

An A to Z of learning

H is for.. home-school links

The team at **Rachel Keeling Nursery School** maintain strong relationships with families outside of the setting by sharing resources, learning activities and information

HOME VISITS

Home is where the heart is and it is where the journey at Rachel Keeling Nursery School begins for our children and their families.

Usually our home visit is the first point of contact with families, and it is such a privilege to be part of this. Families welcoming staff into their home for a conversation (and sometimes a cuppa) signals the start of a warm and positive relationship.

It is often the first time we get to meet the children, and even if they hide under the table for the entire visit, eventually many children will remember the visit fondly, often including photographs from the visit in their Special Book.

To be welcomed into someone's home signals to the children that our staff are friends to be trusted. This helps children to develop attachment. It also enables families to talk freely in a space where they feel comfortable and we often meet the wider family. On occasion, it has helped us to witness potentially poor living conditions, and we are best placed to help families access help with accommodation.

Obviously, the pandemic means we have been unable to carry out our wonderful home visits. Instead, we arranged a socially distanced meet-up in the local park, where each family had their own slot to come and meet the team.

We also asked families to carry out transition forms and share information via a survey on Survey Monkey. While this system worked well, we look forward to returning to home visits with new cohorts as soon as it is safe to do so.

HOME LOANING

Children love to share what they are learning at school with their families, and we find their Special Books are a great way to do this. These books document the children's learning in school and can be added



to out of school as well. Children are free to move them between home and school and choose what to add to them. These books are treasured by the children and families.

Each week, we also loan books from our library, as well as language resources such as story packs and props, song packs and instruments and toys from our Toy Library.

At weekends and school holidays, families can borrow our balance bikes and two-wheeler bicycles, with a helmet too. This has been such a success in promoting cycling, and enabling children to share their skills with their families out of school. Some children have got their whole families cycling, which is a fantastic achievement.

HOME LEARNING

Our website has always been a rich source of information, but it became a lifeline during lockdown to support home learning: from sharing our favourite recipes, to films of teachers reading stories, phonic games, ideas for crafting and messages to enhance well-being and remind parents and carers that they are not expected to be home-schooling their children!

We also sent home craft packs with resources and a book to read to lift children's spirits, and staff have created a book of '52 things to do before you start Reception class'.

Families can borrow bikes from the school, and parents come into the setting to share their skills



The Home Learning and News Blog page on the website will be added to, to support the relationship between home and school and children's learning and development.

HOME AND AWAY

We are committed to working in partnership with parents and carers, and aim to help them and engage them in the life of the school as much as possible.

We have a home school liaison officer who works with parents on everything from child behaviour to housing. She has specialist knowledge of domestic violence, immigration, portage and the benefits system. Pre-Covid, we ran regular workshops in response to parents' requests or to needs identified by professionals working with the school. Topics have ranged from mathematical learning at home to the importance of outside play and risk-taking.

We encourage parents to help in school, and to share their skills, such as cooking, woodwork, weaving and plaiting hair, or music. And we punctuate our year with family events, such as our summer trip and international evening. Our doors are still open, but we look forward to working more closely again with parents as soon as we can. ■

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MORE INFORMATION

- www.rachelkeeling.towerhamlets.sch.uk/learning-at-home.html

Rachel Keeling Nursery School is an Outstanding setting in Bethnal Green, east London