

LONDON
FOSTERING
ACHIEVEMENT

Practical ideas for primary learners

Education Changes Lives

Education changes lives. It opens the door to new dreams and expectations. It provides strong foundations for adult life, improves self-esteem and gives a positive self-image.

The best foster carers are strong advocates for the education of their children, supporting their learning at school and in the home and challenging others to do the same.

7 key ways to help your child learn:

1. Foster Confidence and Self-Belief
2. Always have High Expectations
3. Motivate through Praise and Encouragement
4. Inspire High Aspirations
5. Reward Effort, Ignore failure
6. Build on your child's strengths
7. Show interest, give time



All children have different talents and all learn in different ways

For starters ...

- Form a relationship with your child's class teacher at the very beginning of the year and get into the habit of asking them how your child is doing when you pick him/her up at the end of the day
- Offer help the school when asked, such as accompanying school outings, helping with school plays, assemblies and other activities during school hours
- Encourage your child to join after-school activities and clubs
- Say hello to your child's friends when you pick her/him up after school, meet their parents and invite them to play



Improving Numeracy Skills

Numeracy and problem solving are skills we use every day without thinking about what they are. So, it's not difficult to support your foster child in improving their numeracy skills. Just one thing: try not to mention if you didn't like or weren't good at maths in school!

Here are some tips for you...

- Use your number skills out loud as you go about daily life so your home is a place where children and young people feel comfortable about numbers
- Help them budget their pocket money. Let them take responsibility buying for personal things
- Open a bank account and let them take control of it when they are ready
- Encourage them to read a TV programme guide and work out timings
- Get them to count out the cutlery drawer or check the fridge to see if there are enough yoghurts for tea
- Practice estimating and 'guesstimating'
- Cook together - let them weigh out the ingredients, decide on which containers to use, set the time on the oven
- Play games where they have to keep score - darts, stop the clock, card games such as 21
- Solve puzzles together – anything from jigsaws to crosswords



A word about homework

Helping with homework is not doing it for them. Here are a few tips:

- Ask your child to **explain** to you clearly and simply what they learnt in a specific subject that day, e.g. long division. By doing this, you are making the child organise their ideas and then put them into words in an intelligible way. This is essential for making concepts stick in the brain.
- Help your child to memorise. There are lots of tricks they can use such as **Mnemonics**: e.g. **N**orth, **S**outh, **E**ast, **W**est—Never Eat Shredded Wheat and silly phrases (the sillier the phrase, the easier to remember!) e.g. **B**ECAUSE : **B**ig **E**lephants **C**an't **A**lways **U**se **S**mall **E**xits.
- Go through your child's exercise books with them and read together the teacher's comments. Discuss what they have to do to improve and how they are going to do it.
- Check your child's homework with them; help them to spot mistakes and to redraft it if necessary. Discuss with them whether they have made the improvements suggested by their teacher in the last piece of work.
- Praise them for what they have done well; do not dwell on what they have not done well.

Improving Literacy Skills

Reading with your child must be one of the most enjoyable ways in which you can support their learning. Reading improves listening and concentration skills, develops comprehension, stretches the imagination, improves word power and, above all ...provides escape into another world when things are tough.

A few tips ...



- Make your home a place where reading is part of daily life. Read yourself. Talk about what you have read in newspapers, books or magazines.
 - Turn off the TV when you are reading or listening to someone read.
 - Build your own collection of books at home. If possible get books that feature characters or storylines that will help children and young people make sense of their own life.
 - Show respect for books and keep them safe. Join the local library and use it.
- We are never too old to be read to;** younger children should be read to every evening and even older children who are not yet fluent readers will benefit from being read to.

With beginner readers:

- Sit them close to you so that they can see the words and the pictures.
- Point to the words as you read so that they learn to recognise them.
- Stop and talk about the pictures and the story they tell.
- Ask what they think will happen next, or how the story will end.

Once your child is reading independently, foster their new skill:

- Get older children to read to the younger ones.
- Once they can read full sentences encourage them to read with expression and put on voices for different characters Ask lots of questions about the story such as;
'Which is your favourite character and why?'
'Does this story remind you of anything that has happened to you?'
'Can you guess what is going to happen next?'
- Keep up reading bedtime stories for as long as they are welcome.
- Encourage them to read instructions, recipes and signs.
- Buy a simple dictionary and check new words.
- Make literacy fun - play a computer game that involves reading, make a scrapbook.
- Buy the book of a film they have enjoyed.
- Download stories and watch film versions of books.
- Read together.

Developing writing skills

Don't forget about developing writing skills too:

- Play lots of ball games to develop hand-eye coordination - board and other house games help too
- Get your child to draw, colour and paint
- Encourage them to keep a little diary and write down the best thing that happened to them each day
- Encourage them to write down appointments and playdates
- Get them to write shopping lists, recipes, send postcards, write emails
- Ask them to write you notes about what they want for supper, in their lunch box etc.

A few more things



Take a full part in your child's Personal Education Plan (PEP)

- Talk with your child before each PEP and prepare well
- Prepare questions you want to ask, such as what support is being given
- Reassure them that it is beneficial for them
- Ask them if they would like you to speak on their behalf about what is going well at school, and anything that is not going well
- Ensure you have done anything you said you would at the last PEP and if you are unsure about anything at the PEP, just ASK
- If you disagree with anything, just SAY SO
- If you feel shy, just remember for whom you are doing it!
- ADVOCATE for your foster child – they're worth it!

Transition times

- Change is often difficult for Children looked after, so they need to be well-prepared
- As their class teacher changes at the end of each school year, help them to say goodbye in July. Find out the name of the new teacher and talk about him/her over the holidays
- Each September, let them see you talking to and developing a relationship with their new teacher, to model how they should behave and signal that it is all right
- Begin preparing for the transition to secondary in Year 5 and discuss possibilities during the Year 5 PEPs
- Attend their primary school information and advice sessions
- If they have Special Educational Needs, ask the primary SENCO for advice
- With your foster child, attend at least 3 secondary school Open Sessions and discuss them with him/her
- Let your child have a voice and be part of the choice

Nine tenths of education is encouragement!

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