

[Visit our website](#)

[Subscribe](#)



Newsletter

February 2026



Welcome to our Stronger Practice Hub February Newsletter, Spring is nearly here..

During the last few weeks we have been offering learning walks which have been successful in early reading at Duke Street Nursery School, Chorley, STEM/STEAM at East Prescot Nursery School, Liverpool and mathematics at Evelyn Primary School, Warrington. With the STEM and mathematics we have developed networks which has enabled a number of colleagues to attend over a period of weeks/months and discuss this area together. To extend across all of our local authorities for networks look out for our existing Leadership and SEND networks online and a new 0-2's network online on Zoom Workplace:

0-2's Network, **Tuesday 10th February 5-6p.m.**

Meeting ID: 886 4705 1305

Passcode: 774943

The Leadership Network is the first Tuesday of every month 3.45-4.45p.m. with the same Zoom Workplace ID: 881 3994 7902 and Passcode: 005369. The next Network meeting is on **Tuesday 3rd March 2026.**

The SEND Network is the first Thursday of every month 6.00-7.00p.m. with the same Zoom Workplace ID: 874 2439 5942 and Passcode:774607. The next Network meeting is on **Thursday 5th March 2026.**

If you are interested in 0-2's we have a learning walk at Kids Planet Baby House, 297 Wallasey Village, Wallasey, CH45 3HA on **Tuesday 3rd March**, 9.30-11.30a.m. Email:

SpHubNW@evertoncentre.liverpool.sch.uk to book a place.

We are offering a **Climate Action Plan evening webinar** with Dr Diane Boyd. If you are interested see below the Zoom Workplace details to access on **Thursday 26th February**, 6.30-8p.m: Meeting ID: 814 1824 8459 and Passcode: 514311

Thank you to everyone who attended our Ofsted Renewed Inspection with Bright Futures Stronger Practice Hub and Ofsted colleagues last Tuesday 3rd February. If you would like a copy of this

recording please email SpHubNW@evertoncentre.liverpool.sch.uk

Finally, we are taking bookings for our **Play Conference on Tuesday 17th March** at Everton Nursery School and Family Centre, Spencer Street, L6 2WF, face to face 10a.m. to 2.30p.m. Please email SpHubNW@evertoncentre.liverpool.sch.uk if you would like to book a place. The face to face full day was requested by colleagues but we will look to develop a half day Saturday eversion and online version later in the year.

February 2026 issue

Welcome, Early Mathematical Development, Early Years Climate Action Plan and Sustainability, Play Conference, Early Years and SEND Professional Development Network, EYFS Leadership Network, Children's Mental Health Week 2026, The importance of developing strong gross motor skills in the youngest years, Baby Room Vision-Building Online Workshops, Early Years Insights, Communication and Language Development, Childminder Network Padlet, 'Let's Talk' Childminding Network, Math's Champion, Experience, CPD Recorded Sessions, Information Notices.

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
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.

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.

March 5th 2026

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

Early Years Climate Action Plan and Sustainability

Climate Action Plan & Sustainability Workshop (Early Years)

Liverpool City Region and Beyond Stronger Practice Hub invite early years professionals to an online workshop exploring Climate Action Plans and sustainability in practice.

- Thursday 26th February
- 6.30pm – 8.00pm
- Zoom

Led by **Dr Diane Boyd**, this session will guide practitioners through writing a Climate Action Plan, sourcing information, and linking everyday practice to the **17 Sustainable Development Goals**.

Audience: Childminders, nursery practitioners, EYFS & Reception leads, and professionals working with under 5s.



This session will be held on Zoom
Meeting ID: 814 1824 8459
Passcode: 514311

Please ensure you are registered with Liverpool City Region. And Beyond SPH to access this session



Please contact sphubnw@evertoncentre.liverpool.sch.uk to reserve your funded place.



Funded by
UK Government



Liverpool City Region and Beyond Early Years Stronger Practice Hub Play Conference

Liverpool City Region and Beyond Early Years Stronger Practice Hub are offering a fully funded **Play Conference** on:

Tuesday 17th March 2026, 9.45am – 2.15pm

**At the Everton Nursery School and Family Centre
Spencer Street, Liverpool, L6 2WF**

This conference will provide opportunities to engage in dialogue and reflect on play, exploring shared meanings, knowledge, and insights about children and the possibilities created through play.

Speakers include:

Dr Denise Wright – The Importance of Play in the Early Years

Emma-Louise Scott – Play and Special Educational Needs and Disabilities

Dr Diane Boyd – Play and Sustainability

Audience: This event is open to all early years educators and is a chance to connect, learn, and leave with fresh ideas to champion play in your setting.

Please contact sphubNW@evertoncentre.liverpool.sch.uk to reserve your funded place.



**Funded by
UK Government**

Early Years and SEND Professional Development Network



Liverpool City Region and Beyond Stronger Practice Hub are launching 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 Zoom starting

Thursday June 5th 2025 6.00-7.00pm

Meeting ID: 874 2439 5942

Passcode: 774607

- **September 4th**
- **October 2nd**
- **November 6th**
- **December 4th**
- **February 3rd 7:00pm – 8:00pm
2026 (Ofsted speaker)**
- **March 5th 2026**



EYFS Leadership Network

Liverpool City Region and Beyond Stronger Practice Hub are launching 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 **Zoom** starting **Tuesday June 3rd 2025**
3.45pm – 4.30pm

Topic: Early Leadership Network

Meeting ID: 881 3994 7902
Passcode: 005369

- **September 4th**
- **October 2nd**
- **November 6th**
- **December 4th**
- **February 3rd 7-8pm 2026**
(Ofsted link with Bright Futures)
- **March 3rd 2026**



It's Children's Mental Health Week 2026!

Make sure you get your hands on Place2Be's official free Children's Mental Health Week 2026 resources are available for you to download! Whether you're a [primary school](#), [secondary school](#), [family](#), [community group](#) or [workplace](#), we've got activities and resources for you

The importance of developing strong gross motor skills in the youngest years



Dr Diane Boyd

The development of strong gross motor skills is crucial in the early years as they form a foundational core strength necessary for later fine motor skills. The developmental sequence for this process starts for a baby with the head and travels down the body. For example, a baby will master the movements of their head before their shoulders, their arms before their hands and their hands before their fingers. An enabling environment within the EYFS (DfE, 2024) must provide multiple daily opportunities to help stimulate their gross motor skills, whilst praising their developing confidence, balance, resilience and co-ordination.

Most educators are familiar with the five inner senses, but there is a sixth outer sense – Proprioception (balance and co-ordination). According to the NHS, proprioception has a huge influence on developing body awareness, helping children to recognise themselves in time and space. As children move in their enabling environment, the proprioceptive system receptors (for example, in muscles, joints, bones and skin) feed information to their brains helping them to know where their arms, legs, hands and feet are in relation to the rest of the body. This important sense supports children to be able to walk, climb, manoeuvre around and not bump into obstacles, balance, hop and catch.

The DfE recommends young children to be physically active for at least three hours a day. For some children however, developing strong gross motor skills can be more difficult and may take longer to achieve. Difficulties in gross motor skills can affect not just their physical abilities but also their wellbeing. For example, not being able to physically join in will affect how they see themselves and be part of the group. As the EYFS (DFE,2024, p) states, "*Gross motor skills provide the foundation for developing healthy bodies and social and emotional well-being,*" highlighting the need for quality educators understanding child development.

As babies they need daily tummy time which supports their gross motor skills for sitting and crawling. For toddler's gross motor strength is vital as they build awareness of how their body operates, mastering simple tasks like balancing, walking, running, crawling, jumping and skipping. As an educator the enabling environment

must be challenging enough and allow children to start to take risks and master new physical skills. The equipment educators provide must be appropriate but achievable, think of Vygotsky's zone of proximal development (1978). The DfE states that young children can self-regulate and will never attempt an activity they are not confident to achieve, aligning with the EYFS (DfE, 2024, p 17) Characteristics of Effective Learning where children must be encouraged *"to have a go... And "to concentrate and keep on trying if they encounter difficulties."*

So, crucially what sort of activities should educators provide in the enabling environment for developing toddlers?

Toddlers and very young children need a variety of materials that they can lift to strengthen their arms and co-ordination. For example, when considering the transporting schema children can carry buckets, baskets, watering cans, and containers. It is important the utensils are made from a variety of materials and can carry a diverse range of substances, such as water and egg as in these examples. This demonstrates the holistic nature of early childhood too as this is early mathematics (both weight and capacity) in action. Here Mia, who is two, has organised herself and knows exactly how much water she can carry in the adult-sized watering can and how many eggs she can carry carefully, without breaking them!



Toddlers and very young children need a variety of materials that they can lift to strengthen their arms and co-ordination. For example, when considering the transporting schema children can carry buckets, baskets, watering cans, and containers. It is important the utensils are made from a variety of materials and can carry a diverse range of substances, such as water and egg as in these examples.

This demonstrates the holistic nature of early childhood too as this is early mathematics (both weight and capacity) in action. Here Mia, who is two, has organised herself and knows exactly how much water she can carry in the adult-sized watering can and how many eggs she can carry carefully, without breaking them!



Toddlers and young children need opportunities to balance either with support or on their own. As educators we need to offer different ways for children to balance providing a natural sustainable environment. In this example of a small-scale home learning environment, toddlers can access a variety of balancing options. The examples below were supplied through either local park Rangers services or were found washed up on the beach. Children can either negotiate tree log cut offs of different sizes and heights, balance along a tree truck or along a bench made from a plank of wood.



The sense of achievement when they have mastered the skill is immense and again clearly aligns with the Characteristics of Effective Learning (persistence- *“keep on trying”*) and the Prime Area Physical Development, (EYFS DfE,2024, p13) being able to *“demonstrate strength, balance and coordination when playing”*. This persistence was demonstrated on another aspect of this early year’s sustainable natural play area.

To cross over the bridge Jack (aged 14 months at the start) had to initially walk up the slope, crossing over holding onto the handles and maneuver down the three cut tree logs. As before, scaffolding support was given to Jack initially, enabling him to successfully master the bridge. But Jack, through repetition (enables mastery), praise (encourages resilience and persistence), and determination is now able to go backwards and forwards over the bridge unaided. He has now mastered the hardest negotiation of going both forward and backwards over the three logs at the end. Once over, he claps his hands and turns around to repeat the journey again! Jack has successfully *“negotiated space and obstacles safely,”* (p13) as required in Physical Development and in self-regulation demonstrated he can already *“set and work towards simple goals,”* (EYFS, DfE,2024, p12).



Another aspect of this enabling environment provides Jack with elements of the Enclosure Schema, when toddlers and young children like hiding within containers of different materials.



Jack loves to run through backwards and forwards giggling excitedly as ‘he hides’, but this game will change as the willow grows around the frame, making a more exciting tunnel!

Within this sustainable nature area there is a developing Willow tunnel bare now as it is Winter, but this too provides opportunities for Communication and Language of the natural world, being able to “*understand some important processes and changes in the natural world around them, including the seasons*” (2024, p15).



This article demonstrates the importance of providing challenges for toddlers and young children to develop their gross motor strength. It also highlights that physical challenges promote not just physical development, but health and wellbeing and a sense of mastery too! This is a sustainable early year’s garden – if you want any information on developing such spaces, please contact dianeboyd_23@hotmail.co.uk

5th February, 2026

Early Years Insights



Inside this issue:

- Access new funding opportunities to support early maths
- Reflect on joyful, intentional ways to teach and model vocabulary
- Shape the future of our website by sharing your reviews

[New funding opportunity: early years maths programmes \(ages 2–4\)](#)

We've opened applications to our Spring 2026 funding round, focused on pre-Reception maths programmes.

We're looking for ready-to-evaluate programmes that aim to strengthen early number, geometry, spatial thinking, or measurement through developmentally appropriate practice— especially for children from lower-income backgrounds.

Deadline: Wednesday 11th March 2026, 11am



Applicant webinar: Monday 9th February 2026, 3pm (online)

[Find out more and apply](#)

[Rethinking vocabulary](#)

Vocabulary development isn't an add-on to early years practice — it sits at the heart of it. From stories and play to everyday routines, the words children hear and use shape how they understand the world and themselves.

Evidence shows that early vocabulary supports later reading and learning. Research also highlights the importance of the communication environment. Together, the evidence shows how thoughtful, evidence-informed practice can make a real difference for children.

Effective practice brings together:

- Explicit teaching: intentionally introducing and explaining new words
- Implicit modelling: using rich language naturally and repeatedly through play and conversation

When vocabulary teaching is joyful, playful, and well-timed, it enhances learning rather than interrupting it. Small, consistent moments — a word noticed in a story, revisited in play, reused in talk — can have a lasting

impact.

Julian Grenier's blog explores the evidence and practical examples.

[Read more](#)

[Receive a promising, evidence-backed programme to support early maths!](#)

There's still time to access [Maths Champions](#), a promising programme designed to build practitioner confidence and strengthen children's early maths, delivered by [the National Day Nurseries Association \(NDNA\)](#).

Fully funded through the Department for Education, this programme is available at no cost to PVI, maintained, and school-based nurseries across England, with cohorts starting training in February, March, April, May, and June 2026.

In each participating setting, a 'Maths Champion' (a senior member of staff) is selected to lead improvement in maths practice across the setting. Supported by a Deputy Maths Champion, they audit current practice, create an action plan, and implement strategies to support colleagues throughout the year. Support includes bespoke online training, covering early mathematical development and coaching, practical resources, and one-to-one guidance.

Children in PVI and school-based nurseries receiving the Maths Champions programme made an average of three additional months' progress in maths and language compared to children in settings that did not receive the programme. There were also indications of a larger impact for children in receipt of Early Years Pupil Premium.

[Sign up](#)

[Shape the future of the EEF website](#)

We're redesigning our website — and we want your input. Share your views to help us prioritise what matters most and make our resources easier to use for educators like you. By taking part, you could win a £100 Love2Shop voucher.

The short survey closes Friday 20th February 2026.

[Take part](#)

[Find us on Instagram](#)

Our Instagram account is live!

We're excited to bring evidence-informed insights and resources straight to your feed. Follow our new account for practical ideas, evidence-informed tips, and the latest updates to support teaching and learning.

[Follow us](#)

News from elsewhere

[School readiness survey](#)

Kindred Squared [Read more](#)

The annual Kindred Squared survey suggests parents identify the rising cost of living as the main barrier to school readiness. It also finds that earlier information before children are four, along with reducing screen time and supporting basic self-care skills, could help children transition more successfully into school.

[£200 million landmark SEND teacher training programme](#)

Department for Education [Read more](#)

More children with SEND will be given the support they need to thrive as the government unveils an ambitious new training initiative.

[Early years funding rates rise above inflation](#)

Early Years Alliance [Read more](#)

Funding rates for 2026–27 will rise by 4–5 % across all age groups, supporting delivery of funded childcare entitlements. These increases complement the wider growth in early years investment.

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

Communication and Language Development

For practitioners working with children aged 2-5

Written By Laura Johnson – Senior Teacher across two outstanding maintained nursery schools in Chorley, Lancashire.

Information outline



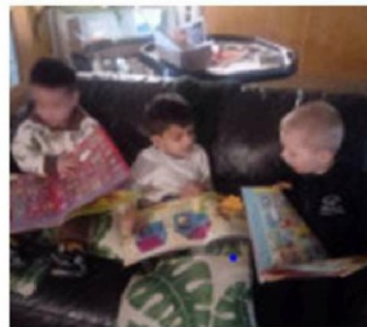
This blog draws attention to the specific elements that enable young children to communicate effectively within the early years. There is a particular focus on the 'role of the adult' and how adults support interactions. This blog also looks at the uniqueness of communication and language.

Our pedagogy and ethos...

At Duke Street Nursery, we view communication and language as a vital priority within the early years; we know this opens up opportunities for learning and development in all other areas of the curriculum.

No matter where children are starting from, our skilled practitioners and teachers tailor their interactions and teaching to meet the children where they are at and build on their communication and language skills.

Our environment is set up to promote communication and language, with communication friendly spaces, open ended resources, a plethora of books (both fiction and nonfiction), and not forgetting the uninterrupted time our children are given to play and explore whilst our expert adults model and scaffold conversations, language, and interactions.



What the evidence tells us...

The Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) state:

Language provides the foundation of thinking and learning and should be prioritised. **High quality adultchild interactions are important** and sometimes described as talking with children rather than just talking to children. Adults have a **vital role to play in modelling effective language and communication**. Use a wide range of approaches including shared reading, storytelling, and explicitly extending children's vocabulary.



ff b f p b oH h ...

Effective approaches to support Communication and Language	What is it?	Evidence summary of the approach	Put the approach into action
<p>01 Teaching and Modelling Vocabulary</p>	<p>This approach involves educator's intentional use of words to build a child's understanding of, and use of words. This approach can be delivered using explicit or implicit practices, or a combination of both.</p>	<p>There is strong evidence that this approach improves children's communication and language skills. Explicit vocabulary teaching strategies have been shown to be effective, both alone and in combination with implicit vocabulary teaching strategies. Careful selection of vocabulary to focus on can increase children's usage and retention.</p> <p>Studies where children received the same vocabulary support showed those with more advanced language skills progress faster than both those at an earlier stage in development and those from lower-income families. Therefore, those more at risk may need more exposure to this approach to make progress.</p>	<p>Explicit Practices:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Naming and labelling • Explaining and showing • Repetition <p>Implicit Practices:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Imitation • Recasting • Extending • Commenting
<p>02 Teaching and Modelling Language</p>	<p>This approach involves intentionally using language to show how words are used together to form sentences and providing opportunities for children to apply it in their own speech. Story (recounts of true events or imagined) provides a useful context for practising these skills.</p>	<p>There is strong evidence this approach benefits all children, however, research lacks evidence on its specific impact on particular groups of children.</p> <p>Practices that may be effective can be either verbal or physical, and the evidence suggests that combining both kinds has the most impact.</p>	<p>Explicit Practices:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Questioning • Explaining and showing • Repetition • Sequencing • Recapping • Recalling <p>Implicit Practices:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Imitation • Commenting • Recasting • Naming

 <p>03 Interactive Reading</p>	<p>This approach involves considered actions during shared reading where the adult encourages the child to become an active participant in 'reading' the book. Over time the balance of who 'reads' or facilitates discussion about the book passes increasingly to the child.</p>	<p>There is strong evidence this approach benefits all children, however, research lacks evidence on its specific impact on particular groups of children.</p> <p>It is hard to pinpoint which interactive reading practices are the most influential because studies often test several practices at the same time. Successful interventions usually involve spoken interactions between the reader and child that go beyond the text in the book; the more the child participates or responds, the more their oral language skills develop.</p>	<p>Prompt based practices</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Questioning • Recalling of events or experiences • Completion • Posing suggestions or problems • Imitation 	<p>Information based practices</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commenting • Recapping and reminding • Expanding • Extending • Explaining • Repetition
 <p>04 Teaching Through Collaborative Talk</p>	<p>This approach involves the educator using language or activities to stimulate and extend interaction during a cognitively challenging activity. Children are encouraged to hear and use language by sharing ideas, providing reasons, and building on each other's ideas</p>	<p>This emerging approach looks promising, however, this is based on only a few studies and these were not implemented in England.</p> <p>From the evidence that does exist, it is difficult to be sure of which practices are effective; the strategies used to facilitate collaborative talk vary significantly between studies and are often one component of a broader package of support. Successful studies often focused on developing educators' skills through professional development.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recapping • Explaining and showing • Posing suggestions or problems • Questioning • Making links • Evaluating • Recall of events or experiences 	
 <p>05 Teaching and Modelling Social Communication Skills</p>	<p>This approach involves providing opportunities for children to learn the societal rules of verbal and non-verbal communication, so they can adjust their choice of words, volume or body language to best engage with the listener and show them they are listening.</p>	<p>There are very few studies that have looked at the impact of this approach by itself on children's outcomes. However, there are some positive findings for this approach when it was used alongside other approaches, which suggests it could have a promising effect.</p> <p>Due to the limited number of studies in this area, supporting practices are less well-evidenced. However, mirroring, gestures, eye contact, and teaching facial expressions appear in research that reports a positive impact on children's language and communication outcomes.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrating social rules of communication or adjustments based on context • Waiting • Body positioning • Mirroring • Gesturing • Reminding • Providing opportunities for considering appropriate non-verbal communication • Demonstrating non-verbal communication 	

Best start in life research review – Part 2 (prime areas) highlight:

Communication and language are also vital for social and emotional development. They enable children to build relationships with their peers and the adults around them, to talk about what matters to them and to express their needs. Back and forth interactions form the foundations for language and cognitive development.

- Reading to children and engaging them in stories, rhymes and songs helps children to learn new language.
- Well before they start learning to speak, babies communicate with their parents or carers through eye contact, crying, cooing, smiling and making gestures such as pointing and waving. Early backandforth interactions with responsive adults helps meet children's physical, psychological and social needs.
- Practitioners need to think carefully about the sorts of words they prioritise in teaching vocabulary. They need to select the words that will be the most useful in supporting children's development and enabling them to learn.
- Children love repeated readings of highquality picture books. They also learn new words much faster when the book is read several times over a short period. Repeatedly reading the same story is more effective in promoting word learning than reading different stories.

How we support children to make maximum progress in their communication and language development...

Create cosy, inviting, communication friendly spaces throughout our nursery to promote communication/talk/interaction/social play. We offer uninterrupted time for children to play and interact through child led play. Our experienced practitioners and teachers skilfully scaffold the children by tuning into their play, offering valuable language, communication techniques and extending their learning.

Understand that every child is unique, has their own personality... all children communicate in a different way. We feel it is important to know the holistic child and meet the child where they are at (in terms of their development).

Incorporate a range of techniques, adaptive curriculums, interventions and aids to support all children with their communication, we find this creates opportunities for development and removes barriers in communication...

- Visuals / Widget – a standardised pictorial communication aid.
- Core word curriculum – focusing on specific language across one or two weeks weaved into all aspects of teaching and interactions.
- Concept Cat focusing on conceptual language, a specific word explicitly taught in an interactive way across one or two weeks.
- WellComm – speech and language toolkit, including screening and intervention support.



We provide opened resources that promote communication and offer children uninterrupted time to play with their peers, whilst skilful adults observe, model and scaffold children's communication and language skills through high quality interactions, following the ShREC approach.

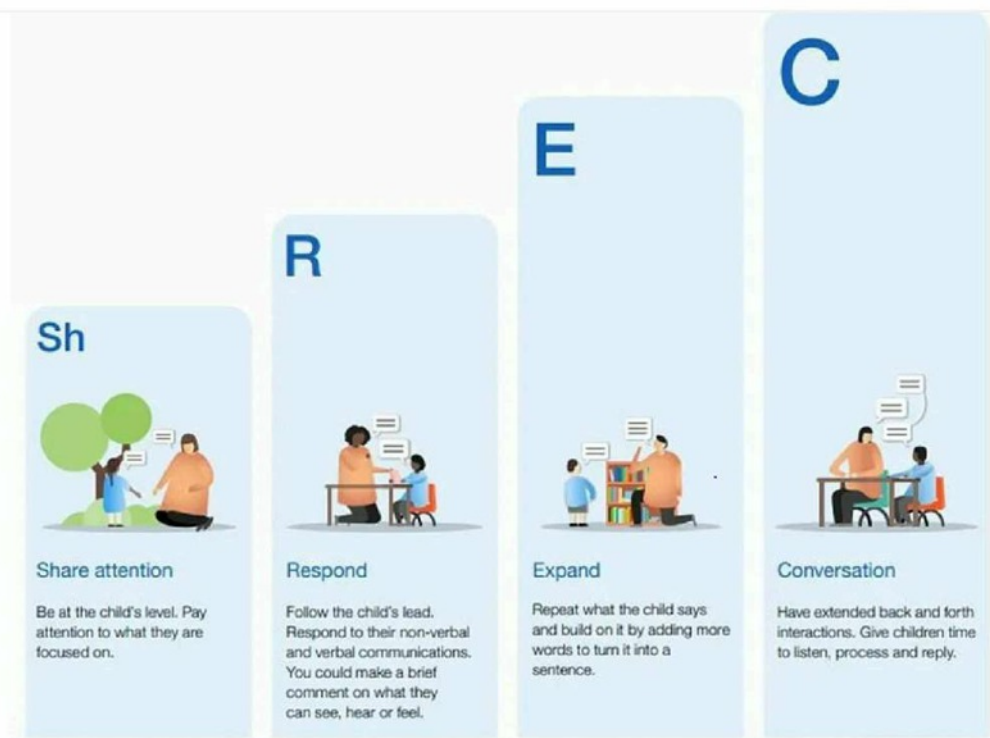
ShREC approach taken from the EEF:

Share attention – we tune into children, being at their level and showing a genuine interest in their play and ideas. This connection promotes trust and children are more likely to communicate with you.

Respond – we warmly acknowledge children’s verbal and nonverbal communication, this comes in many different forms and depends on the unique child and the adult knowing the holistic child. The adult might narrate on the play, comment, or make a link to previous experience. There may only be nonverbal communication through eye contact, body language, facial expressions or nodding.

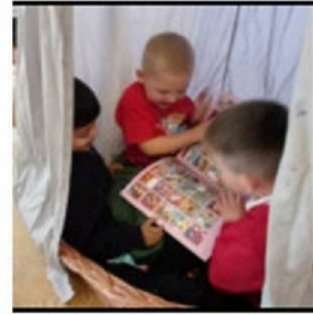
Expand – this is where the adult engages in ‘back and forth’ communication, skilfully expanding on language by following the child’s lead but modelling and scaffolding the conversation.

Conversation – where the development of back and forth conversation happens, involving many turns. The adult comments and allows the child to expand and elaborate. Some ‘Wh’ questions are used not over used!



The power of stories...

[The ShREC approach | EEF](#)



We highly value the importance of stories; we know sharing a book develops language skills, creates a connection and opens up a world of imagination and information to young children.


Books are everywhere within our nursery, both indoors and out! These are accessible for all children; adults instil the love of reading by regularly sharing stories with children and sharing the joy that books bring. We purposely choose stories and books that link to our children's interests, we also ensure these are developmentally appropriate and complement what we are teaching the children (such as having books related to farm animals when we have the visiting farm).









We have a focus book/text over two weeks, enabling children to fully understand the story. Specific vocabulary is chosen and explicitly taught from each book we cover, and we incorporate the teaching of vocabulary into our 'drawing club' circle time sessions and end of session shared story times.



We also ensure to provide high quality oracy provision, through spontaneous conversations during free play in continuous provision and through structured learning, such as circle time to teach and model social communication skills. These interactions promote sustained shared thinking through following the 'Teacher Talk Tactics resource' (from Voice 21a resisted charity 2024).

Teacher Talk Tactics scaffold classroom dialogue, promoting educationally productive talk. Teachers have two additional tactics to employ in order to foster high-quality talk for learning.



 <p>Instigate Present an idea or open up a new line of enquiry.</p>	<p>Instigate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Let's start the discussion by... Has anyone considered... Let's think about... 	<p>Invite instigation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Who would like to begin our discussion...? Does anyone have another idea...? Would anybody like to share a different point? 	 <p>Summarise Identify and recap the main ideas.</p>	<p>Summarise:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> So far we have talked about... The main points raised today were... To summarise X's idea? 	<p>Invite summary:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can anybody summarise the main points so far? Could you summarise what X is saying? Who can recap the main ideas?
 <p>Probe Dig deeper, ask for evidence or justification of ideas.</p>	<p>Probe:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Why do you think...? Could you provide an example of...? How do you know that? 	<p>Invite probing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Would anyone like to probe what X said? Who would like to ask a probing question? Does this remind you of anything we've learned before? 	 <p>Build Develop, add to or elaborate on an idea.</p>	<p>Build:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Building on X's idea... X's idea made me think... To develop X's idea... 	<p>Invite building:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Would anybody like to build on X's idea? Could you tell me more about...? Who can tell me why they might agree with X?
 <p>Challenge Disagree or present an alternative argument.</p>	<p>Challenge:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have you considered...? You mentioned X but what about...? What if...? 	<p>Invite challenge:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Would anybody like to challenge X's idea? Does anybody have a counter argument? Who disagrees with that point? 	<p>Additional moves:</p>  <p>Model Articulate the thought processes underpinning talk.</p>		
 <p>Clarify Asking questions to make things clearer and check your understanding.</p>	<p>Clarify:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> So are you saying...? Let me get this right, what you're saying is...? Can you clarify what you mean by...? 	<p>Invite clarification:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Could anybody clarify what X is saying? Would anybody like to ask a clarifying question? Could I just check your understanding X? 	 <p>Mark Highlight an important idea or type of contribution.</p>		
			<p>Model:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> I'm not sure I agree with that so I'm going to challenge X's idea... I am going to clarify X's point to check I've understood correctly... It would be a good idea to summarise the points so far to help us move forward... I am going to refer to X to provide evidence for my point... 		
			<p>Mark:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> That's an important point. Did everyone hear what X just said? How does that help move us on? Did you notice how X just probed X's idea? What did X say to challenge X's idea politely? 		

The additional teacher tactics are inspired by the 'Teacher Moves in Group Discussion' as set out in the Accountable Talk Sourcebook (Barnett et al., 2016).

Teacher Talk Tactics

© 2022 Voice 21. Voice 21 is a registered charity in England and Wales. Charity number 1106172. Company no. 16161758

We have created a culture where every child's voice is heard ensuring regular opportunities for talk, children are encouraged to share their ideas, express their thoughts, and listen to one another. This not only supports children's language but also builds their confidence.

Conclusion and reflection...

Within Duke Street Nursery School communication and language is at the heart of everything we do. We inspire children by offering them various opportunities to communicate in their preferred way and give them time and our full attention, with genuine interest, whilst they exchange in communication with us.

We ensure to maintain a high quality language rich learning environment that reflects the children's interests and is developmentally appropriate to ensure continuous engagement and progression. **Next steps:** If you are interested in finding out more about how you can support communication and language in your setting please visit the EEF evidence store:

(<https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/early-years/evidence-store/communication-and-language>), there are a range of videos and written examples of how to put the five strategies into practice. **References and further reading...**

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/best-start-in-life-a-research-review-for-early-years/best-start-in-life-part-2-the-3-prime-areas-of-learning#communication-and-language>

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

https://d2tic4wvo1iusb.cloudfront.net/production/eef-guidance-reports/literacy-early-years/Preparing_Literacy_Poster.pdf?v=1760954992

https://speechandlanguage.org.uk/educators-and-professionals/programmes-for-nurseries-and-schools/?gad_source=1&gad_campaignid=21094500162&gbraid=0AAAAADQ2tk1CCfrcmGVH2k5_YLwcB8w_f&gclid=EA1aIQobC_hM1lPPske6YjgMVtpxQBh3nVT0mEAAYASAAEgLXt_D_BwE

<https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/early-years/the-shrec-approach> <https://voice21.org/little-learners-big-voices-oracy-in-the-early-years/>

-
https://d2tic4wvo1iusb.cloudfront.net/production/documents/ey-evidence-store/early_years_evidence_store_supporting_communication_and_language_in_the_early_years.pdf?v=1710860125

Please find below the link to the **Childminder Network Padlet**, Childminders can access this centralised resource it at any time to fit around your busy schedules and is updated weekly or when latest information is released.

<https://forms.gle/EPBVXAxTvAfiRiBiGA>

It is a versatile resource and includes:

- OFSTED updates
- EYFS Framework
- EEF Resources showcasing evidence-based research and showcases good practice
- Food Safety
- Business Matters
- Childminding legislation and Publications
- Safeguarding
- Professional Development
- Evidence based programmes
- Support and signposting
- training opportunities
- Specific LA information

This Padlet will support all your childminding needs in one user friendly space using versatile content through videos, text, links, recommendations and documents. Its showcasing creativity and good practice and created to support you through all your childminding practice.

For more information contact:

Tracie Dowling

traciestreasureschildminder@gmail.com

Tel 07772176159

'Let's Talk' Childminding Network every 2nd Saturday of each month.

We will look at topics for the next six months to ensure it is relevant for your Childminding needs.

This is a monthly Zoom meeting for childminders to have a 'safe space' to discuss 'Childminding Issues' and gain Peer support and foster a Childminder community to building connections.

Each month we have a specific lead topic, invite guest speakers, signpost for further support, recommend CPD and resource recommendations.

Meeting ID: 81654991912 Pass: 369243

'Maths Crusaders' Network'

A Monthly 1hr zoom Network o includes Childminders and their children. It is an interactive session supported by the 'PEEP' <https://www.peeple.org.uk/> evidenced based Programme and is Maths based. Each session we investigate different mathematical concepts to include activities, stories and singing to make it fun. Childminders will be signpost to further evidence-based information, training where needed and resources. The session will support your setting to include parents by encouraging home learning activities initiated by the children. Information and certificates will be emailed monthly, and a WhatsApp group can be accessed for on-going support.

Limited spaces please contact Tracie on traciestreasureschildminder@gmail.com to book a place

Maths Champion



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 AND RECORDED SESSIONS

Webinar: Food growing and Sustainability – improving our skills in order to ensure best practice in implementing the New EYFS Nutritional guidance.

Wednesday 18th March 6.30-8p.m. with Lil Newton (Early Years Consultant and previous Nursery Headteacher) online on Zoom Workplace.

A lack of nutritious food affects a child's physical health, emotional well-being as well as cognitive and social development. A recent report from the Food Foundation (October 2025) found that 1 in 4 children in Britain are living in food poverty.

This webinar will look at the requirements of the new EYFS nutritional guidance, current health research, soil and nutrient density. Lil will give many practical tips and ideas about how food growing and sustainability can enrich our curriculum, develop vocabulary, thinking skills, resilience and problem solving and support every child's health and well being.

Email: SpHubNW@evertoncentre.liverpool.sch.uk to book a place.

Beach school session first session theory Wednesday 13th May 1-4p.m.

Beach school practical Wednesday 10th June 1-4p.m.

at Everton Nursery School and Family Centre, Spencer Street, Liverpool L6 2WF

Please email SpHubNW@evertoncentre.liverpool.sch.uk to book a place.

Forest school first session theory Wednesday 20th May 1-4p.m.

Forest school practical Wednesday 17th June 1-4p.m.

at Everton Nursery School and Family Centre, Spencer Street, Liverpool L6 2WF

Please email SpHubNW@evertoncentre.liverpool.sch.uk to book a place.

Here is a list of some of our 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.

Please contact our sph email if you are interested in accessing other recorded sessions for your setting.

sphubnw@evertoncentre.liverpool.sch.uk

Information Notices

- [Grants](#) of up to £10,000 are available to community groups, charities, and not-for-profit organisations that support deaf children and their families. The funding is offered through the National Deaf Children's Society's Community Grants Programme and is intended for projects that support the development of deaf children in their early years (ages 0–5).
- The Office for Product Safety and Standards (OPSS) has issued a [Product Recall](#) to warn about a safety risk associated with the Hobbycraft Giant Box of Craft. The recall relates to vials of coloured sand included in the product, which may be contaminated with asbestos. Consumers are advised to stop using the product immediately and keep it out of the reach of children.
- [Formula Milk Recall Aptamil, Cow & Gate, SMA and Aptamil](#)
- Affected products
- Check which batches of formulas have been affected by viewing the full list of recalled products:
 - [Aptamil and Cow & Gate infant formula recall](#)
 - [SMA infant formula and follow-on formula recall](#)
 - [Aptamil infant formula recall](#) (October best before dates)
 - Why products have been recalled
 - These products have been recalled because they might contain the toxin cereulide, which makes them unsafe for your baby to drink.
 - Symptoms of cereulide poisoning are:
 - feeling sick
 - being sick
 - tummy pain
 - diarrhoea
 - Boiling water or heating the formula will not remove this toxin.
- You need to check which formula your baby is using. If it is one of [the affected batches](#), stop using it immediately, even if your baby seems well.
- If you have already fed one of the recalled formulas to your

baby and are concerned about symptoms, contact your GP or call NHS 111.

- The recalled batches were produced some time ago and are unlikely still to be on sale, but they might be in your cupboards at home.
 - If you have an affected batch, do not use it. You can return it to the store and exchange it for an unaffected batch.
 - All other batches of SMA, Aptamil and Cow & Gate infant or follow-on formula product not listed in the recall lists remain safe to use.
- [Infant formula recalls | Food Standards Agency](#)
- The government has committed to publishing [guidance](#) for parents on early years screen time in April 2026. They are seeking [evidence](#) to inform the guidance. The evidence will be considered by the Early years screen time advisory group (deadline: 16 February 2026). The new guidance will also be used to inform DfE guidance for practitioners, such as the [Internet safety](#) page on the Help for Early Years Providers platform which includes how device use affects development including benefits and challenges and its statutory and non-statutory guidance
 - DfE has published the [phase 3 school-based nursery \(SBN\) guidance](#), which invites local authorities to develop multi-year funding proposals to deliver new and extended SBNs between 2027 and 2030, with the first places available from September 2027. Local authorities can apply for funding for SBN projects in primary schools, Maintained Nursery Schools and on Best Start Family Hubs (BSFH) sites. Schools and BSFH can also partner with private, voluntary and independent providers (PVI) and childminders to deliver nursery provision. Phase 2 outcomes will be announced in Spring 2026.
 - It has also published related research on [Early years school-based nursery provision operating outside of the typical model](#) and [Early years provision: onsite nursery on a Best Start Family Hub site](#).

- DfE has published [interim findings](#) from the evaluation of the Early Language Support for Every Child (ELSEC) programme, identifying successes and challenges.

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.



0151 233 1969

Share on social



Check out our site 