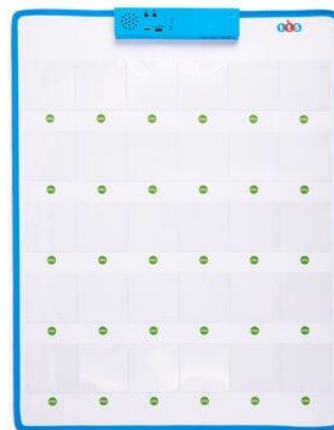




Interactive Talking Mat AV46703

Interactive Talking Mat

St. Edwards RC Primary School share with us why they chose the Interactive Talking Mat and describe some of the ways they have used it.



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The interactive mat quickly became a popular resource...

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Lisa Nelson

Areas to develop:

When children first join us in Autumn, we typically begin with familiar circle-time activities such as sharing information about their families, interests, and experiences. This year, however, we noticed that many of our pupils lacked the confidence to speak in front of a larger group. Communication and language skills quickly emerged as a priority—not only within our class, but across the school. In Reception, we focus on establishing strong foundations in attentive listening and essential communication skills, such as responding appropriately to others and contributing relevant ideas.

Our Reception intake comes from a wide range of nurseries across the borough, and many children arrive without any familiar peers. Therefore, it takes time for them to build relationships and feel comfortable in a new environment, and this initial shyness can delay the development of early communication skills. With this in mind, we planned to use the interactive mat as a tool to promote communication and language, particularly during the early weeks when children may not yet feel confident speaking in front of others.

Phonics is always a key priority in Early Years, and we constantly look for ways to support independence in this area. This year, we found that many children could recognise sounds and segment words but were unsure of what the corresponding letter shapes looked like. We planned on using the interactive mat as a way to consolidate this knowledge and strengthen early reading and writing skills.

How the resource was used:

The resource was used primarily to support children's communication and language development in our Reception class. Adults initially created the recordings and modelled how to play them back, helping the children gain confidence in accessing the resource independently.

When introducing the tool during our "getting to know you" activity, an adult worked with a small group to guide them through making their recordings. We then followed up with a listening activity, during which the children explored each other's recordings and engaged in an adult-led discussion about what they had heard.

As the children became more confident with the playback feature, the resource was incorporated into classroom displays to reinforce phonics sounds and key vocabulary. Children now use it independently and often revisit recordings to hear the correct pronunciation of sounds.

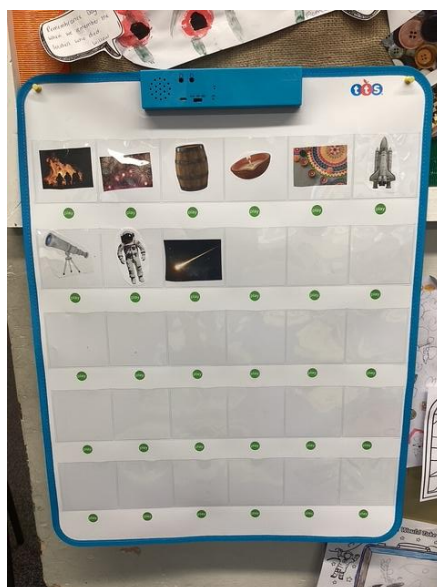
Activities:

Small world stories - In Autumn 1, our focus was on simple stories that children could retell using small-world puppets and props. We used the interactive mat to record short versions of familiar stories, such as 'We're Going on a Bear Hunt' and placed it next to the small-world tray with the related resources. Children who needed a little extra support could press the buttons to hear an adult model the story before having a go themselves.



Getting to know you - During the Autumn term, we placed a photo of each child in the pocket on the interactive mat. The children were first invited to record a simple sentence such as 'My name is....' to match their picture. This proved to be a fantastic tool for helping everyone learn the names of their new friends. We later developed this idea by encouraging children to record a short message about themselves, such as something they enjoy doing or their favourite food. The children were delighted to hear their own voices and loved listening to what their classmates had to share. It opened up conversation starters such as 'I like pizza too...'.

Key vocabulary - To strengthen children's language skills, we used the interactive mat to record correct pronunciations of key vocabulary linked to our themes. Each pocket included a picture and a brief explanation to help children understand and use the words confidently in context. For example, barrel- This is what Guy Fawkes put the gunpowder in." This approach really encouraged children to engage with and use new language in a meaningful way.



Phonics support - In the writing area, the mat became a valuable tool for supporting emergent writers. We recorded the correct pronunciation of each sound and matched it with the corresponding flashcard from our phonics scheme. Children who wanted to 'have a go' could press the buttons to find the grapheme they

needed, helping build both accuracy and independence.

Later, we developed this further by removing the flashcards and challenging children to listen to a sound

and match it to the correct card, this helped to strengthen their sound recognition skills and encouraged 'good listening'.



Future Development: Oracy and Storytelling

Looking ahead, we are planning to use the interactive mat to further develop children's oracy and storytelling skills. We will use the mat to support them in creating their own oral stories, focusing on the four, basic elements: character, setting, problem, and ending/solution. Using the mat, children will be encouraged to record their own simple four-sentence stories for others to listen to and enjoy. To develop this further, they will also have the opportunity to create accompanying illustrations, providing a meaningful mark-making activity.

Impact and outcomes:

The interactive mat quickly became a popular resource, particularly when children were given the opportunity to record their own thoughts and ideas. Even our quietest pupils were eager to contribute; the pressure of speaking in front of a large group was removed, allowing them to communicate in a way that felt safe and comfortable. The mat also supported attentive listening and encouraged children to build on what they heard—for example, responding with comments like, "I like to paint pictures too."

In provision, the mat served as a valuable vocabulary model. The ability to pair recordings with a picture, flashcard, or illustration helped children consolidate their understanding and apply new language or sounds accurately. This was especially effective for auditory and visual learners, who benefited from the combination of spoken and visual cues. In the small world area, it helped to 'keep play going' by providing a useful model of stories for children to initially retell, then adapt whilst still using some of the vocabulary they had heard.

At the writing table, the mat helped children develop greater independence. Many were able to segment the sounds in words but were unsure what the corresponding graphemes looked like. Using the mat to locate and hear the correct grapheme significantly improved both accuracy and confidence in early mark making.

With thanks to St. Edwards RC Primary School for sharing their thoughts and ideas with us.