

An A to Z of learning

L is for..learning at home

How **the Rachel Keeling Nursery School team** not only kept in touch with families during lockdown but provided access to ideas for learning and fun activities to do at home

At Rachel Keeling Nursery School, we work very hard to establish strong and warm relationships with our families from day one. This has stood us in good stead during lockdown in its various forms. However, Covid has presented us with opportunities and challenges – our Home Learning page on our website being one of them.

As well as keeping communication going with all our families, we wanted to create a one-stop ‘shop’ where they could access ideas, see familiar faces and have fun. We did not want to add to the pressures on families who are home-schooling older children with limited access to devices, so we decided everything would be pre-recorded and able to be accessed freely.

ONLINE IDEAS

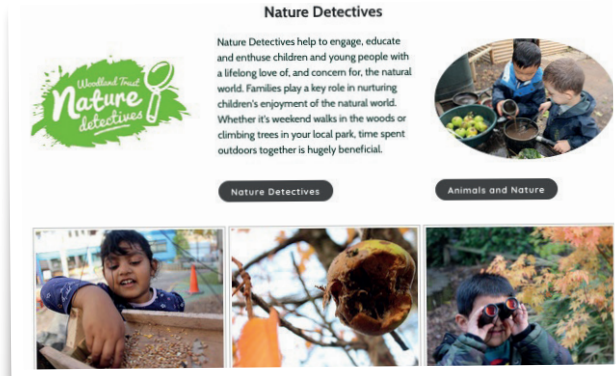
Stories We started by recording films of key workers reading familiar stories and poems, using props and books or just telling the stories orally. The feedback was incredible: children, and parents, loved watching from home and it gave a boost to families who may have been feeling isolated.

Number rhymes Next, some staff recorded number songs and games – what was important was allowing staff the freedom to choose their favourites as this naturally ensured we got a range of rhymes, from ‘5 Currant Buns’ to ‘10 in the Bed’.

Cooking Staff submitted videos of themselves making their favourite recipes, including banana bread, tzatziki, superhero smoothies and oat cookies. Again, some families used these and made their own.

Dancing and singing Staff who were brave enough shared songs on the website with music and dance.

Experiments These included erupting volcanoes, making rain,



and a germ experiment too (which was very apt!).

Letters and Sounds Staff focused on different strands from Phase 1: Rhyming Soup, I Spy and Environmental Sounds Bingo. (For more, see the DfE’s *Letters and Sounds*, <https://bit.ly/2Z21COz>.)

Gardening We explained how to sow carrots and potatoes.

Cycling One of us made a film of the London sights we see as we cycle home, then narrated it on iMovies. Families again have appreciated being able to ‘escape’ their homes virtually. We also uploaded a home-made bicycle maintenance film we made.

Nature We made a bird-watching video, giving children an idea of the birds they might spot from their windows.

We also have provided ideas for nature and number walks, treasure hunts, den building, making things with playdough, and many other suggestions.

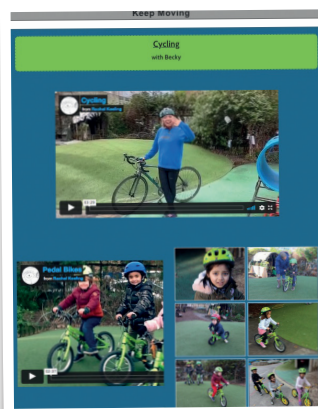
52 THINGS TO DO

We put together a fabulous *52 Things To Do* booklet for all our families. Initially, the idea was to issue children with one when they start at Rachel Keeling. Then came lockdown!

We decided to still launch it, although we know some of the

One focus of the suggested activities was ‘the awe and wonder of nature’

The nursery school website’s other activities also included cycling



suggestions (such as float in a boat) may not be possible at the moment. It is filled with exciting experiences, some which are relatively easy:

- Splash in a puddle.
 - Make hot chocolate.
 - Listen to the birds sing.
 - Tidy up together.
- And more ambitious ones:
- Feed a goat.
 - Watch a sunset.
 - Toast marshmallows on a campfire.
 - Explore a rockpool.

When drawing up the list, we thought about our school ethos and how we could share that at home. Many of the suggestions focus on the awe and wonder of nature and each other. Families can access them on our website and we have printed small copies in school, perfect for small hands to hold.

We promote the booklet and signpost families and children, but we do not collect them in and ‘mark off’ who is doing them. We know families are under lots of pressure so are mindful of not giving them more tasks.

THINGS TO CONSIDER

When planning home learning, ask:

- What might work for our families?
 - Does lockdown present an opportunity to share our ethos and approach to early learning?
 - Might a weekly challenge for your families work best? Or a list of five things per term instead?
 - What can children access in our local area – parks, beaches, etc?
- And personalise activities according to children’s interests. We have found children’s interest in birds has been a great vehicle to get families engaged in learning together. ■

→ See all our ideas and more: www.rachelkeeling.towerhamlets.sch.uk/learning-at-home.html