

LEARNING AT HOME:

Ideas for parents and carers about learning at Early Level



When your child is in an early learning centre, nursery or in P1 at school we say that they are learning at Early Level. For some children learning at this Level can be later. Part of every child's learning is about **families and friendships**, that **every child is unique and special, their bodies, feelings and making choices** and **looking after living things**. This is part of our Health and Wellbeing learning called *Relationships, Sexual Health and Parenthood* education.

You are your child's first and most important teacher. With your child at an early learning centre, nursery or school there is the opportunity for parents/carers and staff to work together to help your child to learn. In the pages that follow we explore how you might support learning, there are also some quotes from parents who have been asked about what they do to support their child's learning.

When children are learning at Early Level we think about 'teachable moments'. These are the times when we don't necessarily plan a learning activity, things just pop up and there's an opportunity to help a child learn. When it comes to learning about health and wellbeing this is a good way to think about how you can support learning at home. Here are a few ideas - some of these things are kind of obvious and you will be doing them day-to-day, we mention them just because they do back-up the learning we do at school.

Learning about family and friendships

- **Talking about families.**
Children love to hear stories about you when you were their age and growing up, and about relatives near and far. You can draw or paint family portraits, family trees or start a family/selfie gallery. You can talk about how all our families are different. All the while it is possible to remind children who loves and cares for them, and who is there to support them.
- **Talking about friendships.**
At home and in the community, parents can help their child to meet and play with other children, from family members to neighbours and at local play groups or clubs. It's good for children to have the space to play and work out the challenges of getting on with others – like sharing things, or a child not being nice to them. Parents can also say how happy they are to see kindness and sharing and cooperation.

We have some of these books at school, others you should be able to borrow from the local Library – if they don't have them they might be able to order them for you. Always have a read for yourself and you can decide if they are right for you at home. Enjoy!

The Family Book by Todd Parr

The Family Book celebrates the love we feel for our families and all the different varieties they come in.

Families, Families, Families! by Suzanne Lang

If you love each other then you are a family. Discover a whole host of silly animal families in this celebration of the love found in families big and small.

We belong together: a book about adoption and families by Todd Parr

There are lots of different ways to make a family. It just takes love.

Do you sing twinkle? A story about remarriage and new family by Sandra Levins

This book addresses many feelings and questions that children may have while adjusting to remarriage and a blended family after their parents' divorce.

Mommy, Mama and Me by Leslea Newman

From hide-and-seek to dress-up, then bath time and a kiss goodnight, there's no limit to what a loving family can do together.

Do you want to be my friend? By Eric Carle

Do you want to be my friend asks a little mouse in this classic story.

The boy who built a wall around himself by Ali Redford

Boy built a wall to keep himself safe. Behind it he felt strong and more protected. Then Someone Kind came along...

Here are some of the things other parents have said:

"We have a large family, so we often go through the names of who is in the family to make sure he knows who his grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins are."

"My dad, his Grandpa, looked out some photos of him and I when we were the same age as my son and I are now. It was fun for all of us; my son learnt about his heritage and my dad and I were able to joke about the fashions of the 1980s!"

Learning about every child being unique and special

- **We are all unique!**

When you chat and play together remind your child just how important and special they are. You can talk about all the things they are good at, their own special characteristics and what you love about them. You can also have them think about what makes their brothers, sisters, cousins or friends unique and special.

- **Being a boy or a girl.**

In early years settings and in P1 at school, children are encouraged to be happy with who they are, with the kind of girl or boy they want to be. Many children fit what people often expect a boy or girl to like or to do – others don't. At school, we will do

our best to treat all children equally. At home you can encourage your child to be who they want to be, to play with all different kinds of toys, dress up and do what they enjoy, to share tasks around the home, and to help them learn to respect other children whoever they may be. It's also really helpful to encourage boys and girls to be friends when they want to be, and not to talk about these as girlfriend/boyfriend relationships.

These books will help learning at home. Ask at your local library about them:

All about Me by Debbie MacKinnon and Anthea Sieveking

Children learn about their bodies and themselves by naming, counting, discovering and comparing.

Colin and Lee, Carrot and Pea by Morag Hood

Helps children celebrate individuality, friendship... and vegetables!

I love you just the way you are by Tammi Salzano

A mum and son go about their daily routine with familiar activities such as dressing up, reading, painting and bath time.

It's okay to be different by Todd Parr

Bold, bright colours and silly scenes all about acceptance, understanding and confidence.

Here are some of the things other parents have said:

"I want her to be a girl who can have a mind of her own – be what she wants."

"Mixed sex friendships are very common, for under 5s, up to early primary school. They're just best pals."

"My son often points out people who look different to what he has seen before in his life. He recently said 'look mummy that lady only has one arm'. I just keep it casual and say yes we are all born different and some people just have one arm. Mummy has brown hair and daddy has no hair, just like that."

Learning about their bodies

- **The words we use.** In early learning and in P1 at school, we will use these words: penis, vulva, bottom and nipples. We do this because if children have the correct words this means we all understand each other. This keeps them safe. And they learn that these are just parts of their bodies, they shouldn't be embarrassed about them. You can use these words when you need to talk about their private parts. (Just to explain, we use the word vulva because this is the correct word for the part of their genitals that the girl can see – the vagina is the bit inside).
- **My body belongs to me!** This is the big message we want to get over to children. Children can learn that being touched is their choice. At home you can make sure you don't tell your child they have to kiss someone goodbye or have to go sit on someone's knee – they can decide! You can also give your child the clear message

that if anyone touches or tries to touch their private parts, they can tell you and they will never get in to trouble for such a thing.

- **In the bathroom.** When your child goes to the toilet or has a bath or shower there are opportunities to encourage them to think about what's private. You might have heard of the PANTS rule, this is a way to say to children that their pants cover their private parts. Also, unless you have to help, children can begin to do more things independently. They can close the bathroom door, wash their hands, put on their clothes.

These books will help learning at home. Ask at your local library about them:

My body: Usborne Very First Words (Board Book) by Felicity Books

It includes names for parts of the body, the senses, clothes, things we can do, and what our bodies need to stay healthy.

Lift the flap Questions and Answers about my body by Katie Daynes

The book is filled with entertaining and informative illustrations to help to answer all kinds of body questions that young children ask.

It's My Body by Lory Freeman

A book to teach young children how to resist uncomfortable touch.

Your body belongs to you by Cornelia Spelman

In simple reassuring language the author explains that children can decline a friendly hug or kiss, even from someone they love, and still be friends.

My Body Belongs to Me from My Head to My Toes by Dagmar Geisler

Provides children with confidence about accepting and rejecting physical contact from others, helping to give children a voice in uncomfortable situations.

Here are some of the things other parents have said:

"We often talk about body parts and what is private. It begins in the bath when they are naked."

"I will use the words they are taught."

Learning about feelings and making choices

- **How are you feeling?** At home you can ask and talk about feelings – when your child is excited or happy, but also when they are a bit worried or unsure. A child might not have all the words to explain why they feel something, but you can help them recognise how in their body (or in their tummy) they feel in different circumstances. Recognising feelings and encouraging chats will really help now and in the future.
- **Learning about trusted adults.** In early learning and at school, we are helping children learn about all different adults who help and support them and who can help if they are ever worried or concerned about something. You could talk at home

about how you are always there for your child and also help them recognise the other adults in their life who love and care for them.

These books will help learning at home. Ask at your local library about them:

I feel angry/I feel frightened/I feel sad/I'm worried are all books by Brian Moses.

The books look at these feelings in an amusing and reassuring way.

Little Meerkat's Big Panic: A story about learning new ways to feel calm by Jane Evans

This playful full-colour storybook shows children aged 2-6 easy ways for them to calm their body and brain when feeling anxious.

The Huge Bag of Worries by Virginia Ironside

Whenever Jenny goes, her worries follow her - in a big blue bag! But her grannie can help.

This story will appeal to all children who have occasional worries of their own.

My many coloured days by Dr Seuss

'You'd be surprised how many ways I change on different coloured days'. Dr Seuss takes the reader on a journey through many different moods.

No Means No! by Jayneen Sanders and Cherie Zamazing

'No Means No!' is a children's picture book about an empowered little girl who has a very strong and clear voice in all issues.

Oliver who was small but mighty by Mara Bergman and Nick Maland

Oliver is small but he wishes he were tall and mighty. This story is about overcoming your fears.

"He doesn't decide on big things, but makes his own decisions, to see how things turn out."

"When it comes to helping make choices and decisions I always explain to my son that his body is private and he and only he will decide who can touch him i.e. if he doesn't want to give a goodbye cuddle or a kiss to a relative or friend then its ok. I will not be forcing him and I do not allow anyone to try to change his mind. I want to show him its always ok to say no, it's ok to say no to an adult and adults are not always right."

Learning about looking after living things

- **Looking after living things.** At home you can grow and look after plants or vegetables, as well as have pets that children have some responsibilities for when it comes to their care.
- **Pregnancy.** At school, we will use some of the books listed below to talk about how a pregnancy begins and how the baby grows in the mummy's womb. At home or in the family or with friends there may be opportunities for children to meet and chat to

women who are pregnant; children will be curious and fascinated to find out more! Pregnancies at home, with the arrival of new brothers or sisters or cousins, are great opportunities to learn about the developments across a pregnancy.

- **What do babies need?** Although very young themselves we want children to learn about all the things a baby needs to be healthy, happy and safe. Again, you can use personal experiences to help your child learn. You can talk about what kind of baby they were, and what helped soothe them and keep them healthy, happy and safe. If there are little brothers or sisters or cousins around, then involve your child and help them recognise and respond to needs.

These books will help learning at home. Ask at your local library about them:

I want a pet by Lauren Child

The more desperate for a pet a young narrator becomes, the more outlandish her suggestions!

What Did I look Like When I Was a Baby? by Jeanne Willis and Tony Ross

This book explores family traits and genes in a funny and accessible style.

How did I Begin? by Mick Manning and Brita Granstrom

A warm, friendly introduction to the facts of life for young children that follows the story of a new life from the moment of conception to the birth of a baby.

Before you were born by Jennifer Davis

This joyous, innovative book is about pregnancy.

How are babies made? by Alastair Smith

Lift the flaps on the pages to see the baby changing as it grows and grows.

Now We Have a Baby by Lois Rock

Preparing a young child for the impact a new baby may have on their life and family.

“Now age 3 and with mum expecting second baby my daughter has started to ask questions regarding body parts, generally when she is in the bath or see’s mum or dad getting showered, changed. This is a very new development and we are giving everything its correct name rather than a nickname.”