

## Physical Welfare

It is widely reported that an increase in physical activity can lead to improved mental wellbeing, health, sleep and diet to name a few benefits. At Portesbery we use our outside spaces and specialist rooms regularly to give pupils a break from sitting. You can ask your class teacher about any specific sensory, OT or Physio programmes your child is following.

**OUTSIDE WALKS:** A great investment is wet weather clothing such as waterproof overalls or trousers. Mittens, woolly hats and welly boots are also needed at this time of year. Begin by talking about the weather and helping your child to practice dressing skills. You can go on treasure trails; draw some things for them to find such as a leaf, a long twig, a smooth stone and a bug. You can keep it simple and just look for colours; make some marks on paper with crayons and match the colour swatches to objects.

**OBSTACLE COURSE:** Make an obstacle course for your child to explore. Crawl under a table, climb over a footstool, squeeze in a small space, race up the stairs and bounce down on your bottom.

**OUTSIDE PLAY:** Is there any equipment from outside that can be bought in? A trampette, scooter or even a very small climbing frame.

**PARTY GAMES:** Use a music streaming app or smart speaker to play musical statues or the hokey cokey. Pass the parcel is great fun, use tissue paper and familiar toys.

**PHYSICAL TOUCH:** Never underestimate the power of physical touch. A massage story, cuddle, bear hug, rough and tumble or even a parent/child yoga session can provide beneficial physical reassurance. (Cosmic Kids on YouTube is fantastic!)

## Family Wellbeing

Most importantly, now is a time for families to look for ways to reduce any additional stresses and to make everyday tasks as simple and fun as possible.

Pack yourself a flask of hot tea to make an outside walk more enjoyable.

Light a scented candle to make your home cosy.

Put Christmas Lights in a vase to create a warm snuggly glow.

Try a meditation or breathing app to give yourself 5 minutes of calm.

Put the dishwasher on twice a day, who said it can only be used at the end of the day?

Put the telly on and all watch a movie or try a documentary like Perfect Planet on iPlayer.

Contact us here at Portesbery – we are here with more ideas and support.

## Online Suggestions

These sites give great ideas of simple and easy self-occupying activities.

Facebook: Play.Hooray, Five Minute Mum, The Gruffalo (story, song & illustration)

Webpage: [fiveminutemum.com](http://fiveminutemum.com)



Portesbery School

A happy school where every one matters.

## Home Learning Ideas

### Spring Term 2021



**We understand that homes are different to classrooms and therefore learning will be different. Our pupils often display specific behaviours in specific environments and can find it challenging to transfer a skill learnt at school to home and vice versa.**

**Families are managing in exceptional circumstances and the skills our children need to develop in these times are different to those typically needed in the classroom.**

**We have focused on self-occupying skills, mental wellbeing & stimulation and physical welfare– you will be amazed how many academic skills are being learnt through play and family activities.**

**We want you to feel supported to make the right decision for your family and to recognise all the learning taking place within daily activities.**

## Self-occupying/Leisure time

### PLAYTIME

Often our pupils exhibit unusual or undesirable play behaviours – typically this is because they do not fully understand what is expected of them. To us it may be clear that we build a tower with the blocks but to our pupils the blocks are great things to throw or post under the sofa. It really helps to give your child a picture to copy and an 'end' objective. Here are some examples;

**BUILDING BLOCKS:** Duplo or Lego: Have a photo or an example of what you want your child to make. Maybe a repeating pattern of red, blue, yellow, red, blue, yellow Lego bricks. Look online for templates to make Duplo animals, or make a game of building a tower and taking it in turns to knock it over.

**TRAIN TRACKS AND ROADS:** Draw a template for your child to lay the track or road pieces on by drawing around a track you have made – then your child can make a track over your template.

**DOLLS AND TEDDIES:** This is a great time to introduce identiply which is when you have two identical sets of toys and the child sits opposite you and learns to copy what you do. Have a dolly or teddy and pretend to feed it, give it a bottle, brush its hair, wash it in a bath and get it dressed. The intention is the child will learn these plays skills and begin to do them independently.

**PUZZLES AND JIGSAWS:** Inset puzzles when there is a board and you place a puzzle piece in it are excellent example of a play task that gives a pupil information about what to do. Other puzzles such as jigsaws are not always so obvious. Some simple tricks are to have a copy/photo of the completed puzzle underneath like a mat so the child places pieces on top. You can also draw around the puzzle pieces so it is about matching the shapes of the pieces. (Another top tip is if you have a box of several puzzles, complete them in advance, turn them over and put a red dot on one puzzle, blue on another etc. so it is easier to give your child the pieces to one complete puzzle at a time.)

**SCREEN TIME:** There are many huge advantages to screen time – mostly it allows families some time to rest, recover and reset! Cbeebies has a fantastic selection of educational programmes and apps. We also have a list of recommended online resources on our website. Using a timer or 'now and next' board can help to remove conflict when it is time to stop.

## Mental Wellbeing & Stimulation

### SENSORY EXPLORATION

Using the senses to explore is beneficial for everyone. In particular, our pupils use their senses to understand their surroundings in a way we have long forgotten from childhood. Some of our pupils have sensory processing difficulties and therefore practicing skills using the senses can be beneficial, it can also be overwhelming so chose a time when your child is calm and alert.

**FIVE SENSES:** A fantastic grounding sensory activity is to use your senses to bring clarity and purpose; Find **five** things you can see, find **four** things you can touch, find **three** things you can hear, find **two** things you can smell and finally, find **one** thing you can taste.

**HEARING & SIGHT:** Try playing different types of music to create a specific mood. If you have a music streaming subscription or a smart speaker (such as an Echo Dot) you can ask it to play 'chill out' or 'rainforest sounds'. Turn down the lights, put a pillow and blanket on the floor and allow your child to get comfortable. You can add light up toys, torches, a disco ball or even tents and dens to add to this sensory experience.

**SMELL & TOUCH:** Make playdough – there are lots and lots of recipes for playdough that is safe if eaten. You can add drops of food colouring or flavouring, peppermint is a good smell for alerting, cinnamon or ginger is a zingy smell whereas vanilla is a delicate smell. You can also add other food for texture such as dry lentils. Give you child a rolling pin and cutters and let them explore. It can also be great to give your child cutlery to practice cutting, forking and scooping skills. This can be a great 'holding' activity whilst you do baking with siblings. Finally, you may want to print off templates for playdough mats to encourage your child to copy shapes and patterns.

**HEARING & TOUCH:** Make musical instruments. Fill a bottle with dry pasta or rice, put elastic bands over an empty tissue box, turn over pots and pans and put out wooden spoons. Let your child explore the sounds and feel of the vibrations. Play some African drumming music or a jazz tune and join in the musical experience.

**TASTE:** Now may not be the time to introduce new foods. It is ok to keep it simple and to make meal times manageable. Keeping to regular meal times can help establish routines and alleviate some anxieties.