

LEARNING AT HOME:

Ideas for parents and carers about learning at First Level



When your child is in P2, P3 or P4 we say that they are learning at First Level. For some children learning at this Level can also be later. Part of our learning at school is about **relationships, growing up, their bodies** and what we call **the baby's story**. 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 school there is the opportunity for parents/carers and schools 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 ideas from parents who have been asked about what they do to support their child's learning.

Learning about relationships

At home you can do these things - 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.

- **We are all unique!** When you chat and play together remind your child just how important and special they are. Talk about all the things they are good at and what you love about them. You can also have them think about what makes their brothers or sisters or cousins or friends unique and special.
- **Talking about families.** Children love to hear stories about you growing up, about relatives near and far. Small families can celebrate how close they are. You can draw or paint family portraits, family trees or start a family/selfie gallery.
- **Learning about trusted adults.** 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 the other adults in your child's life who love and care for them.
- **Being a boy or a girl.** At school we encourage children 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 share tasks at home, and to help them learn to respect other children whoever they are.

Here are some of the things other parents have said:

"We take opportunities as they arise for open conversations... something we see on TV or on the bus and use it."

“Boys swap stickers with girls, both do football training, so things have changed, it’s refreshing.”

“There’s no pressure from us. We encourage him to do his dancing; he was embarrassed at first so we assured him it was okay.”

“I tell her girls can do everything.”

“LGBT came up as someone at school had been talking about a celebrity saying he was gay. I told them what ‘gay’ means and we had a chat about boys who fancy boys/girls who fancy girls, they didn’t think there was anything strange about it, and we talked about not using the word as an insult.”

Learning about growing up and bodies

At school we talk about ‘teachable moments’. There 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 growing up and learning about their body this is a good way to think about how you can support learning at home. Here are a few ideas.

- **My body belongs to me!** This is the big message we want to get over to children at school. 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 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. Unless you have to help, children can do things independently. They can close doors, wash their hands, put on their clothes.
- **The words we use.** 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 inside bit).
- **The Pants Rule.** Children love this way to learn about private parts. Have a look here: <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/keeping-children-safe/underwear-rule/>

Here are some of the things other parents have said:

“We have had a chat about my daughter’s body parts and the difference between a boy and a girl as she began to ask questions and so I felt if she was asking the questions then she was ready for the answers.”

“They are aware of other names used ‘flower, winky, willy etc.’ I have always ensured that ‘vulva’ ‘penis’ have been used as correct terms for their anatomy.”

“He’s 5 and he knows the word penis. He can choose what to call it.”

“I decided to use the school words because I didn’t want to confuse him.”

“For a mother this is a bit embarrassing for me as I am quite a private person when it comes to anything about the body etc. but I have realised I have to be open and confident in what I am saying and I want him to know that he can come to me whatever is on his mind.”

“They learn this from school, that pants is their safe area. I’m happy with the schools doing this.”

Learning about how human life begins, pregnancy and birth

At school children learn about how life is created, about pregnancy and birth. We do this by talking about plants and animals, and of course this means talking about human life. We do this because children are curious, they really want to know and its best to be very straightforward. You have probably already been asked: *but where do babies come from?* Here are some ideas about how to talk and learn about this at home. **There are some really great books that help with these conversations. Check out the booklist that follows.**

- **How are babies made?** At school, we will talk about how a baby is made in simple terms that describe sex and conception. Before we do this lesson, we will share the PowerPoint and words that we use so that you can support this learning at home.
- **Pregnancy.** At school, we will talk about 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; they 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.
- **How are babies born?** At school children will learn about the baby getting ready to be born and coming down from the womb and out of the mummy’s vagina. At home you can talk about your child’s birth, or the birth of siblings. Maybe you have some early photos to share.
- **What do babies need?** Although very young themselves we want children to learn at school 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.

Here are some of the things other parents have said:

“I explain a lot about reproduction and pregnancy using a book I used when I was pregnant.”

“My daughter was there every step of the way when deciding to have more children to pregnancy and birth so is well clued up on this!”

“I’ve always honest and proactive in discussion when opportunities present themselves such as discussing how I gave birth and what was involved in making a baby - age appropriate though.”

The importance of listening and talking

As you will know, sometimes you just need to be in the right place at the right time. At those moments your child will show an emotion you pick up on, maybe they will look like they need to tell or ask you something, or maybe the question will just pop out. There’s no doubt being a parent or carer can be tough sometimes. But when you can, be there for the chat, the game or the bedtime book.

“It’s about talking about issues. He knows that he can come to me or other family members - I have told him there is not a topic that is off limits.”

Books for Reading Together

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. Enjoy!

Lift the flap Questions and Answers about my Body

Katie Daynes (ISBN 9781409562108)

This Lift-the-Flap book contains the answers to the many questions that curious children have about their bodies, including ‘How do I smell?’ ‘What makes me burp?’ ‘Why do I need to wash my hands?’ ‘Why is blood red?’ and many more.

Your body belongs to you

Cornelia Spelman (ISBN 978-0-8075-9473-5)

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. The text and illustrations remind children that their feelings count. Positive and assertive approach.

Colin and Lee, Carrot and Pea

Morag Hood (ISBN 1509808949)

The perfect way to help children celebrate individuality, friendship... and vegetables!

Miles is the boss of his body

Samantha Kurtzman- Counter and Abbie Schiller (ISBN 0989407136)

On his 6th birthday, Miles' excitement is dimmed when he finds himself being pinched, hugged too tight, picked up and tickled by his well-intentioned family and decides he's had enough! When Miles decrees that he is the "Boss of his body," his whole family expresses support and respect for his personal boundaries.

Who's in a Family

Robert Skutch (ISBN 1883672139)

Family is important, but who's in a family? It's the people who love you the most! This picture book has no preconceptions about what makes a family a family. There's even equal time given to some of children's favourite animal families.

Families, Families, Families!

Suzanne Lang (ISBN 9780552572927)

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.

The Huge Bag of Worries

Virginia Ironside (ISBN 0340903171)

Whenever Jenny goes, her worries follow her - in a big blue bag! Jenny decides they will have to go. But who can she get to help her? This funny and reassuring story will appeal to all children who have occasional worries of their own.

I'm a Girl!

Yasmeen Ismail (ISBN 1408857006)

The girl in this book likes to win, she likes to be spontaneous, fast and strong. When she meets a boy who likes wearing princess dresses and playing dolls, they both quickly discover that they share interests that are wide and varied. Who says that pink is for girls and blue is for boys?

My many coloured days

Dr Seuss (ISBN 0099266598)

'You'd be surprised how many ways I change on different coloured days. Maybe on some days you feel sort of brown, like a bear; you feel slow and low, low down. But then comes a yellow day and wheeeeeeeeeee! you feel like a busy, buzzy bee'. Dr Seuss takes the reader on a journey through many different moods.

No Means No!

Jayneen Sanders and Cherie Zamazing (ISBN 1925089223)

'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, especially those relating to her body and personal boundaries.

Friends

Eric Carle (ISBN 0399172068)

Once there were two friends who were always together... But one day, the boy was all alone. His friend was gone. Undaunted, he sets off on a quest that takes him across a swift cold river, over a tall mountain, through a broad meadow and a forest full of dark shadows. He sleeps under starry skies and dreams of floating on clouds before finally being reunited with his beloved friend.

The boy who built a wall around himself

Ali Redford (ISBN 1849056838)

Boy built a wall to keep himself safe. Behind it he felt strong and more protected. Then Someone Kind came along. Written for children aged 4 to 9, this gentle full-colour picture book uses a simple metaphor to explain how children who have had painful or traumatic experiences can build barriers between themselves and other people. It will help children explore their feelings and encourage communication.

The Invisible Boy

Trudy Ludwig (ISBN 9781582464503)

Meet Brian, the invisible boy. Nobody ever seems to notice him or think to include him in their group, game, or birthday party . . . until, that is, a new kid comes to class. When Justin, the new boy, arrives, Brian is the first to make him feel welcome. And when Brian and Justin team up to work on a class project together, Brian finds a way to shine. This gentle story shows how small acts of kindness can help children feel included and allow them to flourish.

Kindness Starts with you

Jacquelyn Stagg (ISBN 1775183319)

Follow Maddy through her day at school, where your child will learn how easy it can be to spread kindness! From taking turns on the swing to including everyone in the game - this storybook shows that no act of kindness, no matter how small, is ever wasted.

What Did I look Like When I Was a Baby?

Jeanne Willis and Tony Ross (ISBN 184270 2106)

Michael asks his mum; the baboons asks his mum and all other animals ask their mums. The answer in each case is amusing and satisfyingly simple. This book explores family traits and genes in a funny and accessible style. Amusing with lovely visual jokes.

How did I begin?

Mick Manning and Brita Granstrom (ISBN 978-0-7496-5661-4)

An introduction to the facts of life for young children that follows the story from conception to birth of a baby.

Before you were born

Jennifer Davis (ISBN 0761112006)

This joyous, innovative book about pregnancy tells the parallel story of mother and baby from hearing the thumpity-thump of baby's heartbeat to that unforgettable first meeting.

How are babies made?

Alastair Smith (ISBN 0746025025)

Discover how a baby forms inside its mother. Lift the flaps on the pages to see the baby changing as it grows and grows.

Now We Have a Baby

Lois Rock (ISBN 07459 48855)

There's a new baby in your family. There are so many important things to think about and so much you will have to learn to do. Preparing a young child for the impact a new baby may have on their life and family.

Stories for boys who dare to be different

Ben Brooks (ISBN 978-1-78747-198-6)

True tales of amazing boys (who became famous and not so famous men) who changed the world.

Goodnight stories for rebel girls

Elena Favilli and Francesca Cavallo (ISBN 978-0-141-98600-5)

The stories of heroic women from around the world.