

**Daily Mail****COMMENT**

## Stating the obvious

RESEARCHERS have reinvented the wheel. The blinding truth has been revealed that young children who have bedtime stories read to them, join in family sing-songs and kick a ball around the park are likely to develop faster – and that these activities are better than expensive toys.

The deputy director of the Scottish Centre for Social Research has described the findings as ‘surprising’. But they will come as no surprise to parents, nursery teachers and child minders.

It is being trumpeted as good news for parents, in a recession, that they need not feel obliged to buy children expensive toys. But anybody who has bought a small child a costly present, only to see it discarded while the toddler plays happily with the box and wrapping, already knows that.

It is in the later years, under peer pressure, that ‘pester power’ begins to nag for highly priced electronic gadgets and clothes. Best to nip such expectations in the bud and encourage habits of reading and outdoor play that will train children in a healthy and productive lifestyle.

The Scottish Executive intends to incorporate these findings into its policies. Ministers are right to do so, even if this groundbreaking piece of research tells us nothing that common sense had not already made obvious.

