Capital Letters for Names: Helping Your Child Spot Proper Nouns

Key points

- In Year 1, children learn that capital letters are used for specific names of people, places, and things, known as proper nouns.
- This is a separate rule from using a capital letter to start a sentence, which can sometimes cause confusion when children begin writing independently.
- Common nouns like 'boy' or 'school' do not need a capital letter, but specific names like 'Jack' or 'Oak Primary School' always do.
- Days of the week and months are also proper nouns and must always start with a capital letter.
- Recognising these names helps children read more accurately and write with greater confidence in their stories and notes.

Things to try at home

- Play a 'Name Hunt' while walking or shopping: spot signs with names of shops, streets, or parks and ask your child to identify the capital letters.
- When reading bedtime stories, pause on names of characters or places and ask your child to point out the capital letter at the start.
- Create a simple 'Capital or Not' game using household items: write words like 'dog', 'London', 'Tuesday', and 'cat' on cards and sort them into two piles.

Find out more

- Ask your child’s teacher for specific examples of proper nouns currently being taught in their Year 1 English lessons.
- Visit the GOV.UK website for the official National Curriculum guidance on English writing expectations for Key Stage 1.
- Check the Education Makes Sense website for printable worksheets and videos that explain capital letters for names in a clear, visual way.