



A REGISTERED CHARITY, Charity Number 1026054
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Learning Strategy

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) stresses the importance of the Characteristics of Effective Learning:

1. Playing and exploring - engagement
2. Active learning - motivation
3. Creating and thinking critically – thinking

These describe the ways in which children engage with the environment and other people and underpin their learning across all 7 Areas of Learning and Development, which are:

The 3 Prime Areas are:

1. Personal, Social and Emotional Development
2. Communication and Language
3. Physical Development

The 4 Specific Areas are:

1. Literacy
2. Mathematics
3. Understanding the World
4. Expressive Arts and Design

This document describes our learning strategy according to these 7 areas, although it should be understood that they are all inter-connected. Staff use ongoing observations to monitor individual children's progress and plan appropriate, challenging experiences in order to support each child's learning and development in the areas of learning. The 3 prime areas are seen as the priorities, especially during a child's first year at the Pre-School. Partnerships with parents help to give parents an understanding of how they can support their child at home.

Prime Areas

1. Personal, Social and Emotional Development

Making relationships

The key person system helps ensure that one particular member of staff gets to know each child from the start. Each child spends time with a small group of children every day, led by their key person, which helps them get to know a small number of their peers. Staff support children in beginning to develop friendships through encouraging joint play in the home corner and the use of turn-taking games and activities, as well as collaborative activities, such as ring games and use of the parachute.

Self-confidence and self-awareness

Children are encouraged to express their ideas and feelings and are provided with lots of opportunities for making choices at pre-school, such as whether to play inside or outside, what to play with and what to eat at snack time. We encourage children to become independent and give them responsibility for tasks such as tidying up and completing the outside risk assessment. We celebrate not only children's achievements but their efforts.

Managing feelings and behaviour

We provide a range of activities for children to learn to recognise and name feelings, such as books and stories, use of the feelings puppets and talking with children about how they feel. Positive behaviour is affirmed by praise, the use of stickers and the use of our 'Rights Respecting Board', where acts of kindness and helpfulness are celebrated. We make use of sand timers to help children understand about waiting for their turn for playthings. Where negative behaviour occurs, children are encouraged to think about what they have done and how they could make amends. Where another child has been hurt, we help children to think about the feelings of the other child.

2. Communication and Language

Listening and Attention

Small group activities such as 'Show and Tell' are used to help children learn to listen to others and staff use strategies to encourage listening and attention during large group times, such as the 'good listening' flag. We provide opportunities for stories, songs and rhymes, particularly those with actions and repeated refrains, in order to support children's development of listening and attention. Games, such as 'Simon says', 'Animal sounds lotto' and 'Guess the sound' are all utilised. Children are encouraged to play percussion instruments in time to music and songs in order to help their ability to hear and differentiate sounds. Staff also capitalise on opportunities to listen to sounds in the environment.

Understanding

Staff aim to use 'open-ended' questions with the children, particularly questions which require children to explain effects and predict outcomes. Children are encouraged to follow instructions, which involve a sequence of events, and answer questions, which involve 'how' and 'why' things happen. We aim to provide experiences, resources and books which extend children's vocabulary.

Speaking

We provide children with plenty of opportunities to have conversations with the staff, as well as with each other. We help children to learn about taking turns in conversation through turn-taking games. All activities can provide opportunities for talking, but role-play is a particularly rich one, so the home-corner is regularly changed to reflect different themes. Children are encouraged to learn new vocabulary, but where children pronounce or use words incorrectly, staff model the correct use.

3. Physical Development

Moving and Handling

Our outside area provides valuable opportunities for children to develop their gross motor skills. Children are encouraged to access resources such as bicycles, cars and scooters and equipment such as the climbing frame, slide and trampoline, as well as running and chasing games and ball games, all of which support their physical development and sense of well-being. Our regular Music and Movement sessions involve exercising and dancing to music and active nursery rhymes. During PE sessions, children are encouraged to use apparatus in the school hall, as well as take part in exercises, races and active games. We provide a myriad of resources and activities to teach children to handle equipment and tools efficiently and safely, in support of their fine motor skills.

Health and Self-care

Our curriculum addresses specific topics, such as the importance of exercise, eating a healthy diet, hand-washing, oral health and road safety. During free-play, children are encouraged to manage risks safely, according to their stage of development, and all children experience Forest School in their final term. Staff support children to develop the skills needed in order to manage their own toileting, dress themselves independently and manage their own lunch.

Specific Areas

1. Literacy

Pre-reading skills are developed through supporting children as they engage with stories, books, puppets, sequencing puzzles and games. Children's understanding of words, letters and sounds is encouraged with name cards, labels and our 'letter sound of the week', with a bag of items which begin with that letter. Awareness of rhythm and rhyming is encouraged through weekly 'Music and Movement' sessions, frequent opportunities for singing and using musical instruments and learning a different nursery rhyme each week. Good quality books are always available for children to look at independently during free-play, or be read to by staff, and every child is encouraged to look at a book during an allocated time during each session. We ensure that the whole group has story-time every morning and afternoon. Parents are encouraged to read to their children using our lending library.

Pre-writing skills are encouraged through developing children's fine motor skills, during activities such as art and craft, playdough, cookery and construction. Opportunities for mark-making are planned inside and outside, especially through role-play.

2. Mathematics

Numbers

We use lots of different activities in the pre-school to develop children's numeracy such as number songs, books and stories involving numbers, board games, computer games and imaginative play resources like play money. We recognise the importance of children seeing numbers being used in real-life situations, so staff will encourage them to engage in activities, such as counting the number of stairs, sharing out cups at snack time, using mathematical language, solving simple problems and estimating.

Shape, space and measure

We provide many opportunities to help children develop their understanding of shape, space and measure, through staff talking to them about simple mathematical concepts, while the children play with resources, such as sand and water, construction toys, puzzles and weighing scales, . We also recognise the importance of letting children hear us talk about mathematical terminology and concepts in everyday life, such as noticing shapes and patterns in the environment and talking about concepts such as distance and time.

3. Understanding the World

People and communities

Children are encouraged to talk about their family and home life, as well as to understand how their friends' lives are different from theirs and to learn about other people in the community, such as health and safety professionals. We believe it is important for children to learn about different cultures and develop respect for people with different beliefs and experiences to those of their own family. We try to do this in a meaningful way for the children, not simply celebrating diverse festivals, but engaging in activities such as the Shoebox Appeal and our annual "no running-water day", where the children experience what it would be like to rely on fetching water from a well.

The world

In order to encourage children to be inquisitive and learn and talk about the world around them, we have a wide range of resources such as magnets, magnifying glasses, small world equipment and our outdoors mud kitchen. Practical activities like cooking and gardening provide great learning contexts for how things change over time. Each year we hold a life cycle project: one year we hatch caterpillars and the following year we hatch chicken eggs. Forest School provides invaluable learning experiences for the children in their final term.

Technology

We aim to provide children with a good range of computer software, which supports their development across the areas of learning. As they progress, children are encouraged to develop their mouse-control, as this is a useful skill, which they will use at school. Other electronic devices include a tablet, mini voice recorders, torches, remote controlled cars and trains, a 'Bee-bot' and a CD player and children are encouraged to become independent users of technology. The older children are all taught how to programme our 'Cubetto', which gives them opportunities to develop their coding skills.

4. Expressive Arts and Design

Exploring and using media and materials

We encourage children to explore and experiment with a broad range of equipment and techniques. These include a large range of mark-making equipment, printing materials and tools, sensory and textured materials, malleable modelling materials, materials for junk modelling and decorative materials for collage-work. Our outside area offers large construction equipment and a mud-kitchen and we also introduce children to a wide range of musical-based activities. Our focus is on the *process* of creativity, rather than the end result.

Being imaginative

We provide a wide range of contexts in which children can develop their imaginations. Small world play, puppetry, dressing up and the home corner provide great opportunities for children to develop their imaginative skills, on their own and in collaboration with others. Children are encouraged to plan and create their own artwork, constructions and music.