



Sandal

Primary School & Nursery



Nursery Handbook



2026 - 2027



Contact the School

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Welcome to Nursery at Sandal Primary

A warm welcome to Sandal Primary school. We are delighted that you have chosen our Nursery for your child to attend. We hope the time you spend with us will be both happy and valuable.

We know that starting nursery can be a major milestone for many children. We therefore aim to make the transition from home to Nursery as smooth and pleasant as possible. With this in mind our first priority is to provide a happy and secure atmosphere where individual needs and potential are recognised.

Your child's first few weeks in Nursery, play a crucial part in forming positive attitudes and relationships. It is important that good relationships between home and nursery, parents and teachers are quickly developed and maintained. By joining us and making a partnership between home and nursery, you will be supporting your child with the beginning of their education at Sandal Primary School.

This booklet provides you with the information you will find useful, in preparation for your child starting nursery.

Our Nursery aims

We aim to...

- Create an environment that is safe, warm and welcoming so that children and their parents will feel respected and at ease.
- Providing an environment indoors and outdoors that is stimulating and appropriate to the enhancement of each child's development socially, emotionally, intellectually and physically.
- Develop relationships between staff and children that supports interactions of a high standard, in order to assess, develop and extend each child's capabilities in all areas of learning.
- Encourage in each child the development of self-motivation, independence and confidence through provision of resources and attitude of staff.
- Plan for the development of skills, knowledge and concepts and to provide a broad and balanced curriculum that is appropriate for the needs of three and four year olds.



Staff at Sandal



Headteacher

Mr Paul Douglass



Deputy Headteacher

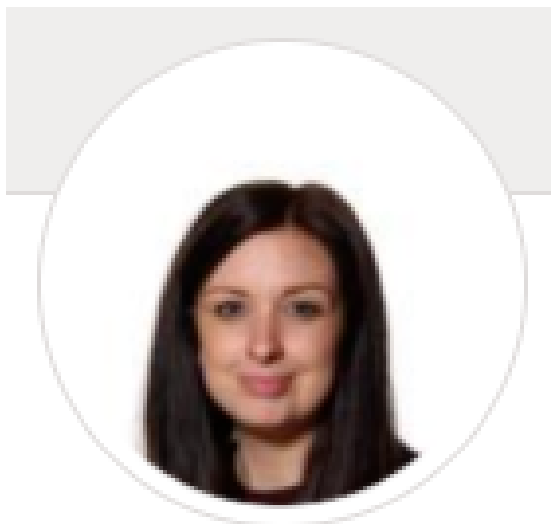
Mrs Emma Watkins
(currently on maternity leave)



Attendance and
Safeguarding Officer

Mrs Abi Bradley

Staff at Sandal



Buttercups Class Teachers

Mrs Cooper (MTW)



Nursery Nurse

Mrs McGoldrick

The School Day

The nursery day is from 9am to 3pm

Children will come to our nursery for either 15 or 30 hours.

Children with us for 15 hours will attend either:

Monday and Tuesday 9am-3pm Wednesday 9-11:45am

Or

Wednesday 12:15-3pm, Thursday and Friday 9am-3pm

Children who are with us for 30 hours attend from 9am-3pm every day

Arrival

To support parents/ carers who have older children in school, drop off will be between 8.50-9am. On arrival, a member of staff will open the entrance door for your child to enter the building. If your child attends breakfast club, a member of staff will bring them down to Nursery. Whilst offering support where needed, we do encourage each child to become independent in organising their own belongings. This will include hanging up their coat on their peg and putting away their lunch box and water bottle. The children will say goodbye at the door, have a hug and a kiss with their grown-ups and then self-register by finding their name card. The children can then go and choose their favourite activity.

School updates will be available weekly through email and through the school website www.sandalprimaryschool.co.uk

Lunch

Children who are with us all day will have lunch in 'The Meadow', our nursery dining space from 12.00-13.00. They will need to bring a healthy packed lunch with them each day. There will also be a nap area available if needed.

Departure

At the end of the session, we open the doors. Children will be called by a member of the nursery team, once their adult has been seen. No child is allowed to go until we have seen their responsible adult in the nursery playground. Please ensure that you have provided the names of approved adults who are able to collect your child (in the information pack). Your patience is appreciated at this very busy time as the children's safety is our first priority.

Children who go to Funtastik or After School Care Club are collected by school staff.

Please call school if you think you may arrive late to collect your child or let a member of staff know in the morning if it will be someone different to usual at pick up time.

Attendance: How do I report an absence?

Daily attendance is important to ensure continuity and progression in learning. If your child is unable to attend nursery for any reason on their planned sessions, please ring before 8.30am and leave an answer machine message (01274 598115) or email the office at: office@sandalprimaryschool.co.uk

We are aiming for over 98% attendance as a school. There are incentives to the most well-attended classes on a weekly basis!



What does the Nursery Day look like?

8.50 - 9.00	Welcome, Registration
9.00 - 9.15	Whole class input
9.15- 10.30	Child Initiated learning activities- (indoor/outdoor classrooms)
10.30- 10.45	Snack and milk time
10.45-11.30	Child Initiated learning activities- (indoor/outdoor classrooms)
11.30-11.40	Tidy up time
11.40-11.50	Adult let small group focus
12-12.45	Lunch <i>*children will have their lunch and will be able to get busy in the classroom once they have finished*</i>
1- 1.15	Whole class input
1.15- 2.20	Child Initiated learning activities- (indoor/outdoor classrooms)
2.20- 2.30	Tidy up Time
2.30- 2.55	Story time and get ready for home time
3.00	Home time

The short inputs throughout the week will range from;

- Maths
- Early phonics
- Understanding the world/ topic
- Physical Education (PE, 1 lesson per week)
- PSHE
- Sandal Stars



Milk and snack: Will my child need to bring any snacks?

The children gather together for milk and snack time where they will listen to a story. Milk is provided free of charge for nursery children.

We also provide a variety of fresh fruit each day. Every child is required to bring their own water bottle to school each day. They will have access to this throughout the nursery day.

Dinners: What happens at lunchtimes?

Lunchtime is around 12pm for children in nursery.



The children stay with familiar adults over lunchtime, to ensure they continue to feel safe and secure in nursery. They will eat their dinner in 'The Meadow', which is the classroom next to our nursery classroom.

We encourage all pupils to eat their meals in a positive way. Children are encouraged to eat their sandwiches/ main food first. Please make sure their lunch box is clearly labelled with their name and remember we are a healthy school.

A healthy packed lunch doesn't have to be boring, use your imagination, but please make sure you always include a sandwich or something similar, a piece of fruit and non-fizzy drink. Due to health and safety reasons, we are unable to heat any form of food up for the children. If your child does prefer hot food such as pasta or spaghetti hoops, these can be kept in a thermal container in their lunchbox.

If your child has any allergies or dietary requirements, please make sure to inform the school office.

What will my child need?

The first steps to ensuring your child feels confident and settled in Nursery, is ensuring they have everything they need and are ready for the day ahead. Initially your child will need:

- A named coat
- A named bag, to keep on their peg with spare clothes in
- A named water bottle containing water only please.
- A named pair of wellington boots (to stay in school)

All children must wear school uniform (see list in pack). School colours are compulsory. It would be helpful if children could wear clothes that they can fasten and unfasten themselves. **Please clearly label all your child's clothes.**

In Nursery, we do painting and gluing activities almost everyday. We provide aprons, but please appreciate that your child might go home a little messy. We try to ensure our paint and glue is washable. However, if your child does get paint on their clothes, we recommend that you soak them in cold water first.

Our learning takes place indoors and outdoors so they can go outside in all weather. On cold or snowy days, it is essential that children bring coats, warm jumpers, extra socks etc. On warmer days, children must be suitably covered for protection from the sun. Sun protection cream, sun hats and cool clothing are essential for safety. Children's footwear must be safe to wear for climbing, balancing and running as these are all part of the day.



Mastering Toileting: A Big Step for Little People

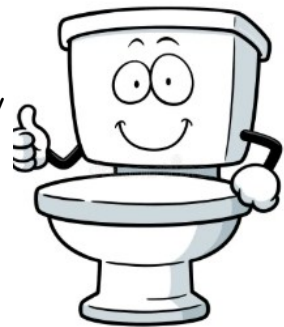
Moving out of nappies and mastering toileting is a huge milestone in your child's personal development. Succeeding with toilet training gives 3 and 4-year-olds a massive boost in self-esteem, helping them feel incredibly proud, independent, and confident as they step into the nursery world.

Ideally, we hope that most children will have achieved daytime dryness and be using the toilet by the time they start Nursery in September. However, we also know that every child's development journey is unique, and "accidents" are a totally normal part of being three and four!

What Does "Toilet Independence" Look Like in Nursery?

In Nursery, we always have staff on hand to help if a child gets stuck, but we encourage the children to manage as much as they can on their own. To help your child prepare, you can practice these steps at home:

- **Recognising the urge:** Helping them notice and say out loud when they need to go, rather than waiting until the very last second.
- **Managing clothing:** Dressing your child in **"school-friendly" clothes** (like jogging bottoms or leggings with elasticated waists). Avoid tricky belts, stiff buttons, dungarees, or tight jeans, which can cause panic when they need to go quickly!
- **The routine:** Practicing the full routine together: pulling trousers/pants down, sitting down, wiping, pulling clothes back up, flushing the toilet and washing hands with soap.



Top Tips for Parents

- **Keep a routine:** Encourage your child to try using the toilet at set times of the day, such as right when they wake up, before leaving the house, and before bed.
- **Praise the effort, ignore the accidents:** Use lots of positive rewards (like sticker charts or enthusiastic praise) for trying, even if nothing happens. If they have an accident, keep it low-key and stress-free: *"Never mind, we'll try again next time!"*
- **Send in spare clothes:** On your child's first day, please pack a couple of complete changes of clothes (pants, socks, trousers/skirts, and a top) in their school bag. Even fully trained children can have accidents when they get deeply engrossed in play or feel a bit overwhelmed by a new environment!

We Are Here to Support You

Please remember: **you are not alone in this**. If your child is struggling to master toilet training, is experiencing a setback, or has additional developmental needs, please talk to us before your child starts. We will work closely with you to put a supportive plan in place.

If you are looking for extra guidance, we have excellent, parent-friendly information leaflets available. Alternatively, you can get brilliant free advice and support from:

Your Health Visitor: You can contact your local health visiting team through your GP surgery.



Parent/Carer Involvement: How will I be kept informed?

We believe that education is a partnership and we value the things that you and your child have been involved with at home. When your child joins Nursery, we hope that you will feel welcome and stay sometimes to join in with the many activities that we offer.

We have planned a range of events over the coming year, including Spring crafts, where parents and carers can enjoy craft activities with their child.

We also offer 'Stay and Play' sessions once every term where parents/ carers are invited into school to explore the provision and learning with their child.

This day will change each term to accommodate for working parents/ carers.



There will also be curriculum workshops to keep you informed of curriculum expectations.

Before school, Nursery staff are available to speak to informally or you could make an appointment to speak to your child's class teacher at the end of the nursery day.

After the first couple of weeks when your child starts Nursery, there will be an opportunity to discuss how you feel your child has settled with their class teachers if you feel this is needed. This will be optional if you feel there are things you need to discuss.

It will be an afternoon drop-in session with dates to be confirmed in the first half term.

There will be 2 points in the year where a formal parents' evening will take place to discuss your child's progress.

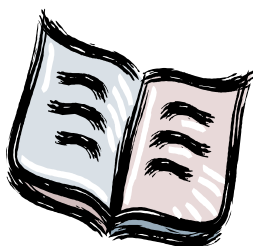
Assessment and the Learning Journey: How does it work?

Your child will be assessed through a variety of different methods including group work and observations. We observe each child in the areas of provision which are outlined in this handbook. This allows staff to identify the progress they are making and their needs which will then be incorporated into planning and teaching.

Each child will have an online learning journal, where staff are able to upload observations and photographs of their achievements. This will be accessible to parents/ carers at all times, as you will receive a log. We hope that you will respect the terms and conditions of using an online journal to view your child's progress.

Further information about this will be sent to you during the first few weeks in September.

Your child will also have many experiences and achievements outside of school which we would like to hear about. You can upload these achievements onto your child's learning journal. There will then be opportunities for your child to share some of these experiences with their class.



Your child's key person in Nursery

Your child will have guided teaching sessions throughout the day in a small group, two in the morning and one in the afternoon. This will include phonics, reading, mathematics, topic and song drawing sessions, as well as promoting communication and language. The key person's role is to support your child's learning and your child's next steps in learning, through thoughtful targeted questioning. The groups are rotated on a fortnightly basis, so that all the nursery adults can get to know your child. All members of the nursery team will work with your child and build a positive relationship with them.

Medication: What do I do if my child requires it?

If your child requires prescribed medication more than 3 times per day, this can be administered in school, under the supervision of office staff upon completion of the required form, available from the office. Where needed, inhalers will be kept in the school office and a form will need to be completed with the office when it is brought into school.

Please inform staff of any medical conditions, and ensure you complete the additional needs form which you will find in your pack.

Safety: How can we keep our children safe around school?

We would ask you to help us to make our school a safe place, where you will be happy to leave your child. With this in mind, we hope you will bear with us on the following points:

1. The school car park and Children Centre car park must **not** be used by parents/carers dropping off or picking up children.
2. If your child has pierced ears please use earrings with studs, as other types can be dangerous. Other jewellery is not allowed.
3. Please do not bring dogs into the school grounds.
4. You must not park in the 'Drop and Go' zone or on double yellow or zig-zag lines.

Parent Partnership Group

The PPG arrange fund raising events and give invaluable help to our school. They are always in need of new members so if you would like to join them please ask for details.



Foundation Stage Curriculum

What will my child do in Nursery?

In Nursery, we follow the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum (EYFS), developing children's skills across 7 defined areas of learning. These areas of learning are divided into 2 groups.

Prime areas of Learning

Communication and Language

(Listening, Attention and Understanding, Speaking)

- **What it looks like:** Creating a talk-rich environment where children build vocabulary through stories, rhymes, and role-play.
- **Focus for 3-4s:** Helping children learn to express their needs, thoughts, and feelings in longer sentences (using 4-6 words). They are learning to listen to others during small-group times, follow two-step instructions, and ask "why" and "how" questions to make sense of their world.

Physical Development

(Gross Motor Skills; Fine Motor Skills)

- **What it looks like:** Providing active, hands-on play to build both large muscles (gross motor) and small hand muscles (fine motor).
- **Focus for 3-4s:** Developing coordination through running, jumping, climbing, and balancing. Children are learning to handle tools like scissors, chunky pencils, and paintbrushes with increasing control. They are also developing independence in self-care, such as washing their hands, putting on their coats, and learning to make healthy food choices.

Personal, Social, and Emotional Development (PSED)

(Self-Regulation; Managing Self; Building Relationships)

- **What it looks like:** Supporting children to understand their own identity, build self-confidence, and navigate their first friendships.
- **Focus for 3-4s:** Learning to share, take turns, and resolve minor conflicts with adult support. Children are developing the vocabulary to name their feelings (e.g., happy, sad, angry) and are beginning to understand how to follow simple nursery boundaries and routines.



Specific areas of Learning

Literacy

(Comprehension; Word Reading; Writing)

- **What it looks like:** Sparking a deep love for stories, rhymes, and print in the environment.
- **Focus for 3-4s:** Tuning into sounds (phonological awareness) through rhythm, rhyme, and alliteration (e.g., "silly sausage"). Rather than blending written words, the focus here is on **pre-reading and pre-writing skills**—holding books correctly, spotting familiar signs and logos, and making marks in sand, paint, or paper to represent meaning.

Maths

(Number; Numerical Patterns)

- **What it looks like:** Exploring mathematical concepts naturally through daily routines and playful, concrete experiences.
- **Focus for 3-4s:** Developing "number sense" up to 5 (and sometimes 10) by counting real objects, subitising (recognising small groups of objects without counting them), and comparing quantities (e.g., *who has "more" or "fewer" blocks?*). Children also explore spatial awareness by experimenting with shapes, building towers, and using positional language like "under," "on top," or "inside."

Understanding of the World

(Past and Present; People, Culture and Communities; The Natural World)

- **What it looks like:** Guiding children's natural curiosity about the people, places, and nature around them.
- **Focus for 3-4s:** Encouraging hands-on exploration of the natural world—watching bugs, planting seeds, and noticing changes in the weather. Children talk about their own families and traditions, explore how things work, and use simple everyday technology constructively.

Expressive Arts and Design

(Creating with Materials; Being Imaginative and Expressive)

- **What it looks like:** Giving children the freedom to experiment with materials and express their imagination without worrying about a perfect "end product."
- **Focus for 3-4s:** Exploring colours, textures, and shapes by mixing paint, joining materials, and modelling with clay or dough. Children enthusiastically take part in pretend play (pretending to be doctors, animals, or chefs), sing familiar songs, and experiment with making their own music, rhythms, and dance movements.



Exploring the provision in our Nursery classroom

The classroom is split into areas to help promote all areas of learning. Here are some examples of the continuous provision that will be offered throughout the year to your child on a daily basis. Further resources may be added to an area of provision to promote a specific learning outcome, develop a theme or support a child's interest or need.

House on the Hill

During the first term, we have a home corner as this provides an ideal opportunity for children to re-enact familiar experiences. This is crucial to their learning about themselves and each other. This area is key in promoting children's personal, social and emotional development and language for communication and thinking.



Diggers Delight

Sand play helps with emotional and social development. In the sandpit, children learn collaboration skills as they dig, carry, and move sand with other children. They learn to wait patiently and take turns with the sand play materials. A lot of the materials are household items which provides a sense of realism for the children.

Modelling Mansion and Creative Creek- design and technology, painting, workshop, drawing

These areas develop children's imaginative and investigative skills. They learn to persevere when things don't quite go to plan. They develop a wide range of skills using different tools and techniques. They play an important role in building children's self confidence and independence.



Construction Capital

We have a wide range of construction sets, such as Lego and clever sticks which children can use to create their own models which resemble their interests. We also have natural materials such as tubes, carpet pieces and wooden blocks for children to use their imagination with. This is another area where children can express themselves and be creative with their peers.

Investigation/ STEM (Science, Technology, Economics, Maths)

Children have a natural instinct to explore the environment around them. Children can investigate and make their own enquiries through any area of learning. They will ask and answer their own questions, as well as develop a thirst for investigating!



Outdoor Area

Our outdoor area is a very important part of our Reception class. We provide a range of large scale activities outside for the children and aim for them to have access to outdoor provision at least once each day. opportunity. Anything that can be done inside can be done outside and much, much more.



Sandal Primary School's EYFS mission

Our school is a place where everyone is treated equally, encouraged and respected. We aim to support all children to become independent and collaborative learners, who are able to make their own decisions and reflect on their learning and actions.

We will provide a balanced curriculum that will enable each child to develop personally, socially, emotionally, spiritually, physically, creatively and intellectually to their full potential. It will be relevant and motivate young learners to set firm foundations for further learning as they move into each key stage. We use and value what each child can do, assessing their individual needs to help each child progress from their starting points, including those children with special educational needs.

We are committed to our school being a safe and inclusive place where learning is nurtured and in a happy, caring and curious environment. We will work closely with parents and carers to build a strong partnership in supporting their child's learning. We all aim for our school to be a happy place where excellent behaviour is expected and all children enjoy their educational journey in EYFS. Throughout their time in EYFS, the children develop a sense of belonging to a school community, ready for their transition into Year 1.

Early Language development in EYFS

Being a successful learner in school depends greatly on feeling comfortable with language. Children need to be able to understand easily the spoken language used by their parents, teachers and peers. This helps them to decode the language used in text and storybooks and to be able to use language with confidence. You can help your child to progress at nursery by frequently having relaxed conversations with them about whatever is interesting them at the time.

Listening is also recognised as a vital communication skill. Always listen to what your child has to say and encourage them to listen carefully all of the time. The more your child talks and listens, the more thoughtful they become. Never ignore or brush aside questions. Answer them as simply, clearly, carefully and truthfully as you can and don't be afraid to introduce new words.

It is helpful if your child can:

- communicate their needs
- respond to simple instructions

Play games at home which encourage your child to listen and follow instructions, such as 'Simon Says', taking part in a 'listening walk' or describing what they experience by touching objects in a feely bag. Don't underestimate the power of nursery rhymes either; children find them great fun to recite, making them an invaluable way of developing listening and learning skills.

If you are aware that your child may have an identified communication difficulty, please let us know and we will be able to support them accordingly.



Sharing books with your Nursery children

Remember all experiences with books should be enjoyable

At this age, "reading" isn't about sounding out words yet because it's all about curiosity, building a love for stories, and noticing the print in the world around them.

Children love spotting words and numbers everywhere they go! You will notice them starting to recognise familiar signs and logos inside and outside the home, like the logo on a favourite cereal box, a shop sign, the number on the front of a bus, or a label on their clothing.

Sharing books together is a wonderful way to cuddle up, chat, and bond. By exploring books together, your child learns how to love stories, how to care for books, and how to connect what they see on the page to their own everyday adventures.

Top Tips for Sharing Books at Nursery Age

- **Make it a daily habit:** Try to share a story together every day (bedtime is a lovely opportunity!). However, always follow your child's lead; stop as soon as they get restless or tired.
- **Embrace repetition:** Encourage your child to choose their own book. Don't worry if they pick the exact same story night after night! Repetition is fantastic for their brain development and helps them learn story structures.
- **Talk about the pictures:** You don't always have to read the text. Spend time looking at the illustrations, asking questions like, "What do you think that little bear is going to do next?" or "How do you think they are feeling?"
- **Be a reading role model:** Let your child see you reading. Whether it's a book, a magazine, a recipe, or a shopping list, it shows them that reading is a useful and enjoyable part of everyday life.



Helping Them Learn How Books Work

Before children learn to read words, they need to learn how books function. You can gently show them this by pointing out that:

- We start at the front cover of the book and turn the pages one by one to the back.
- We read the pages from the top down.
- In English, we read words from left to right. You can run your finger under the words as you read aloud to show them this flow.

Stories About Starting Nursery

Reading together about going to nursery or school is a fantastic way to chat about what to expect, settle any nerves, and build excitement. Here are some brilliant, age-appropriate titles you might enjoy finding at your local library or bookshop:

- **I am Too Absolutely Small for School** - Lauren Child
- **Harry and the Dinosaurs Go to School** - Ian Whybrow
- **Starting School** - Janet and Allan Ahlberg
- **Lulu's First Day** - Anna McQuinn
- **The Color Monster Goes to School** - Anna Llenas
- **Maisy Goes to Nursery** - Lucy Cousins



Getting Ready for Reading: Phonics in Nursery

At Sandal Primary School, we use a brilliant, high-quality program called Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised to teach phonics. It is a consistent approach used all the way from our Early Years classes right into Key Stage 1.

While children in Reception and Year 1 focus on learning written letter shapes and reading books, **Nursery is all about building the essential foundations**. Research shows that the best way to prepare a child for reading is by growing their spoken language and their ability to hear sounds. Children cannot read if they cannot speak!

In Nursery, we follow the **Little Wandle: Foundations for Phonics** framework, which focuses on two main, joyful areas: **Rhyme Time** and **Tuning Into Sounds**.

1. Rhyme Time

Did you know that children who know a wealth of nursery rhymes by heart before they start school often find learning to read and write much easier?

In Nursery, we use the Little Wandle Rhyme Time activities to sing, chant, and clap along to classic rhymes like *Humpty Dumpty*, *Incy Wincy Spider*, and *The Wheels on the Bus*. This helps children notice the rhythm, beat, and patterns of language.

Parent Tip: Singing nursery rhymes with your child face-to-face has a massive impact on their brain development! Try to prioritise singing together over watching rhymes on a screen.



2. Tuning into Sounds (Phase 1 Phonics)

Before children can look at a written letter (like 's') and make its sound, they need to train their ears to listen carefully. We play lots of active, playful listening games in Nursery to develop these skills:

- **Alliteration Games:** We play games like "Bertha the Bus" or "What's in the Box?" to look at objects and explore words that start with the same sound (e.g., *s-s-snake*, *s-s-star*, *s-s-sun*). We encourage the children to copy these speech sounds clearly, but we don't show them the written letters just yet.
- **Oral Blending ("Sound-Talk"):** This is the ultimate "dress rehearsal" for reading. We practice breaking words down into individual sounds out loud, and then blending them back together. For example, an adult might say, "*Can you touch your b-a-ck?*" or "*Look at the d-o-g.*" We then help the children put those sounds together to hear the word "back" or "dog."

How can you find out more?

We know phonics can feel a bit daunting if it's new to you, but we are here to guide you every step of the way!

Phonics Evening: We will be holding a special Nursery Phonics Information Evening during the first half term. We will share practical ideas, demonstrate our games, and give you all the guidance you need to support your child confidently at home.

Explore Online: If you would like a sneak peek or want to find out more, please visit the dedicated parents' section on the Little Wandle website:

<https://www.littlewandlelettersandsounds.org.uk/resources/for-parents/>



Early Writing at Sandal Primary School: Making Marks!

Before a child can write letters, they need to build up the muscles in their hands and shoulders, and discover that the marks they make have meaning. In Nursery, we call this **mark-making**.

Your child might make marks using a paintbrush and water on an outside wall, a stick in the mud, their finger in shaving foam, or chunky crayons on a big piece of cardboard. All of this is "writing" to a three- or four-year-old!

How can you help at home?

- **Provide messy, fun materials:** Give your child access to chalks, chunky crayons, felt-tips, and paintbrushes.
- **Be a writing role model:** Let your child see you writing shopping lists, birthday cards, or work notes. Invite them to grab some paper and write their own "list" right next to you.
- **Praise every scribble:** Ask your child, *"Can you tell me what your drawing says?"* Celebrate their marks! This builds immense confidence and a love for expressing themselves.
- **A note on names:** If your child is showing interest in writing the letters of their name, that's wonderful! Always encourage them to use a **capital letter for the very first letter**, and **lower-case (small) letters** for the rest.



Early Mathematical Understanding: Maths is Everywhere!

Maths in Nursery isn't about worksheets or calculations, it's about exploring, counting, and problem-solving through daily routines and play. You are probably doing heaps of maths at home already without even realising it!

Here are some fantastic, stress-free ways to weave maths into your daily routines:

Around the House & Kitchen

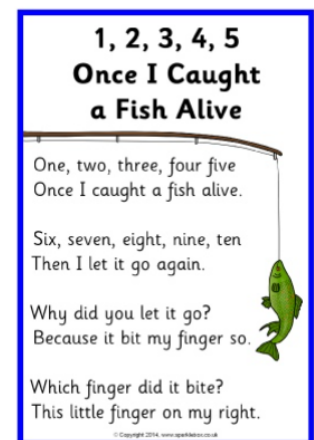
- **Set the table together:** "We have 3 people for lunch. Can you find 3 plates?"
- **Bake together:** Let them help you scoop, pour, and measure ingredients for a cake.
- **Sort the laundry:** Matching pairs of socks or sorting clothes by colour is a brilliant mathematical sorting skill.
- **Tidy-up time:** Use positional language like, "Can you put the blocks *inside* the box?" or "Put the teddy *on top* of the shelf."

Out and About

- **Spot numbers:** Look for numbers on house doors, car registration plates, and buses.
- **Talk about the world:** Use mathematical language naturally. "Is that bag too **heavy** to carry?", "Look at that **long** stick!", or "Do you have **more** strawberries than me?"
- **Spot patterns:** Look at patterns on clothing, brick walls, or pavement tiles. You can make your own patterns by alternating colored blocks (e.g., red, blue, red, blue).

Stories, Games, and Rhymes

- **Sing number songs:** Sing rhymes that count up or down, like *5 Little Speckled Frogs*, *1, 2, 3, 4, 5, Once I Caught a Fish Alive*, or *10 Green Bottles*.
- **Play simple games:** Play classic games like Snap, Dominoes, or board games that involve rolling a dice and counting the moves.
- **Read number books:** Look for counting books at the library to enjoy at bedtime.



Number Rhymes

When your child is ready to start writing numbers, we use catchy little rhymes in Nursery to help them remember how to form them correctly (for example, "Around the tree and around the tree, that's the way we make a three!").



Early Physical Development

Young children need lots of time and play to develop both their **gross motor skills** (big movements using whole body muscles) and **fine motor skills** (small movements using finger and hand muscles).

Building strength in their shoulders, arms, and hands is what eventually allows them to sit comfortably at a table and hold a pencil!

Here are some fun, everyday ways you can help your child build these muscles at home:

Building Finger Strength (Fine Motor Skills)

Before children can write, they need strong finger muscles. You can help them develop these by:

- **Playing with dough:** Squeezing, rolling, and pinching playdough, clay, or salt dough is the ultimate hand workout!
- **Getting creative:** Making models out of recycling (cardboard boxes, kitchen rolls, and bottle tops) using glue or tape.
- **Building and snapping:** Using construction toys like Duplo, Mega Blocks, or Stickle Bricks (Meccano and loom bands are a bit tricky for Nursery, but big bricks are perfect!).
- **Puzzles and threading:** Completing age-appropriate jigsaws together, or threading large beads or pasta onto string.
- **Snips and scribbles:** Giving them child-safe scissors to practice making snips in paper or playdough. Don't worry about them cutting perfect shapes yet, just the action of cutting builds great muscle control.
- **Exploring crayons:** Encourage your child to experiment with chunky crayons and chalks. Rather than worrying about them staying inside the lines, celebrate their control as they try to fill the page!

A note on pencil grip: At age 3 and 4, children are still developing their grip. Some will use their whole hand, while others are starting to move toward a "tripod grip" (holding it between the thumb and forefinger). If you'd like to see how this develops, you can find lovely guidance on the [Teach Handwriting Website](#).



Building Whole-Body Strength (Gross Motor Skills)

Developing balance and coordination is vital for physical confidence. Enjoy doing these together:

- **Ball games:** Kicking large balls, rolling them to each other, and practicing throwing and catching big, soft balls or beanbags.
- **Moving in different ways:** Riding scooters or balance bikes, climbing at the park, and walking along logs or stepping stones to practice balance.



How can you encourage independence? Getting "Nursery Ready"

Being ready for Nursery isn't about being able to write or count perfectly. It is about helping your child become as independent as possible so they feel confident and capable in their new environment.

Here are some wonderful life skills you can practice with your 3 or 4-year-old at home to help them prepare for Nursery life:

- **Using the toilet:** Working towards using the toilet independently, including wiping, flushing, and washing their hands with soap afterwards.
- **Coats and shoes:** Practicing putting on and taking off their own shoes (velcro is a lifesaver!) and having a go at putting their arms into their coat sleeves.
- **Meal times:** Encouraging them to feed themselves using a spoon and fork, and practicing drinking from an open cup.
- **Hygiene:** Learning how to pull a tissue out of a box, blow their own nose, and pop the tissue straight into the bin.
- **Tidying up:** Encouraging them to help put a few toys back into the box when they finish playing.
- **Sharing space:** Having opportunities to play alongside other children, learning to share toys and take turns.



Please Don't Worry!

Every single child develops at their own pace. **Please do not worry if your child hasn't mastered all of these skills yet.** When your child starts at Sandal Primary, our Nursery team will work closely with you. We are entirely here to support, encourage, and help your little one naturally develop these independence skills at a pace that feels safe and happy for them!

Starting Nursery can be very exhausting - emotionally, physically, socially and mentally. Do not be surprised if for the first few weeks your child comes home tired and not wanting to talk about their day, other than to say they have 'played' or 'done nothing'. Give them a cuddle, a drink and something to eat. They will tell you exactly what they have been doing when they are ready to!

Remember, children are

ALL DIFFERENT SHAPES AND SIZES

From different surroundings

Interested in different things

and

They all learn differently.





Sandal

Primary School & Nursery

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