**QUESTION TIME**

NDNA's lead early years adviser, Jo Baranek, explains why, and how, we should be championing maths in early years settings...

**Q: Why is maths an important part of early years education?**

Maths is an important part of the EYFS Framework, and an essential life skill for children. As well as developing numeracy, it supports skills such as problem solving, understanding and using shapes and measure, and improves children's spatial awareness. It also helps them to recognise, create and describe patterns, which is essential for early problem-solving skills.

In short, introducing maths to children from an early age helps to develop their understanding of all elements of maths, problem solving and reasoning in a broad range of contexts. Practitioners need to be able to provide opportunities for children to practise their developing skills and knowledge so they improve their competence and confidence in using them.

**Q: What can practitioners do to help children develop their skills?**

From birth children have a keen interest in the world around them, but to have the confidence to explore it, they need the support from adults around them. Positive relationships help give children the confidence to discover and develop their mathematical skills. Enabling environments help children to discover maths through indoor and outdoor play. Outdoors, children can spot shapes and numbers naturally, explore and investigate and build dens, which can help them discover shape, space and measure using equipment like boxes, crates and building blocks. Indoors, children can spot shapes and numbers and develop their mathematical skills. Enabling environments also help give children the confidence to discover it, they need the support from adults around them. Positive relationships help give children the confidence to discover and develop their mathematical skills. Enabling environments help children to discover maths through indoor and outdoor play. Outdoors, children can spot shapes and numbers naturally, explore and investigate and build dens, which can help them discover shape, space and measure using equipment like boxes, crates and building blocks. Indoors, children can spot shapes and numbers and develop their mathematical skills.

**Q: What does a nursery need to provide to help children learn maths through play?**

To give children the best opportunities to learn and develop mathematical skills, settings should pay particular attention to four, familiar themes: a unique child, positive relationships, enabling environments, and learning and development. All children can be successful with maths provided they are given the opportunities to understand it in a way that makes sense to them. Using the Characteristics of Effective Learning to ensure children are engaged, motivated and thinking critically for themselves is vital. For example, encouraging children to problem solve by asking “How many spoons do we need for everyone in this group to have one each? How many have we got? How many more do we need?”

By integrating related topics into the curriculum, it is possible to support all children to develop in areas such as understanding of maths through stories, songs and games. By ensuring that every opportunity to understand it in a way that makes sense to them. Using the Characteristics of Effective Learning to ensure children are engaged, motivated and thinking critically for themselves is vital. For example, encouraging children to problem solve by asking “How many spoons do we need for everyone in this group to have one each? How many have we got? How many more do we need?”

Finally, as well as learning practical ways to help children in nursery it is helpful for mathematical learning to be carried through at home, and these courses also support you to understand the importance of this.

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