

École maternelle (nursery school) teaching programme

NOR: MENE1504759A

decision of 18-2-2015 - O.J. of 12-3-2015

MENESR - DGESCO MAF 1

Having regard to the Education Code, notably articles L. 311-3, D. 311-5, D. 311-10 and D. 321-1; decision of 9-6-2008 modified; opinion of the CSE (Conseil supérieur de l'éducation - Higher Council for Education) of 5-2-2015

Article 1 - The école maternelle (nursery school - nursery, reception and year 1) teaching programme is fixed in accordance with the annex to this decision.

Article 2 - The provisions relative to the école maternelle (nursery school) programme appearing in the annex of the above mentioned decision of 9 June 2008 are repealed.

Article 3 - The provisions of this decision enter into force with effect from the return to school for the 2015 school year.

– The general director of school education is responsible for implementing this decision, which shall be published in the Official Journal of the French Republic.

Executed on 18 February 2015

For the Ministry for national education, higher education and research
and by delegation,
The general director of school education,
Florence Robine

Annex - école maternelle (nursery school) teaching programme

Find the full école maternelle (nursery school) teaching programme, which comes into force at the beginning of the 2015 school year, in six different formats:

ONLINE	Read the école maternelle (nursery school) programme
PDF	Download the école maternelle (nursery school) programme
FLIPBOOK	Leaf through the école maternelle (nursery school) programme
DOCX	Import the école maternelle (nursery school) programme
ODT	Import the école maternelle (nursery school) programme
RTF	Import the école maternelle (nursery school) programme

The école maternelle (nursery school): a single cycle, fundamental for the success of all

The law for the restructuring of the School created a single cycle for the école maternelle (nursery school) and highlights its fundamental place as the first step to guarantee the success of all the pupils within a school that is just for all and demanding for everyone. This tuition time, although not obligatory, establishes the educative and teaching foundations upon which the future learning areas of pupils for the whole of their schooling are supported

and developed. The école maternelle is a benevolent school, even more so than the subsequent stages of the school career. Its principal mission is to give children the desire to go to school in order to learn, affirm and develop their personality. It is based on a fundamental principle: all children are capable of learning and of progressing. By manifesting its confidence with regard to each child, the école maternelle engages them to have confidence in their own power to act and think, in their capacity to learn and to succeed in their schooling and beyond.

1. A school which adapts itself to young children

The child who enters école maternelle for the first time already possesses know-how, knowledge and representations of the world; in his family and in the various childcare centres that he has frequented, he has developed habits, realised experiences and learning that the school takes into account.

1.1. A school which welcomes children and their parents

From the point when the child is welcomed to the school, a regular and constructive dialogue is established between teachers and parents; it demands mutual information and trust. For that, the teaching staff defines the conditions of relations with the parents, in the interest of well-being and a first successful schooling of children and by paying attention to the diversity of families. These relations permit parents to understand the functioning and the specific features of the école maternelle (the place of language, the role of play, the importance of physical and artistic activities etc.). The experience of the separation between the child and his family requires the attention of all the educational team, particularly during the first year of schooling. The daily welcome in the classroom is a means of giving a sense of security to the child. The teacher recognises in each child a person in the making and a full partner, whatever his age.

1.2. A school which supports the transitions experienced by the children

The école maternelle builds bridges every day between the family and the school, school time and extra-curricular time. It also plays a pivotal role through the relationships it establishes with the institutions of early childhood and école élémentaire (infants/juniors - years 2 to 6).

The teaching staff organise the life of the school in consultation with other staff, in particular the ATSEMs (specialist territorial agents of nursery schools). The links between school time, catering and the times when the child is taken care of in the context of extra-curricular child care must be worked out with all the actors concerned in order to favour the well-being of the children and to constitute an educational continuity. While maintaining its specific features, the école maternelle ensures the best relations possible with the different childcare centres and education centres during the course of the day, the week and the year. It establishes relationships with partners outside the school, notably in the context of the territorial educational projects.

It works in cooperation with the école élémentaire (infants/juniors - years 2 to 6), more specifically with cycle 2 (years 2 to 4), in order to implement a veritable continuity of learning areas, an individual monitoring of the children. It relies on the RASED (network of specialist help for pupils in difficulty) in order to understand behaviour or an absence of progress, and to provide better assistance for children in these situations.

1.3. A school which takes account of the development of the child

Over the full duration of école maternelle, the progress made in socialisation, language, motor skills and cognitive capacities linked to maturation as well as to the stimulations of school situations is considerable and is achieved at a very variable rate.

Within a single class, the teacher must take into account, in the perspective of a common objective, differences between children which may be particularly noticeable in the first years of their life. The teaching staff fit out the school (class rooms, the specialist rooms, the external spaces, etc.) in order to offer children a universe which stimulates their curiosity, meets their needs especially for play, movement, rest and discoveries and multiplies the opportunities for sensory, motor, relational and cognitive experiences in safety. Each teacher determines an organisation of the time adapted to their age and ensures the alternation of more or less demanding times in terms of physical and cognitive involvement.

Reception, break times, supervision of times for rest, naps and hygiene are education times in their own right. They are organised in this perspective by the adults who have responsibility for them and who give reassuring points of reference to the young children.

1.4. A school which practices a positive evaluation

The evaluation constitutes a tool of regulation in the professional activity of the teachers; it is not an instrument of prediction nor of selection. It rests on an attentive observation and an interpretation of what each child says or does. Beyond the result obtained, every teacher is committed to developing the child's advancement and the progress that he makes in relation to himself. He permits each child to identify and keep track of his successes and to follow their development. He is attentive to what the child can do alone, with his support (what the child realizes often anticipates what he will do alone in the near future) or with that of the other children. He takes account of the differences in age and maturity within a single class.

Adapted to the specifics of école maternelle, evaluation is implemented according to the methods defined within the school. The teachers explain to parents the strategies, expectations and methods of evaluation specific to école maternelle.

2. A school which organises the specific methods of learning

Within each école maternelle, the teachers work in a team in order to define a progressive teaching over the cycle. They construct common resources and tools in order to allow the children to experience this progressiveness. They constitute a common repertoire of practices, of objects and of materials (teaching materials, toys, books, games) in order to offer over the course of the cycle a choice of situations and cultural universes which are both varied and coherent.

Within his class, the teacher puts in place varied learning situations: play, resolution of problems, training etc, and chooses them according to the needs of the class group and those of each child. In all cases and especially with the small children, he gives an important place to the observation and the imitation of other children and adults. He favours interactions between children and creates the conditions for shared attention and taking account of other people's points of view by aiming at integration into a learning community. He develops their capacity to interact by means of projects, in order to realise productions adapted to their possibilities. He knows how to use digital media which, like other media, have their place in the école maternelle on condition that the objectives and their methods of use are placed at the service of a learning activity. In all cases, situations that form part of a shared experience are preferable to formal exercises proposed in the form of work sheets.

2.1. Learning by playing

Play favours the richness of experiences encountered by the children in all of the classes of the école maternelle and feeds all of the domains of learning. It permits children to exercise their autonomy, to act on reality, to construct fictions and to develop their imaginary world, to exercise motor behaviour, to experiment with varied social roles and rules. It favours communication with others and the construction of strong bonds of friendship. It takes various forms: symbolic games, games of exploration, games of construction and manipulation, team games and board games, fabricated and invented games, etc. The teacher gives all children sufficient time in order to deploy their playing activity. He observes them in their free play in order to get to know them better. He also proposes structured games explicitly targeting specific learning areas.

2.2. Learning by reflecting and by resolving problems

In order to provoke the reflection of the children, the teacher confronts them with problems within their reach. Whatever the learning domain and the moment in the life of the class, he targets situations and poses open questions for which the children do not have a directly available answer. Mentally, they cross-check situations, they call upon their knowledge, they make a list of possibilities, they select. They proceed by trial and error and make attempted answers. The teacher is attentive to the progressions which manifest themselves in language or in action; he encourages attempts and generates discussions. These high level cognitive activities are fundamental in order to give children the desire to learn and to make them intellectually independent.

2.3. Learning by practising

For young children, learning takes place over a long period and their progress is rarely linear. They often require a time of appropriation which can take the form of either the repetition of known processes, or new situations. Their stabilisation necessitates numerous repetitions in varied conditions. The methods of learning can, for the oldest children, extend to situations of training or self-training, even automation. The teacher then seeks to explain to the children what they are in the process of learning, to make them understand the meaning of the efforts demanded and to make them perceive the progress made. In all cases, the teaching choices take into account the

skills/knowledge acquired by the children.

2.4. Learning by remembering and memorising

The mental operations of memorising in young children are not voluntary. In the case of the youngest children, they depend on the emotional aspect of situations and on the experience of repetitive events that an adult has named and commented upon. These children rely heavily on what they perceive visually in order to maintain information in temporary memory, while from five to six years of age it is the language that was addressed to them that allows them to understand and remember.

The teacher stabilises the information, and focuses on ensuring that it is clear in order to allow the children to remember it. In all the domains, he organises regular returns to prior discoveries and acquisitions in order to ensure their stabilisation. Engaging the class in an activity is an opportunity to remind pupils of prior knowledge on which they can rely, relating to different situations already encountered or similar problems posed to the group. The teacher leads the sessions which clearly have the function of teaching, particularly with nursery rhymes, songs or poems. He valorises the recall or the evocation of what has been memorised; he helps the children to become aware that learning at school involves constantly re-using prior knowledge/acquired skills in order to go further.

3. A school where the children will learn together and live together

The école maternelle structures the learning areas around a central training issue for the children: "Learning together and living together". The class and the group constitute a learning community which establishes the bases for building citizenship that respects secularity and is open to the plurality of cultures in the world. It is in this context that the child is called to become a pupil in a very progressive manner over the whole of the cycle. The children learn to identify the roles of different adults, the function of different spaces in the class and in the school and the rules which are associated with them. They are consulted regarding certain decisions concerning them and thus discover the foundations of collective debate. The école maternelle thus ensures an initial acquisition of the principles of life in society. The reception and schooling of disabled children plays a part in this issue for these children themselves and contributes to developing in all pupils a positive attitude towards differences. All of the adults ensure that all the children benefit from equal treatment in all circumstances. The école maternelle creates the conditions for equality, notably between girls and boys.

3.1. Understanding the function of the school

The école maternelle is the place where the child progressively familiarises himself with a specific manner of learning; this is based on activities and experiences within his reach, but assumes that he draws knowledge or know-how from it with the aid of the other children and the teacher. Language, in all its diverse uses, has an important place in this process. The child learns at the same time to enter into a collective rhythm (doing something or paying attention at the same time as the others, taking into account collective instructions) which obliges him to renounce his immediate desires. The école maternelle thus begins to progressively construct the role of pupil. The teacher makes the requirements of the school situation comprehensible through role playing and explanations which allow the children - and their parents - to identify them and to appropriate them. He encourages them to cooperate, to engage in effort and to persevere thanks to his encouragement and the aid of peers. He encourages the development of personal trials, the taking of initiatives and gradually learning to make choices.

He helps to identify the objects to which learning areas pertain and causes work habits to be acquired which will evolve over time and which children can transfer. In order to do this, he focuses on making them perceive the continuity between learning situations and the links between different sessions. In order to stabilise the first benchmarks, he uses identical processes in his methods of questioning the group, making the children explain the activity which they will undertake, causing them to reformulate what has been said, to produce by themselves the explanations for others about a task already experienced.

The teacher practices with the children the identification of the different stages of learning, using terms adapted to their age. He helps them to imagine what they will have to do, with which tools and according to which processes. He defines the criteria of success so that each one can locate the path he has followed and perceive the progress that he must still make.

3.2. Constructing themselves as an individual within a group

Constructing themselves as an individual involves discovering the role of the group in their own progressions, participating in the realisation of shared projects, learning to cooperate. It is progressively sharing tasks and taking

initiatives and responsibilities within the group. By his participation, the child acquires the taste for collective activities, takes pleasure in exchanging and confronting his point of view with that of others. He learns the rules of communication and exchange. The teacher's goal is to guide the collective reflection so that each pupil can expand his own way of seeing or thinking. Thus, the child finds his place in the group, is recognized as a person in his own right and experiences the role of others in the construction of learning.

First of all, the collective rules are given and justified by the teacher who indicates to the child the rights (to express himself, to play, to learn, to make mistakes, to be helped and protected, etc.) and obligations in the school community (waiting his turn, sharing objects, tidying up, respecting the material, etc.). They are learnt through the repetition of ritual activities and a first reflection on their application. Progressively, the children are led to participate in a collective elaboration of the rules of life adapted to the local environment.

By means of the concrete situations of the life of the class, a first sensibility to moral experiences (feeling of empathy, expression of fairness and unfairness, questioning of stereotypes, etc.) is constructed. The stories read, tales and plays contribute to this; the staging of fictional characters creates a range of possibilities for identification and at the same time ensures an adequate distancing. Throughout the cycle, the teacher develops the capacity of the children to identify and express verbally their emotions and feelings. He ensures that everyone can develop their self-esteem, help one another and share with the others.

The five domains of learning

The teaching areas are organised into five domains of learning. This organisation permits the teacher to identify the learning areas targeted and implement their interactions in the class. Each of the five domains is essential to the child's development and must find its place in the organisation of the daily time. While from the perspective of the child any educational situation presents a rich variety of possibilities of interpretations and actions, for the teacher it often belongs to several domains of learning.

The domain "Using language in all its dimensions" reaffirms the primordial place of the language at école maternelle as an essential condition of the success of all pupils. The stimulation and structuring of the oral language on the one hand and the progressive entry into the culture of writing on the other hand constitute the priorities of the école maternelle and concerns all of the domains.

The domains "Acting, expressing oneself, understanding by means of physical activity" and "Acting, expressing oneself, understanding by means of artistic activities" permit the development of interactions between action, sensations, the imaginary world, sensitivity and thought.

The domains "Constructing the first tools in order to structure one's thought" and "Exploring the world" focus on developing a first understanding of the environment of children and to arouse their questioning. By basing itself on initial knowledge linked to their experience, the école maternelle puts in place a programme which permits them to order the world which surrounds them, to access ordinary representations and knowledge that the école élémentaire (infants/juniors) will enrich.

For each domain of learning, the programme establishes a general definition, sets out the objectives targeted and gives teaching indications to provide benchmarks in order to organise the progression of learning areas.

1. Using language in all its dimensions

The word "language" means a set of activities implemented by an individual when he speaks, listens, reflects, tries to understand and progressively, reads and writes. The école maternelle permits all the children to implement these activities by simultaneously involving the two components of the language:

- the oral language: used during interactions, in production and in reception, allows the children to communicate, to understand, to learn and to reflect. It is the means of discovering the characteristics of the French language and of listening to other spoken languages.
- the written language: introduced progressively to children until they start to use it, it gets them used to a form of communication of which they will discover the characteristics and the role for keeping track, reflecting, anticipating, contacting an absent addressee. It prepares the pupils for learning how to read and write at cycle 2.

1.1. Oral language

Whatever his native language, from his earliest childhood and throughout a long process, a child spontaneously acquires language thanks to his interactions with the adults of his entourage.

The teacher, being attentive, supports each child in his first attempts, correcting his oral productions to provide him with more appropriate words or sentence structures that help him to progress. The teacher addresses himself to

the youngest children with speech at slow speed; he produces brief statements, which are syntactically correct and carefully articulated. Constantly attentive to his own language and taking care to adapt himself to the diversity of language performances of the children, he expresses himself progressively in a more complex manner. He permits each pupil to gradually progress from simple spontaneous and non-mastered speech to enter into increasingly organised conversations and to speak in a large group. He knows how to capture the attention of everyone in activities which lead them to understand increasingly longer words and texts. He sets them on the path of consciousness of languages, the words of the French language and of its sound units.

Objectives targeted and elements of progression

Daring to enter into communication

The objective is to permit each pupil to be able to talk, to express an opinion or a need, to question or to announce a piece of news. The child thus learns to enter into communication with others and to make efforts so that others understand what he wants to say. Each pupil arrives at école maternelle with acquired language skills that are still very hesitant. Between two and four years of age, the children express themselves a lot by non-verbal means and learn to talk. They repeat formulations or fragments of remarks which are addressed to them and thus work this material which is the language that they hear. After three-four years of age, they continue these attempts and progress on the syntactic and lexical level. They produce more complete statements, organised with coherence, articulated in longer speech, and increasingly adapted to the situations.

Around four years of age, the children discover that people, including themselves, think and feel, and each one does so differently from the other. They thus begin to act voluntarily on others using language and to imagine the effect that a word can provoke: they can then understand that it is necessary to explain and re-explain in order for a partner to understand, and the school must guide them in this discovery. They begin to pose real questions, to grasp jokes and to make them. Their progress is accompanied by an increase in vocabulary and by an increasingly complex organisation of phrases. At the end of école maternelle, the teacher can thus have conversations with the children which are close to those that he has with adults.

Throughout école maternelle, the teacher creates benevolent and reassuring conditions so that all the children (even those who do not express themselves at all or only a little) take turns to speak and participate in language situations more complex than those of ordinary life; he welcomes "positive" errors which convey a mental reorganisation of the language by highlighting them and by offering a reformulation. Thus, he contributes to creating equality between children by reducing the language gaps.

Understanding and learning

The teacher's speech is the means of understanding and learning for the children. In comprehension, the children "pick up" what is within their reach in what they hear, firstly in scenes referring to precise personal experiences, often loaded with affectivity. They are encouraged to progressively take an interest in what they did not know, thanks to the contribution of new concepts, new cultural objects and even new manners of learning.

The moments of reception where the children work mentally without speaking are language activities in their own right which the teacher must seek and encourage, because they allow the construction of cognitive tools: recognising, comparing, categorising, contrasting, building mental pictures from fictional stories, linking events heard and/or seen in narratives or explanations, in moments of structured learning, dealing with words referring to space, time, etc. These activities, invisible to the eye of any observer, are crucial.

Exchanging and reflecting with others

The moments of language with multiple participants are numerous at école maternelle: resolution of problems, taking of collective decisions, comprehension of stories heard, etc. Then there is argumentation, explanation, questions, interest in what others believe, think and know. The teacher comments on the activity that takes place in order to highlight its importance and purpose.

The school regularly asks pupils to evoke, that is to say to talk about things that are not present (recitals of past experiences, class projects etc.). These situations of evocation lead the pupils to use language in order to make themselves understood without other support, they offer them a means of training themselves to express themselves in an increasingly explicit manner. This language skill is part of an ongoing development that starts early and will only be established at about eight years of age. The role of the teacher is to encourage stepping back and reflecting on the statements made by each party.

Beginning to reflect on the language and to acquire phonological awareness

From their youngest age, children are interested by the language(s) that they hear. Spontaneously and without being conscious of it they make attempts to reproduce the sounds, the forms and the structures in order to enter into communication with their entourage. From the age of three to four years they can step back and be aware of the efforts required to master a language and accomplish these efforts intentionally. Their attention can then be focused on the vocabulary, syntax and sound units of the French language, the recognition of which will be essential for learning to master the functioning of the writing of French.

The acquisition and development of phonological awareness

In order to be able to read and write, children must make two great acquisitions: identifying the sound units that we use when we speak French (phonological awareness) and understanding that the writing of French is a code by means of which we transcribe the sounds (alphabetic principle).

When they learn to speak, children reproduce the words that they have heard and thus the sounds of the language that we speak to them. If they happen to play with the sounds, that is done in a random manner. At école maternelle, they learn to voluntarily manipulate sounds, to identify them by ear and thus to dissociate them from other sounds, to spot resemblances and differences. In order to be able to take an interest in the syllables and phonemes, it is necessary that the children detach themselves from the meaning of the words.

The unit which is most easily perceptible is the syllable. Once the children are capable of identifying syllables common to several words and of isolating them, they can then focus on identifying smaller elements which make up syllables. Because the vowel sounds are easier to perceive than the consonant sounds and because they sometimes constitute syllables, it is best to begin with them, without wanting to identify all those which exist in French and without excluding some consonant sounds which are among the most accessible. In order to develop phonological awareness, the teacher accustoms the children to voluntarily breaking down what they hear into oral syllables: by clapping a sound sequence, by orally "cutting up" known words into syllables, by identifying an identical syllable in words with two syllables, then by reversing the order of syllables, still without material support, either in writing or in images. These phonic games can be practised in a large group, but the teacher will favour the organisation in small groups for children who participate little or with difficulty in large groups. In the course of the grande section (year 1), he regularly dedicates short sessions to these games, in particular with the children for whom he does not see a development in their attempts at writing. For those who are capable of it, similar activities may be begun on vowel sounds - especially those which constitute a syllable in popular words - and some consonant sounds. These structured activities and games on the sound constituents of the language only occupy a part of the language activities.

Awaking to linguistic diversity

With effect from the moyenne section (reception), they will discover the existence of languages which are sometimes very different from those that they know. During playful situations (games, nursery rhymes etc.) or situations they can make sense of (DVD of known stories for example), they become aware that communication can take place via other languages than French: for example, regional languages, foreign languages and French sign language (LSF). The ambitions are modest, but the attempts that the children are caused to make, especially in order to repeat certain elements, must be conducted with a certain rigour.

1.2. Writing

Objectives targeted and elements of progression

It is the responsibility of the école maternelle to give everyone a shared culture of writing. The children are led to understand better and better the writings within their grasp, to discover the nature and the language function of these traces made by someone for someone else, to begin to participate in the production of written texts of which they explore the characteristics. At the end of the cycle, the children can show all this acquired knowledge in their first independent writings. It is upon these trial and error tracings that the teachers of cycle 2 rely for support.

Listening to the writing and understanding

By preparing the children for the first mastered uses of writing in cycle 2, the école maternelle is best placed to offer them an introduction to the language of writing, which is very different from the oral language of communication. The challenge is to accustom them to the reception of the written language in order to understand its content. The teacher takes charge of the reading, and guides and supervises the exchanges which follow the listening. The progression resides essentially in the choice of texts that are increasingly long and increasingly distanced from the oral language: while youth literature has an important place here, documentary texts are not neglected either.

Discovering the function of writing

The objective is to permit the children to understand that the written signs that they perceive are equivalent to language: in reception, the writing gives access to a person's words, and in production, it permits someone who is absent to be addressed or to keep for oneself a trace of what must not be forgotten. The writing transmits, gives or recalls information and gives rise to imagination: it has cognitive effects on the person who reads it. At école maternelle, the children discover it by using various media (various books, posters, letters, electronic or telephone messages, labels, etc.) in relation with situations or projects which make them necessary; they experience it even more precisely when they are spectators of directed writing and when they see for themselves the effects that the writings produce on those who receive them.

Beginning to produce the writings and discovering the functioning thereof

It is the teacher who judges the moment when the children are ready to take responsibility themselves for part of the activities that adults carry out with writing. And as there is no pre-reading at école maternelle, that partial assumption of responsibility is done in production and largely with the help of an adult. All production of written work requires different stages and thus some time prior to succeeding; the phase of prior oral elaboration of the message is fundamental, notably because it allows the pupil to become aware of the necessary transformations of an oral statement into phrases to be written. The technique of adult dictation concerns one of these stages which is drafting *per se*. These early experiences of productions generate an awareness of the power that the mastery of writing gives.

Discovering the alphabetic principle

One of the conditions of learning to read and write is having discovered the alphabetic principle, according to which the writing largely codes not directly the meaning, but rather the oral (the sound) of what one says. During the three years of école maternelle, the children will discover this principle (that is to say understanding the relationship between letters and sounds) and begin to implement it. What is targeted at école maternelle is the discovery of this principle and not the systematic learning of relationships between oral and written forms.

The progression of the teaching at école maternelle necessitates beginning by writing. Indeed, the children need to understand how the transformation of a word into writing is made, hence the importance of the relationship which goes from the oral form towards the written form. The reverse route, which goes from the written form towards the oral form, will be practised later when the children begin to learn to read. This activity of writing can only be carried out if, at the same time, the child develops a phonological awareness by becoming capable of identifying the sound units of the language. The discovery of the alphabetic principle makes possible the first independent writings at the end of école maternelle because it is associated with complex knowledge and with new skills:

- the discovery of the function of writing and productions with the help of an adult;
- the manipulation of non-signifier sound units of the language which produces skills which are used when the children try to write;
- in parallel, with effect from moyenne section (reception), the introduction to tracing writing;
- the discovery of the correspondences between the three types of writing (cursive, printing and capitals) which gives the children a palette of possibilities, in handwriting and on a word processor.

Independent writing constitutes the result of these different learning areas and discoveries.

Beginning to write on one's own

A necessary training prior to practising the cursive writing: graphic exercises

Children require several years to acquire the multiple skills necessary for writing: using their view to guide their hand, using in a coordinated manner the four joints which serve to hold and guide the writing instrument (shoulder, elbow, wrist, fingers), controlling the tracing, and above all voluntarily tracing abstract signs which they understand are not drawings but letters, that is to say elements of a code which transcribes sounds. The graphic exercises, which provide training in the motor gestures, and writing *per se* are two different things. The teacher ensures that they do not become mixed up.

In petite section (nursery), the graphic exercises, by accustoming the children to control and guide their gestures by viewing, train them to master the motor gestures which are used in drawing and cursive writing, to take references in the space of the sheet. In moyenne section (reception) and grande section (year 1), they regularly practice tasks of fine movement which specifically prepare them for writing. They also regularly train in the gestures specific to writing and they learn to adopt a comfortable posture, to hold the writing instrument in a suitable manner, to manage the graphic space (going from left to right, maintaining an alignment, etc.). The teacher varies the models

and grants time to demonstrations which permit the learning of their reproduction.

Writing in capitals, which is easier graphically, does not form the subject of systematic teaching; where it is practised by children, the teacher ensures the respect of the order of the letters and highlights the consequences of respecting or failing to respect this order on what can then be read. Cursive writing requires training to learn to trace each letter and link up several letters, by only raising the writing instrument advisedly. This training can only occur if the children have acquired a certain motor maturity: while it can be commenced with certain pupils in moyenne section (reception), it is in grande section (year 1) that it most naturally has its place, and often in the second part of the year. It must be continued in a very systematic manner in the preparatory course. The regular writing of the forename provides an occasion to exercise it, as the children have less of an effort of memory and can then concentrate on the quality of the tracing.

With effect from moyenne section (reception), and regularly in grande section (year 1), the teacher explains the correspondence of the three forms of writing (cursive, printing and capitals). The children practice writing out known words, phrases and short texts, and typing them on the computer. Working then in pairs, they learn a number of relationships between the oral and written language: one child names the letters and shows them, the second searches on the keyboard, they check together on the screen, then on the printed version.

The objective being to construct the symbolic value of the letters, the teacher takes care never to isolate the three components of writing: the semantic component (the meaning of what is written), the symbolic component (the alphabetic code) and the motor component (the graphic dexterity).

The attempts of writing words

Publicly valuing the first traces of the children who say they have written, is to place the whole class on the path of the symbolic. If it concerns lines, various signs or pseudo-letters, the teacher clarifies that he cannot yet read it.

With effect from moyenne section (reception), the teacher gives orders for writing simple words, for example the name of a person from a story. The aim is that children grasp the contributions of the teacher who wrote in front of them, or the contributions of documents displayed in the class that were observed together and discussed. Their traces show the teacher what the children have understood of the writing. Once the traces are made, the teacher reads, or murmurs or says that he cannot yet read it. He discusses with the child, he explains himself the processes used and writes the canonic form by making the sound units and graphemes correspond. The activity is more frequent in grande section (year 1).

The teacher does not allow the children to believe that their productions are correct, neither does he seek a normalized spelling result: he values the attempts and finishes with his adult writing under the attempt of the child.

The first independent productions of writings

When the children have understood that writing is a code which permits messages to be delivered, it is possible to encourage them to produce written messages. In grande section (year 1), the children begin to have the resources to write, and the teacher encourages them to do it, or values their spontaneous attempts. The teacher encourages them to write by using everything that is within their grasp. Once they know exactly what they want to write, the children can search in known texts, using the alphabetic principle and ask for help. The more they write, the more they want to write. The teacher accepts that they mix writing in capitals and writing in cursive in order to resolve phonographic problems. When they are no longer content with recopying words that they know, but want to write new words, they have recourse to different strategies, by combining them or not: they can recopy pieces taken from other words, tracing letters of which the sound is to be found in the word to be written (for example the vowels), attributing the phonic value of their name to letters (using the letter K to transcribe the sound /ca/). The separation between the words remains a difficult problem to resolve up until CE1 (year 3).

The first attempts at writing allow the teacher to see that the children are beginning to understand the function and functioning of writing, even if they will only learn the rules gradually. He comments on these texts with their authors (what they wanted to say, what they have written, what shows that they already have knowledge regarding written texts), then he writes in standardized written French highlighting the differences. He also gives the children the means to train themselves, in particular with copying in a specially arranged writing corner (tools, plain paper and lined paper, computer and printer, digital tablet and stylus, spelling correlation tables, known texts). A personal collection of these first writings can become a reference file for each pupil, to be brought back for their return at CP (year 2).

1.3. What is expected of children at the end of école maternelle

- Communicating with adults and other children through language, making themselves understood.
- Expressing themselves in a syntactically correct and precise language. Reformulating in order to make themselves understood better.

- Practising various uses of the oral language: recounting, describing, evoking, explaining, questioning, proposing solutions, discussing a point of view.
- Recounting from memory and in an expressive manner several nursery rhymes and poems.
- Understanding written texts without other aid than the language heard.
- Showing curiosity with regard to the written text. Being able to repeat the words of a written phrase after it is read by the adult, the words of the known title of a book or of a text.
- Participating verbally in the production of a written text. Knowing that we do not write as we speak.
- Identifying patterns in the oral language in French (possibly in another language).
- Manipulating syllables.
- Discriminating sounds (syllables, vowel sounds; some consonant sounds apart from plosives).
- Recognising the letters of the alphabet and knowing the correspondences between the three manners of writing them: cursive, printing and block capitals. Copying with the aid of a keyboard.
- Writing their forename in cursive writing, without a model.
- Writing a word alone by using letters or groups of letters borrowed from known words.

2. Acting, expressing oneself and understanding by means of physical activity

The practice of physical and artistic activities contributes to the motor, sensory, emotional, intellectual and relational development of children. These activities mobilize, stimulate, enrich the imagination and provide the opportunity to experience new emotions and feelings. They permit the children to explore their physical possibilities, to enlarge and refine their motor skills, to master new balances. They help them to construct their laterality, the orientated image of their own body and to better locate themselves in space and time.

These bodily experiences also aim to develop cooperation, to establish constructive relationships with other people, respecting differences, and thus contribute to socialisation. The participation of all the children in all of the physical activities proposed, the organisation and the strategies implemented seek to combat stereotypes and contribute to the construction of equality between girls and boys. Physical activities form part of health education by leading all the children, whatever their "performances", to experience the pleasure of movement and of effort, to know their body better in order to respect it.

2.1. Objectives targeted and elements of progression

Upon their arrival at école maternelle, all the children are not at the same level of motor development. They have not all encountered the same bodily experiences and these have taken on different meanings depending on the contexts in which they were encountered. The choice of various physical activities, always taking forms suited to the age of the children, is the responsibility of the teacher, in the context of planning the class and the cycle to allow the four characteristic objectives of this learning domain to be achieved. The children's need for movement is real. It is therefore imperative to organise a daily session (of approximately thirty to forty-five minutes, depending on the nature of the activities, the organisation chosen, the intensity of the actions realised, the time of the year, the children's behaviour, etc.). These sessions must be organised in cycles of sufficient duration for the children to have a time which guarantees true exploration and allows the construction of significant motor conquests.

Acting within the space, in the long term and on the objects

Gradually, because he is asked by the teacher to note the results of his actions, the child takes pleasure in investing more time in the learning situations which are proposed to him. He discovers the possibility of linking motor behaviours to ensure continuity of action (taking a ball, then running to overcome an obstacle, then aiming at a target to make it fall down, then starting again at the starting point to take a new projectile, etc.). He learns to make efforts over the long term, to seek to cover greater distance in a given time ("materialized" by an hourglass, a recorded song etc.).

By acting on and with objects of different sizes, forms or weights (balls, balloons, beanbags, rings etc.), the child experiences their properties, discovers the possible uses (throwing, catching, rolling etc.), attempts to reproduce an effect he got at random by trial and error. He makes progress in perceiving and anticipating the trajectory of an object in space, things which are still difficult, even after the age of five.

Adapting one's balance and one's journeys to various environments or constraints

Certain of the youngest children need time to conquer new spaces or to engage themselves in unknown environments. Others, on the contrary, immediately invest the new proposals without apprehension, but also without awareness of the potential risks. In all cases, the teacher leads the children to discover their possibilities,

by proposing situations which allow them to explore and to extend (push back) their limits. He invites them to bring into play unusual motor behaviour (climbing, suspending themselves, crawling, etc.), developing new balance (leaning back, rolling, letting oneself float, etc.), discovering unfamiliar spaces or spaces characterized by their uncertainty (swimming pool, skating rink, park, forest, etc.). For children around four years old, the teacher enriches these experiments with the aid of materials requiring balance (skates, stilts, etc.), allowing new modes of travel (tricycles, balance bikes, bicycles, scooters etc.). He draws the attention of the children to their safety and that of others, in teaching situations the level of objective risk of which is controlled by the adult.

Communicating with others by means of actions with expressive or artistic aim

The situations offered to the child allow him to discover and affirm his own possibilities for improvisation, invention and creation by using his body. The teacher uses various sound media (music, sound effects, soundscapes etc.) or, on the contrary develops the skill of listening to oneself and others through silence. He provides the children with objects initiating or prolonging movement (scarves, feathers, leaves etc.), especially for the youngest among them. He proposes adjustments of suitable spaces, real or fictitious, encouraging new experimentations. He leads them to be part of a group performance. Switching between the roles of actors and spectators permits the eldest to better grasp the different dimensions of the activity, the issues covered and the direction of progress. The child thus participates in a collective project which may be displayed before other spectators, external to the class group.

Collaborating, cooperating, contrasting

For the young child, school is most often the place where they first discover collective motor games. The function of this collective, the appropriation of different modes of organisation, the sharing of the equipment and comprehension of the roles need to be learnt. The shared rules (marking out the space, aim of the game, rights and prohibitions, etc.) are one of the conditions of the pleasure of playing, in respecting other people.

For the youngest pupils, the achievement of a common goal is done first of all by the association of actions carried out in parallel, without real coordination. In the simplest forms of play, this concerns understanding and appropriating a single role. The exercise of different roles introduces the first collaborations (emptying a zone of the objects which are found there, collaborating in order to exchange them, to transport them, to put them away in another camp etc.). Then, situations are offered which demonstrate a real antagonism of intentions (stealing objects, pursuing players in order to catch them, running away in order to avoid them, etc.) or a reversibility of the status of the players (if the cat touches the mouse, the latter becomes the cat, etc.).

Other playful situations permit the oldest pupils to come into contact with the body of another pupil, to learn to respect it and to explore action in relation with the specific intentions of cooperation or opposition (grabbing, lifting, pushing, pulling, immobilising etc.). Whether it is in these two-player games or in group games, everyone can usefully appropriate various social roles: referee, observer, score keeper or time keeper.

2.2. What is expected of children at the end of école maternelle

- Running, jumping, throwing in different ways, in a variety of spaces and a variety of materials for a specific purpose.
- Adjusting and linking their actions and their movements according to the obstacles to be overcome or the trajectory of objects on which to act.
- Moving with ease in various environments, whether natural or developed.
- Constructing and conserving a sequence of actions and movements, in relation with other partners, with or without musical support.
- Coordinating one's gestures and one's movements with those of others, during sung rounds and games.
- Cooperating, exercising different complementary roles, confronting each other, developing strategies in order to target a common purpose or goal.

3. Acting, expressing oneself and understanding by means of artistic activities

This learning domain refers to the visual arts (painting, sculpture, drawing, photography, cinema, cartoon, graphic arts, digital arts), to the sound arts (songs, instrumental and vocal music) and to the art of the living spectacle (dance, theatre, arts of the circus, puppets, etc.). The école maternelle plays a decisive role in giving all the children access to these artistic universes; it constitutes the first step of the course of artistic and cultural education that each one accomplishes during their primary and secondary schooling, which targets the acquisition of a personal artistic culture, founded on shared benchmarks.

3.1. Objectives targeted and elements of progression

Developing the taste for artistic practices

Children must have frequent occasions to practice, individually and collectively, in situations with various objectives. They freely explore, leave spontaneous traces with the tools that they choose or that the teacher offers them, in spaces and at times dedicated to these activities. They make trials that the teachers positively welcome. They discover materials which give rise to the exploration of new possibilities, adapting themselves to a material constraint. Throughout the cycle, they interest themselves in the effects produced, in the results of actions and place these effects or results in relation to the intentions that they had.

Discovering different forms of artistic expression

Encounters with different forms of artistic expression are organised regularly; in the class, the children are confronted with works of art in the form of reproductions, recordings, films or video captions. The familiarisation with a dozen works of different eras in different artistic fields over the first learning cycle allows the children to begin to construct knowledge which will then be stabilised in order to progressively constitute an artistic culture of reference. As far as possible, the children are introduced to visiting exhibition spaces, cinemas and live performance venues so that they understand their artistic and social function and discover the pleasure of being a spectator.

Living and expressing emotions, formulating choices

The children learn to put their emotions, their sentiments and their impressions into words, and little by little, to express their intentions and to evoke their performances as well as those of others. The teacher encourages them to be precise in order to compare and to differentiate their points of view and those of others, and to ask questions; he invites them to explain their choices, to formulate what they are thinking and to justify what presents an interest to their eyes.

3.1.1. The plastic and visual productions

Drawing

The children must have time in order to draw freely, in a prepared space where the necessary tools and media are available. The teacher encourages the experimentation with different tools, from crayons to the graphic palette, and favours times of exchange to compare the effects produced. He permits the children to identify the responses provided by visual artists, by the illustrators of albums, to the problems they encountered. He gives open instructions which encourage the diversity of production, then the mutualisation of individual productions; the exchanges regarding the different representations of a single object enrich the practices and help to transcend stereotypes.

The sketches or the first drawings are conserved in order to help comparisons over time and to help each child to perceive their progress; the children may go back to them or extend them.

Practicing decorative graphics

Throughout the cycle, the children encounter decorative graphics coming from various cultural traditions and eras. They constitute repertoires of images and of diverse motifs which they draw upon to learn to reproduce, assemble, organize and link together for creative purposes, but also to invent and transform into compositions. The graphic activity conducted by the teacher leads to the execution of voluntary drawings, to a close observation and to the discrimination of forms, develops coordination between eye and hand and a diversified and appropriate gestural skill. These acquisitions facilitate the mastery of tracing writing.

Making 2D and 3D artistic compositions

In order to realise different artistic compositions, alone or in small groups, the children are led to take an interest in colour, shapes and volumes.

Colour work is carried out in a varied manner with mixes (from primary colours), nuances and shades, superpositions, juxtapositions, the use of different media and images (crayons, ink, paint, natural pigments etc.). These experiences are accompanied by the acquisition of an appropriate vocabulary to describe the actions (darken, lighten, thicken, etc.) or the effects produced (thick, opaque, transparent, etc.).

The 3-D work allows children to understand the very different materials (clay, wood, cellular concrete, cardboard,

paper, etc.); an instruction presented as a problem to be resolved transforms the usual representation of the material used. This work encourages the representation of the world in three dimensions, the search for balance and verticality.

Observing, understanding and transforming images

The children gradually learn to characterise the different images, fixed or animated, and their functions, and to distinguish the real from its representation, in order to have in the end a critical view of the multitude of images with which they are confronted from their earliest age.

The observation of works of art, whether reproduced or original, is conducted in relation with the regular practice of artistic productions and exchanges.

3.1.2. Sound universe

The objective of the école maternelle is to enrich the possibilities of the musical imagination and creation, both personal and collective, of the children, by confronting them with the diversity of the musical universe. The activities of listening and of production are interdependent and are part of the same process.

Playing with one's voice and acquiring a repertoire of nursery rhymes and songs

Through the uses that they make of their voice, the children construct the bases of their future spoken and sung, adult voice. The école maternelle offers situations which progressively permit them to discover its richness, encouraging them to exceed the common uses by engaging them in a playful exploration (whisperings, cries, breaths, noises, imitations of animals or sound elements of daily life, games of pitch etc.).

The children learn to sing in choir with peers; the teacher takes care not to combine too large a number of children in order to be able to work on the precision of the song, the melody, the rhythm and the musical effects. The children acquire a repertoire of nursery rhymes and songs adapted to their age, which will be enriched throughout their schooling. The teacher chooses it according to his objectives, drawing on the children's oral tradition and the repertoire of contemporary authors. Firstly, he favours nursery rhymes and songs composed of short musical phrases, with a simple structure, adapted to the children's vocal possibilities (restricted range, absence of melodic and rhythmic difficulties that are too great). He can then call upon songs that are a little more complex, particularly on the rhythmic level.

Exploring instruments, utilising the sounds of the body

Activities involving instruments and the sounds of the body are part of the pleasure of discovery of various sound sources and are linked to the evolution of the gestural possibilities of children. The activities of exploration make use of the bodily percussions, various objects sometimes borrowed from daily life, percussion instruments, etc. They progressively permit the children to master their gestures in order to control their effects. The comparative use of simple instruments leads the children to appreciate the effects produced in order to group the instruments in families (those that are struck, shaken, scraped or blown into, etc.).

Refining one's listening

The listening activities aim as a priority to develop sensitivity, discrimination and the auditive memory. They also pose the bases of the first cultural references and favour the development of the imagination. They form part of sessions dedicated to song and to the production of sounds with instruments. The activities of listening may form the objects of ritualised specific times, which are progressive in their duration, during the course of which the children discover sound environments and extracts of musical works belonging to different styles, cultures and eras, chosen by the teacher. The teacher firstly favours extracts characterised by strong contrasts (strong or weak sound intensity, slow/rapid tempo, low/high pitched sounds, tones of voice or of instruments etc.) in order to then work on the basis of works presenting less marked contrasts. The instructions that he gives direct the attention of the children in such a manner that they learn to listen more and more acutely.

3.1.3. The live performance

Practising some activities of the art of the live performance

The artistic activities forming part of the art of the live performance (dance, circus, mime, theatre, puppets etc.) and characterised by the involvement of the body and arouse new sensations and emotions in the child. They mobilise and enrich his imagination and transform his usual manners of acting and moving, by developing a use of the body

which is distanced from the daily and functional conditions. A practice of these activities adapted to young children permits them thus to bring into play and produce a poetic expression of movement, to open their eyes to the modes of expression of other people and to the manner in which these people translate their feelings differently. Over the sessions, the teacher encourages them to imitate, to invent, to assemble personal or shared propositions. He leads them to progressively appropriate a scenic space in order to join in a collective production. He helps them to enter into relation with others, whether during the rituals at the start or end of the session, during instantaneous compositions in the course of which they improvise, or during the course of a moment of production constructed with the help of an adult and which the children memorise. Thanks to the time of observation and exchanges with others, the children progressively become active and attentive spectators.

3.2. What is expected of children at the end of école maternelle

- Choosing different tools, media and supports on the basis of a project or of an instruction and using them by adapting one's technique.
- Practising drawing in order to represent or to illustrate, by being faithful to real life or to a model, or by inventing.
- Realising a personal composition by reproducing graphics. Creating new graphics.
- Realising artistic compositions, alone or in a small group, by choosing and combining material, by reinvesting techniques and processes.
- Memorising a varied repertoire of nursery rhymes and songs and interpreting them in an expressive manner.
- Playing with one's voice in order to explore the variants of timbre, intensity, pitch and nuance.
- Identifying and reproducing, bodily or with instruments, simple rhythmic formulae.
- Describing an image, talking about a musical extract and expressing one's feelings or one's understanding by using a suitable vocabulary.
- Proposing solutions in projects, creations, resolution of problems, with one's body, one's voice or with sound objects.

4. Constructing the initial tools to structure one's thought

4.1. Discovering numbers and their uses

From birth, children have an intuition of magnitudes which permits them to compare and evaluate approximately lengths (sizes), volumes, but also collections of various objects ("there are a lot of them", "not a lot" etc.). Upon their arrival at école maternelle, they discriminate small quantities, one, two and three, notably where they form culturally known configurations (dominoes, dice). Finally, if they know how to express the beginnings of the numerical sequence, this recital does not reflect a true understanding of quantities and numbers.

The école maternelle must progressively lead each child to understand that numbers allow the expression of quantities (cardinal use) as well as the expression of a rank or a position in a list (ordinal use). This learning area takes time and requires confrontation with numerous situations involving pre-numeric then numeric activities.

4.1.1. Objectives targeted and elements of progression

The construction of the number relies on the concept of quantity, its oral and written codification, the acquisition of the oral sequence of numbers and the use of counting. With young children, these learning areas are developed in parallel prior to being able to be coordinated: the child may, for example, know how to recite a counting rhyme quite far without knowing how to use it in order to count a collection.

In the learning of numbers at école maternelle, it is appropriate to have the number constructed in order to express quantities, to stabilise the knowledge of small numbers and to use the number as a memory of the position. The teacher favours the very progressive development of each one of these dimensions in order to contribute to the construction of the concept of number. This construction should not be confused with that of counting and of the operations which form part of the learning areas of école élémentaire (infants/juniors).

Constructing the number in order to express quantities

Understanding the concept of quantity for the child entails understanding that the quantity is not characteristic of an object, but of a collection of objects (the child must also understand that the number serves to memorise the quantity).

The child firstly calls upon a global and perceptive estimation (more, less, the same, a lot, not a lot). Progressively, he passes from the appearance of collections to the taking into account of quantities. The comparison of collections

and the production of a collection of the same cardinal as another are essential activities for the learning of numbers. The number as a tool of measurement of the quantity is stabilised when the child can associate it to a collection, whatever its nature, the size of its elements and the space occupied: five allows five ants, five cubes or five elephants to be designated indiscriminately.

The three years of école maternelle are necessary and sometimes not sufficient to stabilise this knowledge, ensuring that the numbers worked are composed and decomposed. The mastery of the decomposition of numbers is a necessary condition to the construction of the number.

Stabilising the knowledge of small numbers

At cycle 1, the construction of quantities up to ten is essential. This does not exclude the work of comparison regarding large collections. The stabilisation of the concept of quantity, for example three, is the capacity to give, to show, to evaluate or to take one, two or three and to compose and decompose two and three. Between two and four years of age, stabilising the knowledge of small numbers (up to five) requires numerous and varied activities pertaining to the decomposition and recomposition of small quantities (three is two and one more; one and two more; four is two and two more; three and one more; one and three more), the recognition and observation of the constellations of the die, the recognition and the expression of a quantity with the fingers of the hand, the one-to-one correspondence with a collection of a known cardinal.

The iteration of the unit (three is two and one more) is constructed progressively, and for each number. After four years of age, the activities of decomposition and recomposition are exercised on quantities up to ten.

Using the number to designate a rank, a position

The number also allows a record to be kept of the rank of an element in an organised collection. In order to record the rank and the position of the object (third pearl, fifth hoop), the children must define a direction of reading, a direction of course, that is to say to set an order. This use of the number is based at the oral level on knowledge of the counting rhyme and at the written level on that of the figured writing.

Constructing the first knowledge and savoir-faire with rigour

Acquiring the oral sequence of number words

In order for the oral sequence of number words to be available as a resource for counting, it must be stable, ordered, segmented and sufficiently long. It must be worked for itself and constitute a reservoir of ordered words. The knowledge of the oral sequence of names of the numbers does not constitute the learning of the number but contributes to it.

Before four years of age, the first elements of the numerical sequence can be put in place up to five or six then progressively extended up to thirty at the end of grande section (year 1). The learning of counting rhymes favours the memorisation of the sequence of numbers and the segmentation of the number words into linguistic units; this acquired knowledge allows the identification of the numbers which are before and after, that is to say the number following and preceding a number, and creates the awareness of a link between the increase or deduction of an element of a collection.

Writing the numbers with figures

In parallel, the children encounter written numbers in particular in the occasional activities of classroom life, in games and by means of a first use of the calendar. The first writings of the numbers must not be introduced too early but progressively, on the basis of the needs of communication for the resolution of specific situations. Learning to trace figures is done with the same rigour as for letters. The progression of the capacity of reading and writing numbers is organised over the cycle, notably from four years old. The institutional written code is the last step of the learning area which is continued to cycle 2.

Counting

Counting activities should avoid counting-numbering and make it clear, during the enumeration of the collection, that each of the names of numbers refers to the quantity that has just been formed (the child must understand that showing three fingers, is not the same as showing the third finger of the hand). Subsequently, beyond five, the same attention must be paid to the progressive development of quantities and their relationships to numbers under different codes. The children must understand that any quantity is obtained by adding one to the preceding quantity (or by removing one from the superior quantity) and that its name is obtained by advancing by one in the sequence of names of numbers or of their writing in figures.

In order to count a collection of objects, the child must be capable of synchronising the recitation of the sequence of the number words with the checking of the objects to be counted. This capacity must be taught in different ways

by causing the nature of the collections and their spatial organisation to be varied, because the strategies are not the same depending on whether the objects are moveable or not (placing in a box, on another table), and according to their arrangement (collection organised in the space or not, collection organised-aligned on a sheet or not).

4.1.2. What is expected of children at the end of école maternelle

Using numbers

- Evaluating and comparing collections of objects with numeric or non-numeric procedures.
- Forming a collection of which the cardinal is given. Using counting in order to compare two quantities, in order to form a collection of a given size or in order to form a collection of a quantity equal to the collection proposed.
- Using the number in order to express the position of an object or of a person in a game, in an organised situation, on a rank or in order to compare positions.
- Mobilising analogical symbols, whether written or verbal, conventional or non-conventional in order to communicate oral and written information regarding a quantity.

Studying numbers

- Having understood that the cardinal does not change if the spatial arrangement or the nature of the elements is changed.
- Having understood that any number is obtained by adding to the preceding number and that this corresponds to the addition of one unit to the preceding quantity.
- Quantifying collections up to at least ten; composing and decomposing them by actual manipulations then by mental manipulations. Saying how many it is necessary to add or remove in order to obtain quantities not exceeding ten.
- Speaking about numbers with the aid of their decomposition.
- Saying the sequence of numbers up to thirty. Read the numbers written in figures up to ten.

4.2. Exploring shapes, sizes, organised sequences

Very early, young children intuitively discern shapes (squares, triangles, etc.) and sizes (length, capacity, mass, area, etc.). At école maternelle, they construct knowledge and benchmarks regarding some shapes and sizes. Approaching flat shapes, objects of the space and sizes is achieved by the manipulation and coordination of actions regarding the objects. This approach is supported by the language: it allows these objects and actions to be described and promotes the identification of first descriptive characteristics. This knowledge, which will remain limited, constitutes a first approach to geometry and measurement which will be taught in cycles 2 and 3.

4.2.1. Objectives targeted and elements of progression

At a very early stage, the children group objects, either on the basis of their aspect, or on the basis of their familiar use or of their effects. At school, they are encouraged to "put together what goes together" in order to understand that any object can belong to several categories and that certain objects may not belong to these categories.

By observations, comparisons and sortings, the children are led to better distinguish between different types of criteria: essentially shape, length, mass and capacity. They progressively learn to recognise and distinguish solids then flat shapes. They begin to understand the concept of alignment that they can also experiment with in the physical activities sessions. The teacher is attentive to the fact that the apprehension of flat shapes is more abstract than that of solids and that certain terms give rise to confusion (square/cube). The teacher uses a precise vocabulary (cube, ball, pyramid, cylinder, square, rectangle, triangle, circle or disk (to be preferred to "round")) that the children are thus trained to understand firstly then to use wisely, but the manipulation of the mathematical vocabulary is not an objective of the école maternelle.

Furthermore, from petite section (nursery), the children are invited to organise sequences of objects on the basis of criteria of forms and colours; the first algorithms which are proposed to them are simple. Progressively, in the following years, they are led to recognise a pattern in an organised sequence and to continue that sequence, to invent increasingly complicated "patterns" and to complete missing items in an organised sequence.

4.2.2. What is expected of children at the end of école maternelle

- Classifying objects on the basis of characteristics linked to their shape. Knowing how to name some flat shapes

- (square, triangle, circle or disk, rectangle) and recognising some solids (cube, pyramid, ball, cylinder).
- Classifying or ranking objects according to a criterion of length or mass or capacity.
 - Reproducing an assembly on the basis of a model (puzzle, paving, assembly of solids).
 - Reproducing and drawing flat shapes.
 - Identifying the principle of organisation of an algorithm and continuing its application.

5. Exploring the world

5.1. Situating oneself in time and space

From their birth, by their exploratory activities, the children intuitively perceive certain spatial and temporal dimensions of their immediate environment. These perceptions permit them to acquire, within their living environments, a first series of benchmarks, to develop expectations and memories of a recent past. However, this knowledge remains implicit and limited. One of the objectives of the école maternelle is precisely to lead them progressively to consider time and space as dimensions relatively independent from the activities in progress, and to begin to treat them as such. It also seeks to lead them to gradually go beyond their own point of view and to adopt that of others.

5.1.1. Objectives targeted and elements of progression

Time

The école maternelle targets the construction of temporal benchmarks and raising awareness of periods of time: short time (that of an activity with what comes before and after it, day) and long time (succession of days in the week and the month, succession of seasons). The apprehension of very long time (historic time) is more difficult, notably in so far as concerns the distinction between the near past and the distant past.

Stabilising the first temporal benchmarks

For the youngest children, the first temporal benchmarks are associated with the recurrent activities of daily life, hence the importance of a regular organisation and of rituals which mark the passage from one moment to another. These benchmarks allow the teacher to "anchor" for the children the first stable elements of a summary chronology and to propose to them a first work of evocation and anticipation based on events close to the present moment.

Introducing social benchmarks

With effect from moyenne section (reception), social benchmarks are introduced and used daily by the children in order to determine the days of the week and to specify the events of school life. The teacher progressively leads the children to link up between them the different systems of reference, notably the moments of the day and the hours in order to objectivise the periods and benchmarks used by adults (in five minutes, in an hour).

Consolidating the concept of chronology

In moyenne section (reception), the teacher proposes work pertaining to the construction of the chronology relating to longer periods, particularly the week. In order to do this, he derives support from events experienced, the progression of which is perceptible to the children and for which the stages can be distinguished, ordered, reconstituted and completed. The activities undertaken in class favour the acquisition of temporal marks in the language, notably in order to situate a statement in relation to the time of speaking (yesterday, today, now, tomorrow, later, etc.), or the use of the corresponding verb forms. The teacher creates the conditions in which the temporal relations of succession, anteriority, posteriority, simultaneity can be translated by suitable verbal formulations (before, after, during, well before, well after, at the same time, etc.).

In grande section (year 1), events chosen on the basis of class projects (the disappearance of the dinosaurs, the emergence of writing, etc.) or of elements of nearby architectural heritage, or the life of parents and grandparents, can be exploited to place some shared reference points in order, but without taking into account the measurement of time.

Raising awareness of the concept of length of time

The concept of length of time begins to be established around four years of age in a subjective fashion. By having recourse to tools and devices which provide a more objective appreciation, the teacher leads the children not to measure time properly speaking, but to materialise it by visualising its passing. Thus, hour glasses, recordings of a

nursery rhyme or a song can permit a first apprehension of a given stable length of time or the comparison with another.

Space

Experiencing space

The experience of space pertains to the acquisition of knowledge linked to journeys, to distances and spatial benchmarks elaborated by the children during their activities. The teacher creates the conditions for an accumulation of experiences accompanied by the taking of references regarding space by allowing the children to explore it, to travel it, to observe the positions of fixed or mobile elements, the journeys of their peers, to progressively anticipate their own itineraries by means of language exchanges. The teacher thus favours the organisation of benchmarks that each child elaborates, through action and through language, on the basis of his own body in order to progressively construct an orientated image.

Representing space

Through the use and production of various representations (photos, models, drawings, plans etc.) and also through the language exchanges with their classmates and adults, the children learn to reconstruct their journeys and to make them on the basis of oral instructions that have been understood and memorised. They then establish relationships between their journeys and their representations. Progressing to flat representations by means of drawing leads them to begin to intuitively place in relation perceptions in three dimensions and codings in two dimensions calling upon certain geometric forms (rectangles, squares, triangles, circles). These interrelations will be more precisely studied at école élémentaire (infants/juniors), but they can already be used in order to code journeys or spatial representations. In addition, drawings, as well as texts presented on pages or graphic productions, introduce children to locating themselves and orientating themselves in a two-dimensional space, that of the page but also that of notebooks and books.

Discovering different environments

The teacher leads the children from the observation of the immediate environment (the class, the school, the district etc.) to the discovery of less familiar spaces (countryside, town, sea, mountain etc.). The observation of human constructions (houses, shops, monuments, roads, bridges etc.) belongs to the same path. For the older pupils, a first approach to the countryside as an environment marked by human activity becomes possible. These situations are opportunities to question oneself, to produce images (the digital camera is a useful tool), to search for information through the teacher's mediation in documentaries and on websites. This exploration of the environments also permits a concrete introduction to a responsible attitude (respect for places, for life, knowledge of the impact of certain behaviours on the environment etc.).

On the basis of experiences encountered both at school and outside it by the children of the class and the opportunities that it provokes, the teacher also favours a first discovery of countries and cultures in order to open them to the diversity of the world. This discovery can also be linked to a first exposure to the plurality of languages.

5.1.2. What is expected of children at the end of école maternelle

- Situating events experienced in relation to one another and locating them within the day, week, month or season.
- Ordering a sequence of photograph or images, in order to take account of a situation experienced or of a fictitious story heard, by marking succession and simultaneity in an exact manner.
- Using suitable temporal markers (then, during, before, after etc.) in stories, descriptions or explanations.
- Situating objects in relation to oneself, one another, relative to benchmark objects.
- Situating oneself in relation to others, relative to benchmark objects.
- In a well-known environment, making a journey, following a course on the basis of its representation (drawing or coding).
- Elaborating first attempts at a 2-dimensional, communicable representation (construction of a common code).
- Correctly orientating and using a sheet of paper, a book or another written medium, on the basis of instructions, for a purpose or a precise project.
- Using suitable spatial markers (in front of, behind, right, left, above, below etc.) in stories, descriptions or explanations.

5.2. Exploring the world of living things, of objects and of matter

At their entry to école maternelle, the children already have representations which permit them to take benchmarks in their daily life. In order to aid them in discovering, organising and understanding the world which surrounds them, the teacher proposes activities which lead the children to observe, to formulate more rational interrogations, to

construct relations between the phenomena observed, to foresee consequences, to identify characteristics capable of being categorised. The children begin to understand what distinguishes the living from the non-living; they manipulate, fabricate in order to familiarise themselves with objects and matter.

5.2.1. Objectives targeted and elements of progression

Discovering the living world

The teacher leads the children to observe the different manifestations of animal and plant life. They discover the cycle made up of birth, growth, reproduction, ageing and death by providing the necessary care for animals and plants raised in class. They identify, name or group animals on the basis of their characteristics (hair, feathers, scales, etc.), of their modes of movement (walking, crawling, flight, swimming, etc.), of their living environments, etc.

By means of physical activities experienced at school, the children learn to better know and master their body. They understand that it belongs to them, that they must take care of it in order to keep themselves in shape and to favour their well-being. They learn to identify, indicate and name the different parts of the body. This health education targets the acquisition of first knowledge and know-how relating to a healthy lifestyle. It integrates a first approach of nutritional questions which may be linked to taste education.

The children enrich and develop their sensory abilities, using them to distinguish different realities according to their olfactory, gustatory, tactile, auditory and visual characteristics. With the oldest pupils, it is a case of comparing, classifying and ordering these realities, describing them with the aid of language and categorising them.

Finally, the questions of the protection of living things and their environment are approached in the context of a discovery of different environments, by a concrete introduction to a responsible attitude.

Exploring matter

A first apprehension of the concept of matter is favoured by the direct action on materials from petite section (nursery). The children regularly practice various actions (pouring, blending, mixing, transporting, modelling, trimming, cutting, splitting up, assembling, transforming). Throughout the cycle, they discover the effects of their actions and they use some natural materials or matters (water, wood, earth, sand, air, etc.) or materials made by man (paper, cardboard, semolina, tissue, etc.).

The activities which lead to the mixes, dissolutions, mechanical transformations or transformations under the effect of heat or cold progressively permit some properties of these matters and materials and some aspects of their possible transformations to be approached. They are the occasion of discussions between the children and with the teacher and allow their qualities to be classified, designated and defined by acquiring the appropriate vocabulary.

Using, fabricating and manipulating objects

The use of instruments, various objects and tools leads the children to develop a series of skills, to manipulate and to discover their uses. From petite section (nursery) to grande section (year 1), the children learn to connect an action or the choice of a tool to the effect that they want to obtain: sticking, threading, assembling, operating, buttoning, cutting out, balancing, holding a writing tool, folding, using a template, manipulating a computer mouse, acting on a digital tablet etc. All these actions become more complex throughout the cycle. In order to achieve the objective which is set for them or which they give themselves, children learn to gradually integrate the sequence of tasks required and to order a series of actions; in grande section (year 1), they are able to use an illustrated operating instruction or construction sheet.

Assembly and disassembly in the context of construction games and the making of models or the fabrication of objects contribute to a first discovery of the technical world.

The multiple uses of instruments and objects are an opportunity to observe physical phenomena, especially by using simple optical instruments (magnifiers in particular) or by acting with springs, magnets, pulleys, gears, inclined planes etc. The children need to act several times in order to observe the patterns which are the manifestations of physical phenomena that they will study at a much later stage (gravity, the attraction between two magnetic poles, the effects of light, etc.).

Throughout the cycle, the children become conscious of the risks linked to the use of objects, notably in the context of the prevention of domestic accidents.

Using digital tools

From their youngest age, the children are in contact with new technologies. The role of the school is to give them benchmarks in order to understand their usefulness and to begin to use them in a suitable manner (digital tablet, computer, digital camera, etc.). Targeted searches, via the Internet, are made and commented on by the teacher. Class or school projects leading to relationships with other children favour experiences of communication at a distance. The teacher evokes with the children the idea of a networked world which can allow them to speak to other people who are sometimes very far away.

5.2.2. What is expected of children at the end of école maternelle

- Recognizing the main stages of development of an animal or plant, in a situation of observation of the real thing or an image.
- Knowing the essential needs of some animals and plants.
- Locating and naming the different parts of the human body, on oneself or on a representation.
- Know and implement some rules of personal hygiene and healthy living.
- Choosing, using and knowing how to designate the tools and materials suited to a situation or to specific technical actions (folding, cutting, pasting, assembling, operating, etc.).
- Making constructions; constructing simple models on the basis of plans or assembly instructions.
- Using digital tools: camera, tablet, computer.
- Taking into account the risks of the close familiar environment (dangerous objects and behaviours, toxic substances).

Find the full école maternelle teaching programme, which comes into force at the beginning of the 2015 school year, in six different formats:

ONLINE	Read the école maternelle (nursery school) programme
PDF	→ Download the école maternelle (nursery school) programme
FLIPBOOK	Leaf through the école maternelle (nursery school) programme
DOCX	→ Import the école maternelle (nursery school) programme
ODT	→ Import the école maternelle (nursery school) programme
RTF	→ Import the école maternelle (nursery school) programme