



Engagement with parents and carers

We believe that it is essential to work in partnership with parents in order to provide the best possible education for all the children in our school.

Aims

To build open, honest and positive relationships with all parents and carers.

1. To treat parents with respect at all times.
2. To create a welcoming and friendly environment.
3. To share our knowledge of the children's achievements and learning with parents.
4. To encourage parents to share their knowledge of the children with us.
5. To help parents understand our aims and teaching systems.
6. To encourage parents to become fully involved in school life.

Methods

We use a number of strategies to achieve our aims, some of which are listed below:

1. New Starters stay and play sessions for 6 weeks exclusively for that cohort of children & parents
2. Getting to know you appointment before children start with us
3. Open door policy – please speak to us if you have any concerns, complaints or compliments
4. Key worker system
5. Informal discussions – if there isn't time at the beginning or end of the session – please speak to the teacher who will be more than happy to make an appointment for you
6. Regular communication calls – a wonderful opportunity to discuss how well your child is doing
7. Displays of the children's work – in every classroom, corridor and communal areas
8. Electronic Records of Achievement – EYLog creates observations, videos, photographs and assessments of the wonderful things that children have been experiencing
9. Social events that we invite parents/carers and the wider community to attend
10. Website – please refer to the latest news section about what we have planned. The website also has the weekly planning for parents and an overview of what will be happening for that half term.
11. Floor books that catalogue the exciting range of teaching and learning opportunities that children have enjoyed



Monitoring and evaluation

Monitoring of our relationships with parents is ongoing and informal.

Related policies:

- Teaching and Learning Policy Equal Opportunities Policy Complaints Policies Safeguarding Policy

Early years foundation stage statutory framework For group and school-based providers Setting the standards for learning, development and care for children from birth to five (effective: 4 January 2024)

Your child will be learning skills, acquiring new knowledge and demonstrating their understanding through 7 areas of learning and development.

Children should mostly develop the **3 prime areas first**. These are:

Communication and Language

Physical development

Personal, social and emotional development

These prime areas are those most essential for your child's healthy development and future learning. As children grow, the prime areas will help them to develop skills in **4 specific areas**. These are:

Literacy

Mathematics

Understanding the world

Expressive arts and design

Communication & Language development involves giving children opportunities to experience a rich language environment; to develop their confidence and skills in expressing themselves; and to speak and listen and understand in a range of situations.



Physical Development involves providing opportunities for young children to be active and interactive; and to develop their co-ordination, control, and movement of both large and small motor skills. Children must also be helped to understand the importance of physical activity, and to make healthy choices in relation to food.



Personal, Social & Emotional Development involves helping children to develop a positive sense of themselves, and others; to form positive relationships and develop respect for others; to develop social skills and learn how to manage their feelings; to understand appropriate behaviour and self-control and to have the confidence in their own abilities.



Literacy development involves encouraging children to link sounds and letters and to begin to read and write. Children must be given access to a wide range of reading materials (books, poems, rhymes and other written materials) to ignite their interest.





Mathematics involves providing children with opportunities to develop and improve their skills in counting, understanding and using numbers, calculating simple addition and subtraction problems; and to describe shapes, space, patterns and measures.

Understanding the world involves guiding children to make sense of their physical world and their community through opportunities to explore, observe and find out about people, places, technology and the environment. It incorporates the past and present, people and culture and the natural world.



Expressive Arts & Design involves enabling children to explore and play with a wide range of media and materials, as well as providing opportunities and encouragement for sharing their thoughts, ideas and feelings through a variety of activities in art, music, movement, dance, role-play, and design and technology.

Characteristics of effective learning

The Characteristics of Effective Learning advocate that in planning and guiding children's activities, practitioners must reflect on the different ways that children learn, and then reflect these in their practice. A child's individual learning characteristics will determine the way they respond to both the teaching and learning taking place in the environment.

Three characteristics of effective teaching and learning identified by the EYFS are:

- **playing and exploring** - children investigate and experience things, and 'have a go';
- **active learning** - children concentrate and keep on trying if they encounter difficulties, and enjoy achievements; and
- **creating and thinking critically** - children have and develop their own ideas, make links between ideas, and develop strategies for doing things.

The focus of the characteristics is on how children learn rather than what they learn i.e. process over outcome. Underpinning this is the understanding that during their earliest years, children form attitudes about learning that will last a lifetime. Our ethos is one that believes that by providing enthusiastic, interested adults for children to work with, the result will be the formation of creative, confident and adventurous learners, whilst remembering that all children are individuals who bring their own needs, talents and histories to the learning environment.

Here at Hirst Wood Nursery School we value independence and this means that children are able to choose activities (or create experiences) where they can engage with other children or adults or sometimes play alone, and during these activities and experiences they learn by first-hand experiences – by actively 'doing'. In order for this characteristic to come alive in the environment children need sufficient space, time and choice with a range of activities and experiences, some of which have been planned and prepared by the practitioners on the basis of their observations of individual children's current interests, talents, learning styles and stages of development.



We plan for areas of continuous provision (see the descriptions further in the booklet) and also adult focussed enhanced activities that children are encouraged to participate with. We also respond in the moment to children's ideas and interests which is all about seizing the moment for children to progress. Based on what the children are already deeply involved in, this way of planning relies on skilled practitioners using quality interactions to draw out the children's knowledge and build on it there and then (in the moment). This means that the practitioner uses skills to observe what the child is doing and needs to do next, assesses the teachable moment from the child's perspective and be skilled enough to know when to intervene and when to stand back and observe. Planning in the moment is all about capturing the moment of engagement and running with it to make sure the children progress. Planning in the moment means that Early Years Practitioners should be doing all of these things, all day, every day.

What does the child gain from the teachable moment?

The child should feel valued, important, interesting, capable, and able to learn as well as gaining knowledge, skills, attitude and understanding therefore making progress in one or several areas of the Early Years Curriculum.

What does the practitioner gain from the teachable moment?

They should gain a sound understanding of the child's knowledge, skills, attitude, understanding and progress.

The Learning Environment

This way of planning means that the learning environment (both the indoor and outdoor environment) constantly need to be reviewed and adapted to ensure that the children have a constant deep level of involvement in their activity. The resources in each area also need to be plentiful and engaging.

Observations

All observations made of the children must be based on quality interactions between children or children and practitioners. They must include any teaching that has taken place or progress that a child or group of children have made. All practitioners are responsible for highlighting progress in observations. Emphasis is highly placed on using 'I wonder...' statements i.e. 'I wonder if...', 'I wonder what...', 'I wonder how...'. We feel that this approach to open-ended questioning is a lot less pressurising and allows the children to open up more readily.

Learning through continuous provision - information for parents & carers about how young children and how we support and develop a lifelong love of learning

Learning through continuous provision – painting and colour mixing

Painting and colour mixing supports children's personal, social and emotional development by providing opportunities to show curiosity, develop new skills, confidence, autonomy and to make choices. Painting and colour mixing assists children's developing communication, language and literacy as children vocalise, make sounds and talk about what they are doing and also collaborating with others. Children will sometimes negotiate as they paint on a large scale together and talk about their ideas. When learning about mixing colours, children will need to listen carefully and follow instructions, and as their competence develops they may talk about what they are doing and what they observe. Painting with fingers, feet, hands and brushes enables children to make marks and to talk about the different marks and what they stand for. Children can use brushes and tools with increasing control, making lines and circles and starting to draw both letter-like shapes and conventional letters.

Children can develop their problem-solving, reasoning and mathematical skills by exploring quantity as they paint, covering spaces and making shapes. They may paint an intended number of objects and count these, and represent size and/or position in their paintings.



When mixing colours children need to solve problems involving quantity in order to make the colour they want. Painting and colour-mixing are also contexts for children to expand their understanding of the world, exploring materials (paint, brushes and other tools, paper and other materials to paint on) with all their senses. Whilst painting, children can observe changes, including how the paper becomes damp, how paint behaves when it is thicker and thinner, how different techniques of applying paint have different results, and how colours can change when mixed together.

Children's physical development is enhanced by opportunities to develop large and small motor skills and hand-eye co-ordination using their whole body, hands, feet, fingers, and tools including brushes. Creative development is also supported as children enjoy and respond to experiences by painting, enjoying the texture of the paint and the paper, making different types of movements, shapes and representations on large and small scales and differentiating and mixing colours.

Learning through continuous provision – block play

Children need many opportunities to become competent in their block play in order to master, control and practice their skills. Gradually, through exploration and interaction, children explore the properties of each of the different blocks, noticing their similarities and differences.

Block play encourages collaboration, co-operation and conversation: building together, and helping each other to lift heavy blocks. Block play can also support and extend stories (for example, using blocks to retell the story of the Three Billy Goats Gruff) and interaction with non-fiction books (for example: information texts about buildings).

Block play enables children's personal, social and emotional development by providing opportunities for making independent choices, sustaining interest and involvement for increasing periods of time, and collaborating with others.

Whilst using the blocks, children can develop their communication, language and literacy as they discuss ideas with each other, talk about what they want to do, listen to the ideas of others, and use language to describe size and position.

Children can also refer to books about building and structures whilst taking part in block play, and they can record their constructions by drawing and making marks. Block play supports the development of children's mathematical skills by providing opportunities to count for a purpose and use the language of quantity and size (for example: more, less, longer, shorter).

Children gain direct experience of the properties of shapes, how to describe shapes, how to use the correct mathematical terms to describe shapes, and how the different blocks fit together. Both building with blocks and tidying up at the end provide opportunities to sort blocks by their properties and sizes. Block play enables children to develop solutions to problems, for example balancing different shapes in a structure or finding the right shaped block.

Children can develop their understanding of the world by exploring the shape, texture and smell of the blocks at first, and finding out how to build different types of structures and how to make them stable. Physical development is enhanced because children develop their gross motor skills by picking up and moving the blocks (sometimes needing to work with others to move the largest hollow blocks), and also their fine motor skills to position and manipulate smaller blocks precisely.

Children's creative development is fostered by the open-ended nature of the blocks, allowing them to create many different types of structures, explore ideas and use their imagination. Block play can be linked with small world play, with children developing stories around their constructions (For example: princes and princesses in a castle).

Learning through continuous provision – mark making

Emergent mark making helps children's personal, social and emotional development by providing opportunities for making choices, sustaining interest and involvement for increasing periods of time, and collaborating with others. Children often use drawing, mark-making and writing as a context to talk about their home and family, and books with photos can enhance children's sense of their own community, family, and personal history. As children become more able to form letters, especially to write their own names, they feel a sense of pride in achieving a very complex skill.



Early writing develops communication, language and literacy as children begin to use marks, circles and lines, letter-type shapes and finally correctly formed letters to represent words and sounds. Emergent writing supports the development of children's mathematical skills by providing opportunities to make marks to represent numbers, and eventually, be able to write some numbers correctly.

Children can also develop their understanding of the world, using different tools to make marks and also using ICT for early writing and illustrations.

Physical development is supported as children learn to use a range of tools to make marks, both on large and small scales, and gain increasing control and co-ordination through practice and perseverance.

Children's expressive art and design skills are enhanced as children experiment with making up symbols and explaining how this stand for other things, and experiment with shapes, colours and forms (for example: enclosures, grids) in their mark-making, using different media and types of paper. Children can talk about their writing, explaining the meaning and reflecting on what they have done.

Learning through continuous provision – imaginative role play

Role play enhances children's personal, social and emotional development by providing opportunities for playing with others, using developing social and communication skills, for developing autonomy, and sometimes sustaining involvement for long periods of time.. Through role play children can explore other people's points of views and respond to the feelings and wishes of others. Imaginary play can also be a medium for children to explore their life experiences of both happy and sad emotions.

In role play children develop their communication, language and literacy as they talk about what they are doing, developing conversations, taking turns, negotiating and listening to the ideas of others to imagine and create roles and scenarios. Role play offers children a context for making marks and emergent writing (for example: writing notes and lists in the ticket office, or estate agency), and an opportunity for emergent reading, browsing magazines, recipe books and other texts in the home area.

Children develop their mathematical skills by exploring size, placement and quantities – which clothes fit which dolls, for example, setting the table, and hanging up dressing-up clothes. In role play children can use numbers for example: counting the number of people at the table and calculating how many plates are required. It can provide a context for children to expand their understanding of the world, as they imagine different events and explore different roles and jobs.

Role play supports physical development as imaginary play outdoors can involve running and climbing, and inside by developing fine motor skills to dress babies, put on dressing-up clothes and put home-corner items in and out of baskets and cupboards.

Children's expressive art and design is supported as they develop their imagination by imitating and recreating what they know about adults and other children. Imaginary play helps children to devise and act out storylines, put together sequences of movements, develop ideas with others and enhance dialogue.

Learning through continuous provision – open ended materials/loose parts

When it comes to materials, children perceive the world differently from adults. Humble everyday items such as a sheet hanging out to dry can have infinite possibilities. Children need materials and opportunities to apply their own logic. The best resources for open-ended play are often simple and ambiguous. According to Margaret McMillan, "Most of the best opportunities for achievement lie in the domain of free play, with access to varied materials." These materials need not be complicated or fancy. Sophisticated resources tend to thwart true play; children often become bored with prescribed games or mesmerized by electronic paraphernalia. All children have latent curiosity and imagination; once these are stimulated, each experience suggests another. Ideas multiply, confidence grows, and creative play becomes self-perpetuating.



Learning through continuous provision – malleable materials

Playing with malleable materials supports children's personal, social and emotional development by providing opportunities to explore materials, develop skills in using tools and manipulating materials, and develop confidence and autonomy. Malleable materials provide a context for children's developing communication, language and literacy as they talk about what they are doing and develop ideas with others.

Children's mathematical skills are developed through exploring quantities and how a large amount of a material can be split into smaller amounts, and by having real problems to solve around quantity (sharing play dough out fairly, for example) and number (for example: checking the number of people at the table and the number of tools required to share). Using shape cutters and other tools allows children to develop their understanding of shapes and their names. Children can count the number of items they have made and know how groups change in quantity when items are added or taken away.

Children can develop their understanding of the world, exploring materials with their senses and finding out about how actions have effects (rolling, squashing etc.) and how materials can be changed (for example: by adding water to the clay).

Children can use tools for a purpose, also helping their physical development as they manipulate materials in different ways with fingers, hands and feet, and use tools which develop fine motor skills and hand-eye co-ordination. Sensory exploration can help children to feel calm.

Children's expressive art and design skills are supported as they develop a "feel" for different textures and materials, and use malleable materials to make objects according to their ideas and plans, and as representations in imaginative play (for example: making animals out of play dough and playing with them). Children can develop ideas and plans, and reflect on how pleased they are with the results of what they have made and what they might do differently next time.

Learning through continuous provision – recycled materials

Model-making supports children's personal, social and emotional development by providing opportunities to make choices, show curiosity, develop new skills and confidence and autonomy, make choices and sometimes become involved for long periods of time.

Children's communication, language and literacy development is supported as children vocalise and talk about what they are doing and collaborate with others. Children will sometimes need to listen carefully and follow instructions in order to learn new skills and to work safely. Children can develop their mathematical skills by exploring size and shape as they select materials, sometimes counting and sorting by size or properties, and experiment with joining materials together. Many problems have to be solved such as applying the right quantity of glue or cutting off the right amount of sellotape. Children can also gain experience of fitting shapes together.

Modelling provides a context for children to expand their understanding of the world, exploring the properties of materials (for example: what sticks and what does not). Children can explore cause-effect relationships (for example learning how to select the right tool for the job, or the right material to stick items together). Physical development is enhanced with opportunities to develop large and small motor skills and hand-eye co-ordination. Creative development is supported by the use of imagination to create objects, sometimes talking through their ideas and plans and reflecting on the final product. Children can explore materials, shapes and colours in two and three dimensions and make props out of resources to support their imaginative play.

Learning through continuous provision – music, movement & dance

Music, movement and dance supports children's personal, social and emotional development by providing opportunities to explore and respond to the environment and music, sometimes individually but often with others. Music, movement and dance also help children's developing communication, language and literacy as they vocalise, make sounds and talk about what they are doing and collaborate with others. Children will sometimes negotiate and talk about their ideas. They may move and dance in response to favourite rhymes and songs, following rhythms and action-words.



Children can develop their mathematical skills by exploring space as they move, having first-hand experiences of being inside, on top, underneath etc. Action rhymes and dances can involve counting and responding to concepts of large and small, fitting-in or being too big.

Children can increase their understanding of the world by exploring different types of materials.

Physical development is enhanced with opportunities to develop large and small motor skills, gradually moving in ways which are more controlled, including stopping and starting, balancing and holding positions, going backwards and forwards, jumping on and off. Children gain skills in negotiating space and objects, moving spontaneously and in response to music, moving freely with pleasure in a range of ways, including slithering, shuffling, rolling, crawling, walking, running, jumping, skipping, sliding and hopping.

Movement can express feelings and represent ideas to support expressive art and design as they enjoy moving and exploring spaces and their bodies, sometimes imitating actions in sequence or expressing themselves freely. Children might talk about their intentions and describe their movements. They can move in response to music and rhythms, showing personal preference.

Learning through continuous provision – sand and water

Sand and water enhance children's personal, social and emotional development by being not only interesting but also calming materials to play with either on your own, alongside others or collaboratively. Children can explore with enjoyment and can sustain involvement for periods of time, developing their confidence and skills. Sand and water play also helps children's developing communication, language and literacy as they vocalise, make sounds and/or talk about what they are doing and collaborate with others by negotiating and sharing ideas. Sand and water can provide a context for pretend imaginary play (for example: making cakes with the sand, playing with small world equipment in the water) which enables children to develop narratives and extend their experiences and ideas through play. Children can make marks in sand using their fingers and using tools, also supporting their emergent writing.

Children can develop their maths by exploring capacity as they fill and empty different sized containers. Sand and water provide a first-hand experience of dividing a large quantity of a material into smaller amounts, and a context for counting (for example: the number of pretend cakes), matching (giving one cake to each person), comparing sizes (different-sized sandcastles) and weights (small and large containers of sand/water).

Children can increase their understanding of the world by exploring these natural materials and how they can be changed, for example how adding water changes the properties of sand, and that this is a reversible change as the sand will dry out again, and how water is used to wash materials. Physical development is enhanced by opportunities to develop large and small motor skills, from picking up big heavy buckets and containers to using tiny teaspoons in the sand or pouring with care from one container to another. Children can use tools (for example: jugs in the water tray and spades in the sand) which develop manipulation of materials to achieve the results they want and also developing eye-hand co-ordination.

Expressive art and design development is improved as children use their senses to connect with natural materials (for example: using sand to make models, exploring textures and sometimes adding marks and decorations).

Learning through continuous provision – book area

Books support children's personal, social and emotional development from the very earliest stages by providing a context for snuggling in with an adult, making choices and developing preferences (for example: having a favourite story or book) whilst also enjoying the feeling of belonging by joining in with others. Well organised book areas enable children to select books independently and also give children a sense of identity by reflecting and celebrating our cultural diversity.

Whilst enjoying books and literature, children can develop their communication, language and literacy by talking about the pictures and illustrations, joining in with repeated refrains, and talking for extended periods about pictures, characters and the main events of the story and developing vocabulary.



Books support language for thinking, wondering why and how things happen in stories, and imagining how characters might feel which enriches role play and small world play. Books and rhymes help children to become active listeners, tuning into and delighting in different sounds like rhymes or individual letter sounds, and being able to sustain and enjoy listening over periods of time. Books, leaflets, posters and computer programmes can all give children additional information whilst they are engaged in other experiences, like block play or finding out about different insects in the garden.

Books and rhymes help children to develop their mathematics by providing opportunities to join in with counting and number rhymes, and to count as part of their enjoyment of a story. Children can learn to recognise numbers in books and identify patterns and shapes in illustrations and photographs.

Children can also develop their understanding of the world through books: nursery-made books enable children to reflect on, talk about and celebrate their earlier experiences and think about the past, the seasons, and their own growth and change. Books also help children to widen their knowledge (for example: by showing pictures of animals they are unlikely to see first-hand).

Holding books and turning pages with care helps children's physical development. Children's expressive art and design is supported as books, rhymes and stories enrich pretend play, and children can enjoy and recreate performances by remembering and saying or singing rhymes and refrains from books.

Learning through continuous provision - technology

Children growing up today are immersed in new technologies. In the home, going shopping, at the doctors and in the street - technology is embedded in children's everyday experiences sometimes to the point where it is almost invisible to them. As part of some of their first activities, early technology experiences will include push button activities, remote control devices, musical keyboards, televisions, cash registers, microwave ovens, tills, scanners and interactive books, as well as computers, tablets and phones. Forever mindful of the recommended times for screen viewing for children of this age group and for children to be sometimes screen free, engagement with technology achieves the best outcomes for young children when it is not a solitary, isolated encounter but enhanced by supported interaction with adults and collaboration with peers. We have a range of resources such as the Beebots, remote controlled vehicles, plasma tv and Apple Mac. We promote the use of technology in a co-operative activity shared with another child or an adult that involves doing things together and giving opportunities to take turns. The receiving of instructions and modelling provides opportunity for talking and listening together -explaining, confirming, elaborating and inspires imagination. Technology encourages further investigation and exploration challenge and encourages solving problem. The range of skills developed are understanding technology, programming, digital literacy and E Safety.

Learning through food preparation / cooking

Children can engage in tasting, knowing the names of different foods, cutting and holding them. Simple cooking ingredients are combined together for the experience of mixing and transformation (for example: adding water to flour and making a sticky mixture).

Cooking is an accessible way for children to find out about different cultures and traditions, and develop positive attitudes about diversity. By taking part in preparing and clearing up after meals, children have a strong experience of living in a community, sharing out work and making a positive contribution to the smooth running of the day.

Cooking helps children's personal, social and emotional development by providing opportunities for exploration, developing skills, confidence and autonomy. It encourages levels of involvement as children wait to mix ingredients together, and to watch as ingredients change during the cooking process. Cooking can sometimes be difficult, so children feel a sense of pride and satisfaction when they eat and share what they have made. Children are encouraged to follow a recipe, selecting ingredients and tools independently.

Cooking supports children's developing communication, language and literacy as children talk about what they are doing and collaborate with others.



Children will often have to follow precise instructions from adults, and use talk to organise, order and clarify what they are doing. Whilst following recipes children are learning how to select and retrieve information from books.

Children develop their mathematical skills by finding out about quantity, starting with ideas of “more”, “a lot”, and over time developing more sophisticated ideas of exact measurement (of quantity, weight, size and time). Cooking presents a real context for the use of number (for example: counting out the spoons of sugar, reading a number in a recipe, or placing muffin mixture into cases to experience division and one-to-one correspondence.)

Through preparing and eating food, children can find out about other cultures and traditions. Whilst cooking, children can observe materials closely and explore them with all their senses, and talk about what they see and how things change. They gain first-hand experience of cause-effect relationships, and observe which changes are one-way and which are reversible (you can melt ice, but can't get the flour and butter back from a cake that has been cooked). Cooking allows children to use tools for a purpose, supporting physical development whilst also learning about keeping safe whilst experiencing risks (for example: cutting with sharp knives). Children's expressive art and design is supported as children develop their own ideas and tastes in cooking and can then talk about and evaluate what they have done.

Learning through continuous provision – outdoor play

Outdoor play helps children's personal, social and emotional development by providing opportunities for exploring the environment with interest, finding and enjoying new features, developing skills, confidence and independence. The outdoor environment allows large-scale experiences which encourage children to link up with others and work collaboratively, and by using bikes and other equipment children learn about how to share resources and also to be appropriately assertive at times.

Outdoor play supports children's developing communication, language and literacy as they talk about what they are doing and collaborate with others. The environment is rich in different shapes and textures to observe, identify and enjoy. There are many different materials to enjoy putting in and tipping out of containers. Whilst climbing, running and crawling, children experience being in, out, under and over, and can develop their understanding and use of positional language. The outdoor area is also a context for children to expand their understanding of the world, exploring the greater space and number of materials, sometimes focusing on specific features or processes and observing actions and their effects. Whilst outside children can find out and talk about the features of different living things, notice and talk about patterns and become aware of change (immediate for example: what happens when you add water to soil, and also over time: observing that leaves fall in autumn).

The outdoor area also provides a space for large-scale construction, making dens, and using the water hose to explore forces and structures. Children can use tools for a variety of purposes, supporting their physical development and learning about keeping safe whilst also experiencing risks. They can experiment with large-scale movements, enjoying their increasing mobility, delighting in changes of perspective as they walk and climb. Children develop their awareness of negotiating space, making, developing and sequencing movements, and using a range of ways to move around like slithering, shuffling, rolling, crawling, walking, running, jumping, skipping, sliding and hopping. Children have opportunities to change speed and direction, go backwards and forwards, negotiate equipment, climb up and also crawl into structures, and balance. Children can move to express their feelings and ideas, and to represent ideas (for example: being a superhero). They can gain skills in using bats, rackets and balls. Refining the skills of independently putting on and taking off all-weather clothes and boots, which develops fine small-motor skills and children's autonomy.

Children's expressive art and design is supported as children respond in different ways to the rich textures, sounds, smells and things to see outside in different ways. They may explore and represent what they see, think and feel through drawing, painting, making music and dance.

Learning through the local environment

It is important that the school & centre feels connected to its community and that if we were not here local people would miss us. Children are regularly taken out on trips around the local and wider environment. Through local visits, children learn about shops and parks, where different types of food are bought, where the park and woods are in relation to school, and about local landmarks.



Children learn about using money to buy items and travel tickets, and perhaps more importantly, about staying safe by the road, canal and/or railway track. Trips enhance children's personal, social and emotional development by providing opportunities for exploring the environment with interest, finding and enjoying new features. Going out of school helps children to learn about staying safe around people they do not know, and also around traffic. Children can learn to manage changes in routine, to feel safe in new situations and adapt their behaviour.

Going out of the school & centre also supports children's developing communication, language and literacy as they talk about what they are doing, what they can see and collaborate with others. Often there is an explosion of language as children see cars, trains, pets and shops and talk in response. Children will often have to follow instructions from an adult, listening carefully. Taking sketch pads provides an opportunity for emergent writing; looking at and talking about print in the environment, including street signs, shop and car logos supports early reading. Children can develop their mathematical skills in large open spaces by locating themselves relative to other children and adults, using the language of position. Train and bus journeys provide opportunities to recognise numbers for a purpose and to count, and to follow maps and routes using the language of position and direction. There are many opportunities to respond to and recognise different shapes in the environment, and to observe symmetry. Trips out help children to expand their understanding of the world, exploring large unfamiliar areas and observing change associated with the seasons. Children may talk about what they see and the features of different environments. Travelling by bus/train provides a context for discussion about how things work and children can operate ICT equipment (for example: digital camera, pelican crossing, and tape recorder).

Children's physical development is supported by opportunities to explore movement as they develop their strength and stamina by walking for longer distances. Children's expressive art and design is supported as children respond in different ways to the rich textures, sounds, smells and things they see, which will often enhance their pretend play back in nursery, especially when adults resource this (for example: by creating a role-play train station).

Things to do at home

Be understood!

Here are some ways to help a child understand what you say...

- ✓ Reduce background noise and distractions e.g. no TV, radios, or phones Work/play in small groups or one-to-one ...
- ✓ Make sure you look at your child and you have their attention
- ✓ Talk about things the child can see and touch – the "here and now" Repeat words over and over
- ✓ Use short, simple sentences
- ✓ Use pictures, objects, demonstration and natural gestures to show what you are talking about
- ✓ Wait! Give the child time to think and respond
- ✓ Try and make sure the day has a regular routine - this helps a child to gain confidence



Top tips for talking

- ✓ Try not to ask too many questions - Instead of saying 'what did you do at nursery today?' Use a comment like 'Nice painting' or give a choice like 'I wonder did you play in the garden or inside today?'
- ✓ Have fun with songs and nursery rhymes, especially those with actions. Children love to hear the same songs over and over again.
- ✓ Encourage your child to have some quiet time and listen to different sounds e.g. Aeroplanes, animals, the postman, microwave.
- ✓ Gain your child's attention when you want to talk together e.g. call their name, give eye contact, get down to their level.
- ✓ Children learn speech sounds gradually – saying the whole word back to a child is the best way to encourage language rather than correcting them e.g. They say 'Bish', you could say 'Yes a fish'
- ✓ Increase your child's vocabulary by giving choices, e.g. 'do you want milk or juice?' 'Would you like to put on your scarf or hat?'
- ✓ Talk about everyday activities as they are happening, like putting away the shopping, bathing, washing the car, waiting for the bus.
- ✓ Take turns to speak, listen carefully and give your child time to finish.
- ✓ Help your child to use more words by adding on to what is already said e.g. If your child says 'juice' you could say 'more juice', 'or 'juice gone'
- ✓ Turn off the TV/phone and try and have a special time (10 mins) with your child each day to play with toys and read books etc. Please help yourself to the wide range of books available from our lending library

Sing a song

- ✓ Children love music and often want to hear their favourite songs over and over. The tune and repetition help children to learn and remember a new word which increases their auditory memory.
- ✓ Don't worry if you're not musical your child really doesn't mind!
- ✓ Sing at a slower pace, so that your child has a chance to really hear the words
- ✓ Sing songs about your child's everyday experiences e.g. 'Twinkle, twinkle' as you look at the stars or 'Wheels on the bus' as you ride on a bus
- ✓ You and your child can enjoy different types of music - not just children's songs but classical and popular music too
- ✓ Make up silly songs together changing the words e.g. Old McDonald had a Zoo! (instead of farm)
- ✓ Add simple actions to the song as they will help your child learn what the words mean e.g. 'Ring a roses all fall down' or 'This is the way we wash our hands'
- ✓ Use props as you sing e.g. Plastic farm animals for 'Old McDonald had a farm' or a doll for Miss Polly had a dolly
- ✓ Try leaving a gap and see if your child can fill in the missing word e.g. Head, shoulders, knees and(toes)
- ✓ Have fun!!

Developing early maths through games & activities

Maths is everywhere in the home. With the support of parents, children can grasp many mathematical concepts through their play and will develop their skills to:

- know and understand early maths language of measurement, shapes, spaces, positions, early numbers, order & patterns
- know the sequence of numbers
- begin to understand positional words, e.g. in, on, outside
- show an awareness of time



- be aware of shapes in their environment
- be aware of 1-to-1 correspondence
- acquire new vocabulary
- learn number rhymes and songs, e.g. one, two, buckle my shoe etc.
- be aware of conservation

Young children have many mathematical experiences in their home environment. For example:

- ✓ they learn about money as they go shopping with parents
- ✓ become aware of numbers as they count the stairs to bed
- ✓ start to understand the concept of time as they become familiar with the routine of their day – wash, dress, breakfast etc.

A child's daily life offers many practical opportunities to learn about number, shape, space, sorting and matching. For instance:

- ✓ setting places at the table – a cup for me, a cup for you
- ✓ playing with water (capacity and vocabulary of full / empty / half-full)
- ✓ helping to sort the washing, matching socks, big shirt / small shirt
- ✓ tidying up – putting similar items together
- ✓ matching lids to saucepans the list is endless

Number

- ✓ Count food items at snack time (e.g., 5 crackers, 20 raisins, 10 carrots). Or ask your child to help you set the table – "how many plates do we need?"
- ✓ Use a calendar to count down the days to a birthday or special holiday. Help your child see the connection between a numeral like "5," the word "five," and five days on the calendar.
- ✓ Practice simple addition and subtraction using small toys and blocks.
- ✓ Play simple board games where your child moves a game piece from one position to the next.

Shape, space & measure

- ✓ Support children's understanding of labelling shapes in the environment e.g. wheels on cars (circles), windows (rectangle).
- ✓ Arrange dough cutters in patterns on the table and introduce repeating patterns such as star-circle-star-circle.
- ✓ Building with construction such as Lego, Duplo where children have to estimate the size and shape of objects
- ✓ Bake together with your child helping you measure/weigh ingredients for a recipe
- ✓ Measure your child's height every month or so, showing how you use a tape measure (or a non-standard measure).
- ✓ Mark their height on a "growth chart" or a door frame. Do the same with any siblings. Help your child compare their height to previous months and also to siblings' heights.
- ✓ Play games where you direct your child to jump forward and back, to run far from you or stay nearby.
- ✓ Provide boxes and materials of different shapes and sizes to compare weight and quantity • Look at the differences between wet and dry as a means of looking at weights

Maths language

- ✓ Talk through games and daily activities that involve math concepts.
- ✓ Help introduce express comparisons like more than/less than, bigger/smaller, and near/far.
- ✓ Use songs with corresponding movements to teach concepts like in and out, up and down, and round and round.
- ✓ Introduce positional language such as under, over, next to, behind



Books and Rhymes

- ✓ Enjoy stories and rhymes with your child that has a mathematical element, e.g. "One-two, Buckle my Shoe". This can also help to develop literacy skills by showing your child that the print reads from left to right.
- ✓ Let your child count out items in the books – how many animals are on the page, how many items are blue. Using rhymes can also help develop your child's awareness of sequencing.

Nature

- ✓ By planting seeds, you can help to develop your child's understanding of time and the life cycle of plants. Watch as the plants grow and even measure your plant – develop language such as taller.
- ✓ Introduce the concept of the different seasons of the year and plant different items at different times of the year to compare colours, flowers, smells.

Early Maths - Tips for Parents

Use maths words

...such as more, less, none, big, small, short, tall, same, different, longer, shorter, heavy, light, etc.

Count...Anything!

- Pegs, cutlery, people, shoes...
- Steps as you climb them and blocks as you stack them
- Flowers on the bush and petals on the flower
- Food - ask how many grapes? How many smarties?
- Collections - leaves, pine cones, shells
- Create a number line on the cement with chalk and jump on the numbers
- Stick numbers on blocks and stack them in numerical order
- Count the toys on the floor - count backwards as you pack them away

Sort things/classify

- Coloured pegs, shells by shape/size/colour, cutlery, buttons, coins, blocks....anything
- Fruit (either plastic or after you do the shopping)
- Clothes as you are folding and match the socks

Shape recognition

- Go for a walk and find all the triangles, or circles, or squares, etc.
- Draw shapes in sand, with finger paint, on the window with shaving cream (Warning - some contain peanut oil), make with play dough, write in a tray of salt, etc. (You can use these also for writing numbers).
- Make up games - race to a triangle, or match a triangle to something in the house and tack it on with Blu-tack...see how many triangles you can find. Label some shapes around the house.

Subitising (recognising instantly an amount in a group)

- Play with dominoes (there are simple domino games) and games using dice
- Use smarties to make numbers like the dots on dice.

Learning patterns

- Create patterns using anything - smarties, buttons, Lego, green and red grapes, cutlery, etc.
- Do musical patterns - clap soft, clap loud, clap soft; two different keys on a piano; shake, bang, shake, etc. Saucepans and Tupperware are great for this.
- Do physical patterns - hop, jump, hop,

As children get good at a simple, AB pattern (shake, bang, shake, bang), make it more complicated like ABBA (shake, bang, bang, shake) or ABC (shake, bang, tap, shake, bang, tap).

Colour

- Have a theme day - e.g. "Red Day" and make red jelly, wear red clothes, use red play dough, etc.
- Make a colour table display - put together all the red toys, pegs, buttons, etc. - Make sure you photograph each display to create your own book of colour.

Money

- Play shops - use old kitchen boxes and bottles for the shop.
- Let children purchase small things themselves when shopping, look at the price, talk about how much money they will need, note change.

