Writing tables' can make some children feel excluded - especially if they don't see themselves as writers. So at Duke Street, they think about how they can enhance their provision so that mark making is naturally integrated throughout their provision. Children have meaningful opportunities to mark make which start with the children's interests. Educators will comment on children's marks to ensure they feel like they are valued as a writer. Comments such as, 'That's a really special note you've written for Mummy. I'd love you to read it to me' or 'I can see you've written some letters from your name in the mud'. These comments encourage children's their thinking, builds their confidence as a writer and helps to develop a deeper understanding of communication and representation.

When there are appropriate opportunities, the children are supported in using **memory prompts** to help the children to draw or write a particular shape or letter or numeral. Alongside educators giving instructional prompts, such as 'Straight down and curve around', Duke Street also use letter formation rhymes as memory prompts. The children have plenty of opportunities to **repeat** and practice particular movements to support letter formation. This could be a top to bottom line to tally scores in a game outdoors or circles and spirals used as 'secret codes' in the message centre.



The strategies to teach the skills needed for mark making and letter formation which have been used here by the team at Duke Street, tempt children in and encourage interest. Take a moment now to consider how you can create an environment where mark making is irresistible for children. How could you use the practices above to teach those all important skills children need to make marks and form letters, which support children in their journey towards achieving an expected standard in their writing.

Book on to our Duke Street Learning Walk

Liverpool City Region and Beyond Early Years Stronger Practice Hub are offering educators the opportunity to see these approaches in action at **Duke Street Nursery School**.

The learning walk will take place on Thursday 29th January from 9.30am-11.30am. To book your place please email us at sphubnw@evertoncentre.liverpool.sch.uk.

Interested in learning more?

Laura Johnson, an early years teacher at Duke Street, has recorded a short video which looks at some of the strategies above, in practice in their setting. To request this recording, please email the Liverpool City Region and Beyond Early Years Stronger Practice Hub at sphubnw@evertoncentre.liverpool.sch.uk.

If you are interested in learning more about this approach to supporting physical development in the early years, you can find further information on the **Education Endowment Foundation's Evidence Store** [here](#).

The **Movement Environment Rating Scale (MOVERS)**, found [here](#), is an evidence-based tool which can be used by early years educators. It offers a method of measuring the quality of the environment and pedagogy in which young children are encouraged to move and be physically active.

Spotlight on STEM in the Early Years

In the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), children learn best through play, exploration and hands-on experiences. Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) naturally support these characteristics of effective learning by encouraging curiosity, problem-solving and active investigation.

Why STEM Matters in Early Years



Current guidance from the Department for Education (DfE) and evidence from the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) highlight several benefits of introducing STEM from the earliest stages:

Builds strong foundations for future learning

STEM experiences nurture early problem-solving, reasoning and critical-thinking skills—key aspects that underpin later achievement in maths, science and literacy.

Encourages language development

Exploring STEM prompts rich conversations. Talking about predictions, changes, measurements and observations supports communication and vocabulary growth—an area the EEF notes is strongly linked to later academic outcomes.

Boosts confidence and independence

Open-ended STEM experiences (such as building, testing, tinkering and investigating) allow children to take safe risks, try ideas, and learn through trial and error—fully aligned with EYFS Characteristics of Effective Learning.

Promotes inclusion and reduces early disadvantage

The EEF's research shows that high-quality early experiences—particularly in

maths and language—can help narrow the attainment gap. STEM activities offer accessible, practical learning for all children.

STEM and Sustainability in Early Years



Embedding STEM within a sustainability context helps children understand the world around them—an EYFS Specific Area—and encourages them to become thoughtful, responsible global citizens.

Sustainable STEM experiences could include:

- **Investigating nature:** observing minibeasts, exploring weather or planting seeds to learn about growth and eco-systems.
- **Using recycled materials:** building structures, models or inventions that encourage re-use and resourcefulness.
- **Exploring simple technologies:** windmills, water wheels or solar toys to introduce renewable energy concepts.
- **Understanding environmental impact:** sorting materials, talking about recycling, or exploring how to care for living things.

These experiences help children make early connections between scientific thinking and caring for the planet—supporting both STEM learning and sustainability education.

STEM in the Early Years can make a **significant positive impact** on children's attainment by the time they start school. This aligns with the EYFS, DfE priorities on early maths and language, and evidence from the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) on school readiness.

Some ideas to begin looking at STEM

in your setting



Educators can begin supporting children with STEM curiosity with simple, everyday activities:

- Counting, measuring and cooking

- Building with blocks or recycled boxes
- Exploring parks, woods or the garden
- Noticing patterns, shapes and changes in nature
- Asking open-ended questions like “What do you think will happen if...?”

Together, home and setting experiences help build the confidence, creativity and curiosity that STEM—and sustainable thinking—rely on.

We will begin this series of **STEM related sessions in February 2026**, starting at **East Prescott Road Nursery School, Liverpool on February 3rd 9.30am – 11.30am**. This STEM themed learning walk will explore the indoor and outdoor environment and hear from practitioners how they plan for STEM in the early years and the impact this has on children.

This will be followed by an online network and webinars to look at different topics related to STEM.

Other sessions and programmes related to this subject: Our Early Mathematics Series being led by Gemma Callaghan, involving learning walks in Evelyn Street School, Warrington, online sessions and a blog. The Maths Champion programme that is fully funded by the NDNA, details are also highlighted in the newsletter. We will also be repeating our Climate Action online session in the New Year, date TBC, please ensure that you look at our events calendar for dates and how to sign up!

Maths Champions Programme

Maths Champions is an online professional development programme with 12 months access developed by National Day Nurseries Association (NDNA). The programme consists of nine steps which can be completed flexibly around your schedule.

The aim of the programme is to increase practitioner knowledge, awareness and confidence in supporting early mathematics in order to improve outcomes for children. Participating nurseries will nominate a Maths Champion and Deputy Maths Champion who will lead the programme supporting and driving improvement.

The Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) evaluation report found that:

- + Children in Maths Champions setting made, on average, the equivalent of three months' additional progress in maths and language attainment compared to a control group**
- + Children eligible for Early Years Pupil Premium (EYPP) made, on average, the equivalent of six months' additional progress in maths attainment**
- + Maths Champions received the EEF's highest possible security rating for the strength of the evidence and the low cost to settings.**

Our own research found that:

- + 100% of settings said that their knowledge of supporting children's mathematical development improved during the course of the programme**
- + 100% of settings said that the programme had a beneficial impact on the staff in their setting**
- + 95% of settings said the programme was good value for money**
- + 95% of settings would recommend the programme to others.**

Find out more at:
ndna.org.uk/maths-champions





As an NDNA Maths Champion you will support your team to evaluate and develop their knowledge, understanding and practice in relation to early year's mathematics, in order to increase their confidence in supporting and teaching children in this area.

You will support staff to develop an enabling environment resulting in high quality maths experiences being available throughout the day, providing children with the best possible start in their mathematical development.

The Maths Champions Programme contains nine steps for you to work through during your enrolment. A brief outline of these steps can be found below.

Step 1: Initial Tasks

This section includes important information about the programme and what is expected throughout. It also allows us to get to know you better.

Step 2: Reflective Learning Journal

This section contains an optional learning journal that you can use throughout the programme to record your reflections, training, development plans and achievements.

Step 3: Online Training

This section contains three bespoke online training courses designed to enhance and consolidate your current knowledge and support staff and children to improve outcomes.

Step 4: Children's Observational Assessment

This section contains a tracking tool to record the impact of changes made throughout the programme on a chosen sample of children.

Step 5: Audits

This section contains a learning environment and staff confidence audit tool to help you evaluate your current practice and identify areas for improvement that you can focus on.

Step 6: Action Plans

This section contains action plan templates allowing you to record key priorities identified in the audits. These can be used throughout the programme to improve practice and record your achievements.

Step 7: Core Activities

This section contains core play based activities to be carried out with children in your setting. The aim of these are to increase staff's understanding and confidence and to benefit children's attainment through every day activities.

Step 8: Measuring Impact

This section requires you to revisit the tracking tool in step four and the audits and action plans in steps five & six to identify the areas where you have made improvement and evaluate the impact of this and success of the programme.

Step 9: Case Study

This section contains a case study for you to complete focussing on an area that you have been developing throughout the programme. This is your opportunity to share the success you have had.

The programme includes two online training courses specifically created by Dr. Sue Gifford for the Maths Champions Programme. These cover the key aspects of maths in the early years including priorities, predictors from research, the progression of big ideas in early number sense and the key aspects of shape, space and measures. You will also explore developmentally appropriate teaching approaches and investigate different methods for observing, assessing and planning for maths across the different ages of children in the setting.

You will also receive ongoing support throughout the 12 months on the programme through:

- + **An initial live induction to take you through the programme steps and how to log in with opportunity for questions**
- + **Monthly one-to-one support to discuss your progress, any obstacles and any further support we can offer**
- + **Regular live webinars on emerging topics with opportunities to network and ask questions.**

You can also gain access to an extensive Resource Bank with hundreds of additional activities, handouts and useful links.



 Songs & Rhymes	 Role Play & Small World	 Construction & Block Play	 Outdoor M
 Cooking	 Holidays & Festivals	 Maths & IT	 Maths at H
 Useful Links	 Printable Resources	 Research & Articles	 Webina

What our champions are saying...



"The observational assessment breaks down the areas of maths further than we have ever looked at them before and has helped so much with staffs understanding and also unpicking children's knowledge and understanding. As a result, it showed children in our setting have made good improvement with mathematics, showing more interest in mathematics around them and in their environment."

+ PVI Pre-School

"The core activities provided carefully structured learning opportunities, designed to be rehearsed and consolidated. They supported the EYFS ethos of learning through play, and so the children never tired of them. They were eager to repeat them throughout the week, thus ensuring mathematics skills and understanding were embedded."

+ Nursery Class



"The programme was really well set out and the format was great – quick and easy to use."

+ PVI Pre-School

"Being involved in the Maths Champion programme has been an amazing experience and one which will impact on the children and staff for years to come."

+ Nursery School



Find out more at:
ndna.org.uk/maths-champions



Maths Champions Information Sheet

National Day Nurseries Association (NDNA) are delighted to have secured funds to deliver the Maths Champions programme through the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) and the Department for Education (DfE). The 12 month online programme has been evaluated by the EEF with York and Durham University and has been proven to boost children's Maths and Language attainment by an average of [3 additional months](#).

About the Programme

The programme aims to improve maths attainment of children in an early years setting by training a Maths Champion and Deputy Maths Champion (MC and DMC) in key mathematical concepts and increasing staff confidence. After completing a live induction and online training modules the MC will lead on completing a staff confidence and nursery environment audit and action plan to improve the mathematical learning environment and confidence of all staff. They will also lead on implementing 10 or more core activities with children that build on the key areas of maths learning. MCs will then be able to revisit their audits and review the outcomes of the core activities. Throughout the 12 months the MC and DMC will have access to ongoing one-to-one support from an Early Years Expert as well as regular webinars on arising topics.

As part of this DfE-funded scaled delivery, the programme will be available at no cost to participating settings.

Programme steps:

- ▶ STEP 1: Initial Tasks
- ▶ STEP 2: Reflective Learning Journal
- ▶ STEP 3: Online Training
- ▶ STEP 4: Children's Observational Assessment
- ▶ STEP 5: Self Assessment Audits
- ▶ STEP 6: Action Plans
- ▶ STEP 7: Core Activities
- ▶ STEP 8: Measuring Impact
- ▶ STEP 9: Case Study

To take part in the programme you must:

- Be a private, voluntary, or independent (PVI) nursery, maintained nursery school or children's centre, or state funded school-based nursery with children accessing 3- and 4-year-old places attending for at least 15 hours per week
- Be able to nominate a level 3 practitioner to be the Maths Champion, who will run the programme in your setting and nominate another level 3 practitioner to be the Deputy Maths Champion, who will support the Maths Champion.
- Not currently be using the NDNA Maths Champions programme or have taken part in the programme in the last two years
- Be committed to completing the mandatory steps of the programme over the 12-month period to the best of your ability
- Have onsite access to a computer with internet connection
- Be based in England
- Be ready to begin on programme between February and June 2026.

Delivery will commence from February 2026. For more information on the programme please visit the [NDNA website](#)

To register your interest please follow the link [here](#) or scan the QR code below to complete the short Expression of Interest form. If you meet the criteria above you will then be sent the full registration materials.

Please note: Where MOUs are received from settings with more than 10% of children in receipt of EYPP these will be prioritised to the programme.



As part of NDNA's recruitment of settings for the Maths Champions programme, we are holding a number of information sessions. Led by our team of expert Early Years Advisors, these sessions will provide a comprehensive explanation of the programme, the eligibility criteria for settings to take part, and the commitment involved. There is also an opportunity for settings to ask direct questions to the Early Years Advisors, followed by clear instructions of next steps and how to sign up.

CPD

RECORDED SESSIONS

EARLY WRITING 25 minutes with Laura Johnson, Early Years Teacher from Duke Street Nursery School, Chorley.

SELF REGULATION AND EXECUTIVE FUNCTION 25 minutes with Emma Doran, Early Years Co-ordinator from Whitefield Primary School, Liverpool.

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-

...ation on interactive reading to 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 (SENDCO) 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 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.

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.

Please email on SpHubNW@evertoncentre.liverpool.sch.uk if you would like to access any of the recording for your own professional development or to use with colleagues in staff meetings.

Other updates include:

Math's Champions Programme

Fully Funded Maths Champions, starting from September 2025. Funded by the Department for Education, places are now available to school-based nurseries, academy nurseries, nursery schools and PVI settings across England. To read more about the programme visit the [NDNA website](#) or watch [this short information video](#). Register your interest [here](#).

Topic: An introduction to...

[https://us06web.zoom.us/j/84344553323?](https://us06web.zoom.us/j/84344553323?pwd=bFiHBYjHryvzbzgaSencs5NdeCVOTqV.1)

[pwd=bFiHBYjHryvzbzgaSencs5NdeCVOTqV.1](https://us06web.zoom.us/j/84344553323?pwd=bFiHBYjHryvzbzgaSencs5NdeCVOTqV.1)

Meeting ID: 843 4455 3323

Passcode: 447255

An introduction to is a series of three webinars, each session focuses on one of the prime areas of learning.

The webinars are repeating again on the below dates, all at 3.45-4.45p.m.

Physical Development - Wednesday 7th January 2026

sphubnw@evertoncentre.liverpool.sch.uk

Information to share with families.

Best Start in life

Please see below, videos to share with parents relating to information and support that's available from www.beststartinlife.gov.uk

- DfE x DHSC x Peppa Pig Official: [Department for Education \(@educationgovuk\)](#) · [Instagram photos and videos](#)
- Muddy Puddle Parenting YouTube channel: [Parenting: The Ultimate Rollercoaster Ride!](#) 📈 [Best Start In Life | Muddy Puddle Parenting](#) 🗣️

CBeebies Festive Collection

Top tips and support to help parents through the holidays - from financial advice to recipes and crafts that keep the kids entertained and learning.

[Celebrating Christmas with family - CBeebies Parenting](#)

Early Years Insights

- Explore a new Promising Programme: Concept Cat.
- Read about how one early years practitioner overcame her maths anxiety to better support children's maths in her setting.
- Learn about our latest research findings from two maths projects.

[Concept Cat recognised as an EEF Promising Programme](#)

Following positive results in an independent trial and our confidence in the findings, Concept Cat is now part of our Promising Programmes portfolio — a collection of programmes that have been found to boost children's outcomes and are available for settings to access. These programmes are likely to be a good investment for settings' professional development and Early Years Pupil Premium spend.

Our independent evaluation found that children in settings that used Concept Cat made two months' additional progress in conceptual vocabulary and early numeracy. Early Years Pupil Premium-eligible children also made three months' additional progress. This demonstrates how one approach can support both children's language and mathematical development.

In this blog, Claire Stanley from Goodway Nursery School, highlights how Concept Cat is strengthening their children's early maths skills through playful teaching of concepts such as long, empty, first and between. These ideas support children's understanding of maths language, positional language, capacity and comparison — key building blocks for early numeracy.

Read Claire's blog to discover practical insights on how you can strengthen early maths through rich, concept-based learning in your setting.

Find out more about [Concept Cat](#) and how your setting can get involved.

 [Read](#)

[How one practitioner overcame her maths anxiety to become a Maths Champion](#)

Early years lead practitioner Adele Younger recently shared how she transformed her own confidence with maths, and, in turn, the learning experiences she offers children, through the National Day Nurseries

Association's Maths Champions professional development programme.

Adele describes arriving with real anxiety around maths. But through practical guidance and simple, affordable approaches, she found new confidence and began weaving meaningful maths into everyday routines. Her story shows how small shifts in practice can make early maths playful, accessible, and empowering for both practitioners and children.

 [Read](#)

[Evaluating early maths programmes – and why it matters](#)

We've published two new evaluation reports that add to the evidence base on how early years educators can strengthen children's mathematical understanding — an essential foundation for later learning.

In a new blog, Julian Grenier shares insights these programmes, which were tested in early years and early primary settings:

Early Number with Numicon

A 14-week programme designed to build young children's conceptual understanding of number. The independent evaluators found that educators taking part reported increased confidence in teaching maths, children with SEND and EAL responded well to the adapted activities, and settings were able to deliver the programme as intended.

TEEMUP

A 16-month professional development programme for Reception and Year 1 teachers. The independent evaluators found that pupils made, on average, one additional month's progress in maths, with two months' additional progress for pupils eligible for free school meals. Teachers also noted improvements in pupils' confidence and self-regulation.

Together, these evaluations contribute to our growing understanding of what helps strengthen early maths — particularly for disadvantaged children.

 [Read](#)

News from elsewhere

[Apply to become an Early Years Stronger Practice Hub](#)

[Find out how to apply](#)

Stronger Practice Hubs bring together childminders, nurseries, schools, and private, voluntary or independent settings to understand effective practice, access high-quality professional development, and engage with programmes grounded in research. As part of their Best Start in Life strategy to strengthen early years support across England, the Department for Education has announced that the network will double in size to 36 Hubs and receive three more years of funding. Applications are now open.

Please forward this email to colleagues you think may be interested. They can subscribe [directly here](#).

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- The latest [Early Years Foundation Stage Profile data for 2024-25](#) shows a small continued rise in the proportion of children achieving the “good level of development” (GLD) to 68.3%. As in previous years, a higher percentage of female, autumn-born, and children not eligible for free school meals had a good level of development than male, summer-born and children eligible for free school meals, respectively. The percentage of children with SEN support or an EHC achieving the GLD increased slightly, but an enormous gap remains compared to children without SEND (20.6% v 76.5%). There is also an 18.7% gap between children in the highest and lowest IDACI deciles.
 - As part of the roll out of Best Start Hubs in every local authority next year, councils are being tasked with recruiting an all-new [dedicated SEND practitioner in every hub](#) to provide direct, family-facing support.
 - Ofsted have published their [Annual Report](#), including summary data on early years inspections for 2024-25.

**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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