Maths in the Early Years

16TH SEPTEMBER 2026

"Developing a strong grounding in number is essential so that all children develop the necessary building blocks to excel mathematically.

Children should be able to count confidently, develop a deep understanding of the numbers to 10, the relationships between them and the patterns within those numbers."

DfE, Statutory Framework (2021)

Characteristics of Effective Teaching and Learning

Playing and Exploring
Children investigate things and have a go.

Active Learning
Children concentrate and keep on going even if they encounter difficulties and they enjoy their achievements.

Creating and Thinking Critically
Children have and develop their own ideas, make links between ideas and develop their strategies for doing things.

Thinking Bee

Team Bee

Can do Bee

"By providing frequent and varied opportunities to build and apply this understanding... children will develop a secure base of knowledge and vocabulary from which mastery of mathematics is built."

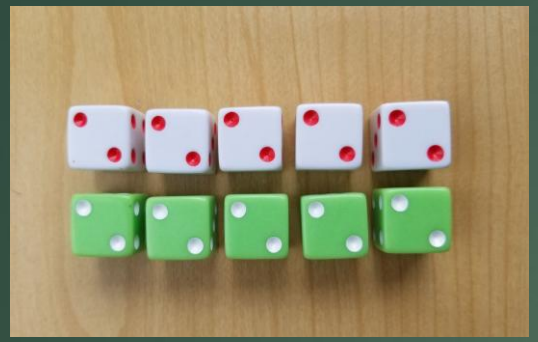
DfE, Statutory Framework (2021)

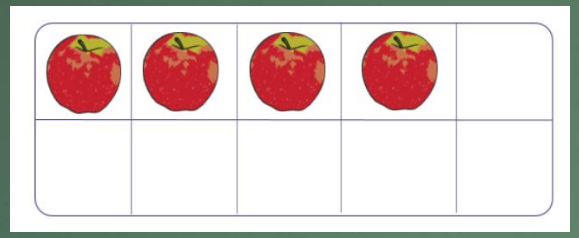
"In addition, it is important that the curriculum includes rich opportunities for children to develop their spatial reasoning skills across all areas of mathematics including shape, space and measures.

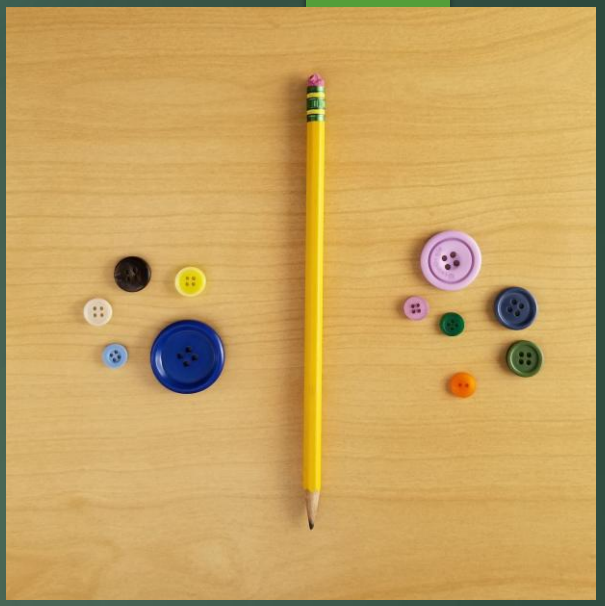
It is important that children develop positive attitudes and interests in mathematics, look for patterns and relationships, spot connections, 'have a go', talk to adults and peers about what they notice and not be afraid to make mistakes."

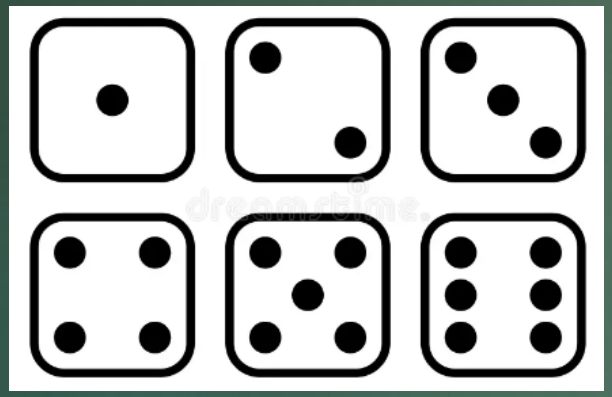
DfE, Statutory Framework (2021)

What do you see and how do you see it?









Recent research has found that young children's ability to spot mathematical patterns can predict later mathematical achievement, more than other abilities such as counting (Rittle-Johnson et al, 2016).

Why is pattern awareness important?

Spotting underlying patterns is important for identifying many different kinds of mathematical relationships. It underpins memorization of the counting sequence and understanding number operations, for instance recognizing that if you add numbers in a different order their total stays the same. Pattern awareness has been described as early algebraic thinking, which involves:

- noticing mathematical features
- identifying the relationship between elements
- observing regularities

(Blanton et al. cited by Kieran, Pang, Schifter & Ng, 2016).

What can you do to help?

Ask the children ‘what do you see’ and ‘how you see it?’ cows in the field, daisies on your lawn.
Three trees in a row.

Develop their subitising skills through language, “Do you want one or two biscuits?”

Playing games like snakes and ladders, cards, orchard games, dominoes and snap.

Creating patterns with everyday things, knives and forks, natural objects outside.