

Mathematical moments: Number with 3 & 4 year olds

Meaningful numbers

Meaningful numbers for young children are often associated with their age:

Just after his birthday, Rossi enjoyed flicking over all the 4s on the number board. He said, 'It goes 4,4,4, going down and 4,4,4,4, going along!' showing that he was beginning to spot patterns in the number system.

Sophie wanted to know, 'How do you write three and a half?' When invited to try she drew some squiggles which looked a bit like a three half symbols. She was becoming aware of a half as an 'in-between' number, rather than the result of sharing objects, which is a key mathematical idea.

Kathy found out how to write 13 on a card for her brother's birthday by counting along the number frieze from one. She was learning that numbers get bigger as you count and can have two digits.

However, the greatest amount of number conversation in the nursery was provoked by putting numerals on the toilet doors: the children liked announcing which one they were going in!

