

# Grass Roots Newsletter



## Hello January!

A very warm welcome back to all our wonderful families, and a truly Happy New Year! We hope you had a lovely, restful, and joyful holiday break. As we step into 2026, our primary focus for the month is dedicated entirely to School Readiness. This isn't just for our eldest children; it's about establishing strong developmental foundations across all age groups, from our three-month-old babies to our four-year-old pre-schoolers. Every milestone achieved here in the nursery and at home contributes directly to the confidence and competence your child will carry with them when they eventually start Reception. We are thrilled to partner with you on this crucial journey!

## School Readiness (Building Foundations from Birth)

School readiness encompasses a wide range of skills that go far beyond knowing the alphabet or counting to ten. Following the guidance from the Best Start in Life initiative, we focus on nurturing the whole child—confidence, independence, curiosity, and social ability. Here is how we tailor this focus for every child in the nursery:

**Babies (3-18 months) - Sensory & Communication Foundation:** The groundwork for school readiness starts with concentration and muscle control. Tummy time builds crucial core strength needed for sitting and focusing later on. Encourage them to track objects with their eyes to develop attention span. Most importantly, respond to all their babbling and sounds with enthusiasm—you are teaching them the fundamental back-and-forth of conversation, which is the cornerstone of classroom communication.

**Toddlers (18 months - 3 years) - Emerging Independence & Emotional Awareness:** This stage is about the shift from 'me' to 'we.' Encourage simple self-help skills like feeding themselves with a spoon or helping to put a toy back in the correct box. This introduces concepts of responsibility and order. When facing big emotions, name the feelings (e.g., "I see you are angry because the tower fell")—this is the start of emotional literacy, a key skill for managing social situations in a busy school environment.

**Pre-School (3-4 years) - Core Independence & Executive Function:** We focus intensely on skills that promote self-reliance. This includes practising dressing/undressing (especially coats and shoes), managing personal belongings (like a lunch box or book bag), and the ability to follow multi-step instructions (e.g., "Take your hat off, and then go sit on the carpet"). These practical skills build immense confidence for their first day in Reception.



## Practitioner Spotlight:

This month, we would like to introduce Emma to our families who are new to the setting. Emma is our SENCo and Deputy Manager, based at both sites. Emma has been on maternity leave since February and has been missed by all.

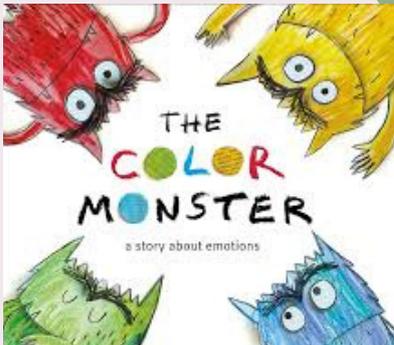
Emma is also our Designated Safeguarding Lead and supports families who may need extra help from ourselves or the amazing external services we have in Calderdale.



We also welcome back Amy G and Tasha from their maternity leave this month!

## Event Calendar:

- Family SEND support session @ Grass Roots Family Centre Thursday 15th January at 10am.
- We break up for February Half Term on Friday Friday 13<sup>th</sup> February and we return on Monday 23<sup>rd</sup> February.



## Community News:

- Check out Grass Roots Family CIC facebook page for community events <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100086769567112>
- 50 things to do before you are 5 has events on their website <https://calderdale.50thingstodo.org/app/os#!/welcome>
- Support Noa's Place, a vision of one of our nursery's parents - [www.noasplace.org.uk](http://www.noasplace.org.uk)

## Book Review:

The Colour Monster: A Book About Feelings by Anna Lenas

Emotional self-regulation is one of the most predictive indicators of school success. Starting school, or even just dealing with peer relationships as a toddler, brings lots of new and sometimes confusing feelings. This beautiful, simple book uses colours to help children identify, name, and talk about their emotions (e.g., yellow for happiness, black for fear). It's a fantastic tool to help children develop the emotional vocabulary and understanding they will need to communicate how they are feeling, rather than acting out, which is a vital component of social readiness. We encourage you to use the book's colour language at home!





## Curriculum Focus: School Readiness

In our curriculum, we deliberately focus on these 12 skills. They represent the non-academic skills that are most crucial for ensuring a smooth, confident, and successful transition to Reception. These 12 skills were developed in collaboration with local reception class teachers and using the national guidance. We will help your child to develop these skills and send helpful hints and tips for you to support your child at home.

1. Dressing and undressing themselves
2. Using cutlery - being able to hold and use a knife and fork
3. To be toilet trained and able to clean their own private areas without help
4. Brush their teeth twice per day
5. To share and take turns - patient when being told not just yet
6. Be able to listen and follow instructions
7. To be able to communicate their wants/needs and talk about their feelings
8. To be able to respond to a boundary setting
9. To interact with adults and peers
10. To pay interest and attention to something
11. To make observations, notice things and ask questions
12. To enjoy reading, drawing and painting



### ? Q&A: "What is the most important thing I can do to prepare my child for school?"

**Reading:** This is fundamental for every child, regardless of age. Reading together builds vocabulary, imagination, concentration, and a shared bond. For babies, it's about looking at bright pictures and hearing the rhythm of your voice. For pre-schoolers, it's about predicting what happens next and discussing the plot and characters.

**Independence:** School staff are there to teach 30 children, not to manage 30 coats and toilet trips. By encouraging your child to put on their own shoes, zip up their own coat, and manage their belongings, you are giving them the critical gift of self-reliance and confidence. This confidence allows them to feel capable and ready to face the new challenges of Reception without being overwhelmed by simple daily tasks. Start small today, and celebrate every tiny success!



## Recipe Corner: Banana Oat Power Bites (Perfect for Little Helpers)

This simple, whole-food recipe requires no baking, making it perfect for safe, focused connection with small children in the kitchen.

### Ingredients:

- 2 ripe bananas, mashed
- 1 cup rolled oats
- 1/4 cup nut butter (or sunflower seed butter for nut-free)
- 1 tbsp chia seeds (optional, adds texture and nutrition)

### Instructions (Child-Friendly Steps):

1. Measure: Have your child measure the oats and nut butter into a large bowl (great measuring practice).
2. Mash: Let them mash the bananas until smooth (excellent hand-eye coordination and strength).
3. Mix: Encourage them to stir all the ingredients together with a wooden spoon or their hands until well combined (a sensory experience!).
4. Roll: Show them how to roll the sticky mixture into small, marble-sized balls.
5. Refrigerate: Chill for 30 minutes before enjoying as a healthy snack.

Connection Activity: Focus on the different textures and the calming, repetitive action of rolling.

## 💡 Tips and Tricks: Building Independence

We believe independence should be nurtured gently and consistently throughout the nursery. Here are some age-specific tips for home:

**Babies (3-18m) Grasping Skills:** Offer toys that require two hands to hold, or objects they can transfer between hands. This strengthens wrists and fingers, preparing them for holding tools later.

**Toddlers (18m-3yrs) Self-Feeding and Clearing:** Let them try using a spoon or fork for most of the meal. Encourage them to carry their own plate (safely, perhaps plastic) to the sink when they are finished. This teaches responsibility for personal space.

**Pre-School (3-4yrs) The Clothes Challenge:** Practise using the bathroom in public places and wiping independently. Provide clothes that are easy to pull up and down (elasticated trousers) and offer plenty of time to dress themselves in the morning, celebrating the effort, not just the speed.





## Risky Play: Building Confidence for New Challenges

Taking small, managed risks is vital for a child's brain development and their ability to problem-solve and stay safe.

- For Younger Children: Safely exploring different textures, balancing on low, sturdy objects (like a curb), and reaching slightly beyond their comfort zone helps them map their physical body in space and learn cause and effect—"If I step here, I wobble."
- For Older Children: When we encourage climbing higher, balancing across planks, or jumping from a safe height, they are engaged in essential learning: Assessing Danger (what is too high?) and Developing Physical Resilience (falling safely and trying again). This resilience is the emotional equivalent of getting back up after a fall, which directly translates to feeling confident tackling new, challenging tasks in school.



## Healthy Choices: Prioritising Sleep

A child who is rested is a child who is ready to learn, regulate their emotions, and handle new social situations. Sleep is non-negotiable for school readiness.

- Consistent Routines for All: Stick rigidly to a predictable bedtime routine (bath, quiet story, cuddles, bed). This consistency signals to the child's body clock that it is time to wind down, leading to better quality sleep across every age group.
- Tuning In (Babies & Toddlers): Watch diligently for your child's individual sleep cues (e.g., specific cries, yawning, rubbing ears) and ensure they are settled before they become overtired, which can lead to difficulty settling.
- School Night Simulation (Pre-School): For those starting school in September 2026, now is the perfect time to start adjusting their bedtime. Ensure their regular bedtime is no later than 7:30-8:00 PM, giving them the 10-12 hours of sleep needed to be alert and focused for a full school day.





## Online Safety: Model Safe Screen Habits

As your children grow, they will encounter technology more frequently, and school readiness now includes understanding how to engage with it safely and appropriately.

- **Model Good Habits (All Ages):** The most powerful lesson is observing you. Put your phone away during meal times, reading, and during dedicated play. Show them that face-to-face interaction is valued.
- **Co-View (Toddlers & Pre-School):** Always watch online content with your child, rather than leaving them alone with a device. This allows you to monitor what they see, discuss the content, and ensure it is entirely age-appropriate.
- **Set Clear Boundaries:** Establish non-negotiable screen-time limits (e.g., 30 minutes per day) and screen-free zones (e.g., no devices in the bedroom). Consistency is vital for making these rules stick.



## Sustainability: Reduce, Reuse, Repair



**January Challenge:** The 'Mending' Mission January is a great time to focus on reusing and repairing after the holidays! Instead of tossing out items that are slightly damaged, use this month to teach your child the value of mending and restoration.

- **Involve Them:** For our older children, involve them directly in the repair process—can they hold the thread while you sew a button back on? Can they help you glue a broken piece back onto a toy?
- **Talk About Value (All Ages):** Describe how repairing items shows we value our belongings and the planet, linking it to our shared responsibility to look after the world around us. This simple act teaches that things don't have to be instantly replaced, fostering resourcefulness and patience.

