**Helping your child with their maths skills**

**Early Years (Reception)**

Your child’s number skills can be developed through stories, songs, games and imaginative play. There are many opportunities to learn about mathematics through everyday activities.

Recognising numbers

To help your child to recognise all the numerals from 1, you could:

* Point out numbers you see in everyday activities – on the front door, on a birthday cake or clocks, car number plates or bus numbers.
* Use ordinary playing cards to play snap, to count the symbols on the number cards, to sort the cards into order or find all the tens, fours etc.
* Introduce zero (0) as a way of describing nothing or none.
* Explain that there are no new numbers (or digits) being used when we want to write the number ten, but we use a ‘1’ and ‘0’ together.

Counting – prior to addition

To help your child’s counting skills, you could:

* Count the red doors on the way to school or the silver cars that pass you.
* Help your child count items around the home – oranges in a bowl, tins in the cupboards, toys in the toy box, cutlery when laying the table. When you count things, help your child to see that the last count word you say tells you how many things there were. Do this by emphasising the last number you say: “One, two, three, *four*. There are *four* teddies.”
* Sing counting songs and nursery rhymes like ‘Five little Ducks’ or ‘Ten Green Bottles’. ‘One, two, three, four, five, once I caught a fish alive’ is a favourite too.
* Ask your child to guess the next number as the oven timer counts down to zero.
* Ask your child to collect a specified number of objects.
* Play games like Snakes and Ladders that involve using a dice.

Games to practise addition and subtraction

* Playing skittles. Make a set of skittles using ten cardboard tubes which can be knocked over with a soft ball. After each throw talk about the score. We had ten skittles and we knocked over six. There are four left standing up. 6 + 4 make 10
* Make a target game. Place three or four empty boxes on the floor and label each box with a number 1 – 5. Make up rules for your game with your child. How many balls can you throw in a turn? How many does the winner need to score altogether?
* Play a hidden objects game. Place five small objects on a tray – show your child and count them together. Now cover the objects with a cloth and slide your hand under and remove some of the objects. Show your child and ask “How many things are left?” Increase the number of objects as your child becomes more confident.
* Guess my number: This is a great game for a journey. “I am thinking of a number between 1 and 10.” Your child has to guess the number by asking questions but you can only answer ‘yes’ or ‘no’.

Maths is more than just about learning to count. Awareness of measuring, shapes and time also play an important part in your child’s development.

Measuring

To develop your child’s measuring skills, you could:

* Practice measuring things in the home with a tape measure and write down their sizes.
* Compare the lengths of two objects using words like ‘bigger’ or ‘smaller’ or ‘taller’ or ‘shorter’.
* Compare objects to see which is heavier.
* Fill and empty containers.
* Weigh ingredients for cooking.

Learning about shapes

After learning the names of shapes, your child’s next step is to describe what they are like and what they can do.

You can develop your child’s interest in shapes by:

* Comparing the shapes of the street signs you see on the way to the shops.
* Looking at everyday objects and finding words to describe their shape.
* Making and talking about simple repeating patterns and continuing them.
* Getting them to find everyday objects which are square, circular, triangular or rectangular.

Learning about time

To develop your child’s understanding of time:-

* Talk about the passing of time - how long does it take to…
* Use time vocabulary – day, night, morning, afternoon, hour, minute, etc
* Talk about important times in the day – play time, dinner time, home time.
* Use an egg timer to play games

Simple Problem Solving

* In practical, everyday activities talk about and practice sharing, doubling and halving.
* Sharing sweets into 4 groups (or family members)
* Cutting cakes/fruit/pizza and talk about how many pieces there are.
* Emphasise that half is two equal groups.
* Play games such as dominoes and highlight the doubles.
* Combining the two equal groups.

Money

* Give children opportunities to handle real coins and work out how to pay for items at the shops.
* Look at ordering coins, coin values.
* Playing money games/shops/role play, etc.

Learning about position

* Talking about and developing mathematical language of position and direction – under, over, above, below, beside, in front of, behind, opposite.

