

Literacy at Ditton Nursery School

We believe that learning to read and write should be a pleasurable journey. We focus on three main building blocks to give your child the best possible start: understanding stories, hearing sounds, and moving big and small muscles. Here is how we do it every day:

Understanding Stories & Words (Comprehension)

Before children can read words on a page, they need to understand how stories work. We create a 'book-rich' world for them to explore. What we do in nursery:

- Every room has a cosy, inviting book corner filled with engaging stories
- Our outdoor area has a fun reading shed to explore
- Puppet play, recipes, and signs are used, indoors and outdoors, so children see words everywhere
- Our 'Story Spine' has carefully chosen stories which are shared daily and used in group teaching. They are made available to children in our special baskets.
- We use golden phrases like: *Once upon a time... Every day... Until one day... Because of that... Until finally...* This teaches children how a story is built!

Tuning Into Sounds ('Little Wandle Foundations' Phonics)

We use a proven programme called Little Wandle Foundations to get children ready for reading. We play games to help children tune into sounds. What we do in nursery:

- Sound Games: We play games listening to everyday noises, musical instruments, and clapping out beats
- Rhyme Time: We sing nursery rhymes and action songs every day. Rhymes help children hear how words can be broken down into smaller sounds
- Sounding out words: We play talking games where we stretch out words—like saying, "*Can you find your c-oo-t?*" or "*Look at the d-o-g!*" This helps their brains connect those sounds together later when they learn letters

Getting Ready to Write (Physical Development)

Writing starts with the whole body, not just the fingers! A child needs strong shoulders, arms, and core muscles before they can comfortably hold and control a pencil. What we do in nursery:

- Big Movements (Gross Motor): We roll tyres, wheel wheelbarrows, wave large ribbons and scarves in the air to make big circles and zigzags. We climb, swing, dance, and paint with large brushes and water. This builds shoulder strength.
- Small Movements (Fine Motor): We strengthen tiny hand muscles by squeezing water spray bottles, using tongs to pick up small objects, poking and rolling playdough, and threading beads.
- Making Marks: We give children the freedom to explore 'making marks' with their fingers or sticks in sand, mud, and paint, or on giant rolls of paper on the floor. Adults sit with them, chatting about what their drawings mean.