

Information for parents

Helping your young child to read and write

Since your child was born you have been teaching him or her to communicate. By speaking and listening to your child, by talking and reading to him or her, by pointing out words and notices at home or out and about, you have introduced your child to the world of language - spoken and written. Through playing with your child, he or she learns new words, and learns to think and to talk about his or her thoughts and feelings. For example, pretending to be a nurse or a shopkeeper, scribbling on re-cycled paper, or looking at and talking about picture books, all help your child to speak, to listen, to read and to write. Even when your child starts school, you continue to have a key role in helping him or her.

Here are some tips on how you can do this:

- Listen to your child. Nod or smile to show you are interested. Try not to interrupt while your child is speaking.
- Encourage your child to talk and tell you about things: *friends, toys and hobbies or what he or she has been doing in school.*
- Enjoy listening to and speaking to your child. Try: *listening to and singing songs or reading and saying nursery rhymes.*
- Play games: *I spy with my little eye something beginning with the sound 'ch' that rhymes with 'more'.*
- Make a book with your child using words and pictures: *My Family or My Favourite Things.* Use photographs, old birthday cards or cut-outs from magazines.
- Enjoy books together. Draw attention to: *holding the book the right way up, turning the pages, moving your finger from left to right, making connections between pictures and words.* Ask questions: *What ...? When ...? Why ...? What if ...?*
- Set up pretend play topics at home: *an office (old phone, paper and something to write with) or a shop (food items, dress-up clothes, shoes, pretend cash register, pencil, paper).*
- Enjoy cutting, gluing and sticking with your child.
- Help your child to: *make marks, trace, and copy patterns, colour, draw or even try their own writing.* Use *pencils, crayons, chalk or markers.* Try forming letters with play dough or in sand. Make a to-do list, thank you cards or a sign for his or her bedroom.
- Draw your child's attention to pictures, signs, letters and words when out and about: *'No dogs allowed' (in the park) or, 'Baggage collection' (in the airport).*
- Visit the library. *Choose, look at and talk about books together.*
- Let your child see you reading magazines or books and writing letters, e-mails or a shopping list.