



Early Years Foundation Stage Policy



'Wonder is the beginning of wisdom.'

Maltby Lilly Hall Academy

Reviewed October 2016 – S.Searson

POLICY STATEMENT

This document outlines the philosophy, aims and principles of early years teaching and learning in The Woodlands Early Years Foundation Stage at Maltby Lilly Hall Academy. This document underpins practice in all areas of provision.

During The Early Years Foundation Stage “Every child deserves the best possible start in life and the support that enables them to fulfil their potential. Children develop quickly in the early years and a child’s experiences between birth and age five have a major impact on their future life chances. A secure, safe and happy childhood is important in its own right. Good parenting and high quality early learning together provide the foundation children with all they need to make the most of their abilities and talents as they grow up.”

“Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage”,

Department for Education, 2012

Early childhood is the foundation on which children build the rest of their lives. At The Woodlands Early Years Foundation Stage at Maltby Lilly Hall Academy we greatly value the important role that the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) plays in laying secure foundations for future learning and development, however we also believe early childhood is valid in itself, as part of life. It is important to view the EYFS as preparation for life and not simply preparation for the next stage of education.

The EYFS is for children from birth to five years of age. The final two years of the EYFS are referred to as Foundation 1 (F1) and Foundation 2 (F2). All children begin school with a variety of experiences and learning. It is the privilege of the practitioners working in the Foundation Stage to take on the task of building upon that prior learning and experience. This is done through a holistic approach to learning, ensuring that parents/guardians,

support staff and the Foundation Stage teachers work effectively together to support children's learning and development.

AIMS

We aim to provide a broad and balanced curriculum which will enable each child to develop personally, socially, emotionally, spiritually, physically, creatively and intellectually to his/her full potential. Each child is valued as an individual and teaching and learning is based on the understanding that children develop at different rates. At The Woodlands Early Years Foundation Stage at Maltby Lilly Hall Academy we aim to:

- Provide a safe, challenging, stimulating, caring and sharing environment which is sensitive to the needs of the child, including children with additional needs.
- Provide a broad, balanced, relevant and creative curriculum that will set in place firm foundations for future learning and development.
- Provide opportunities for children to learn through planned, purposeful play in all areas of learning and development.
- Use and value what each child can do, assessing their individual needs and helping each child to progress.
 - Enable choice and decision-making, fostering independence and self-confidence.
- Work in partnership with parents/guardians and value their contributions ensuring that all children, irrespective of ethnicity, culture, religion, home language, family background, learning difficulties, disabilities, gender or ability have the opportunity to experience a challenging and enjoyable programme of learning and development.
- Provide opportunities whereby children experience a challenging and memorable learning experience.

- Provide rich experiences for all children, whatever their strengths and needs, which are inclusive.

TEACHING & LEARNING

“Teaching should not be taken to imply a ‘top down’ or formal way of working. It is a broad term that covers the many different ways in which adults help young children learn. It includes their interactions with children during planned and child-initiated play and activities: communicating and modelling language, showing, explaining, demonstrating, exploring ideas, encouraging, questioning, recalling, providing a narrative for what they are doing, facilitating and setting challenges. It takes account of the equipment adults provide and the attention given to the physical environment, as well as the structure and routines of the day that establish expectations.”

Ofsted September 2015

What Teaching Interaction Looks like in The Woodlands Early Years Foundation Stage at Maltby Lilly Hall Academy

- Modelling
- Instructing
- Modelling language
- Showing
- Explaining
- Demonstrating
- Exploring ideas
- Encouraging
- Pondering
- Recalling
- Providing a narrative for what they are doing
- Facilitating
- Setting challenges
- Suggesting

CURRICULUM

At The Woodlands Early Years Foundation Stage at Maltby Lilly Hall Academy we deliver a curriculum based on the framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage. This describes the seven areas of learning and development which “**must be implemented through planned, purposeful play.**”

The Prime Areas of Learning and Development

- Personal, Social and Emotional Development
- Physical Development
- Communication and Language

The Specific Areas of Learning and Development

- Literacy
- Mathematics
- Understanding of the World
- Expressive Arts and Design

We have a holistic approach in the Early Years and each area of learning and development is valued equally. However, it is advised that emphasis should be paid to the Prime Areas of learning and development in Foundation Stage 1 building on these vital steps in Foundation Stage 2 with more of an emphasis on the Specific Areas of learning and development.

Unique Child

“Practitioners must consider the individual needs, interests, and stage of development of each child in their care, and must use this information to plan a challenging and enjoyable experience for each child in all areas of learning and development.”

Revised EYFS 2014

The framework also states that “Practitioners must respond to each child’s emerging needs and interests, guiding their

development through warm, positive interaction.” We have a fantastic team of adults who put this into practice every day.

PHONICS

In the Foundation Stage 1 children are taught the Letters and Sounds (Phase 1) programme and when developmentally ready or at the latest the beginning of Foundation Stage 2 they begin to access the Ruth Miskin Read, Write Inc. (RWI) Phonics Programme. The phonics programmes are delivered to small groups of children on a daily basis.

PLANNING

The cycle of **observation, assessment, planning, observation** is carried out on a moment-by-moment basis. We have focus children each week (approximately 10% of the group). Some interactions and activities that occur are recorded when the cycle is complete. These records are on the ‘Learning Journeys’ for the focus children and on ‘in the moment’ planning sheets for activities in which a group have become involved.

We work in this way because ... “Babies and young children are experiencing and learning in the here and now, not storing up their questions until tomorrow or next week. It is in that moment of curiosity, puzzlement, effort or interest – the ‘teachable moment’ – that the skilful adult makes a difference. By using this cycle on a moment-by-moment basis, the adult will be always alert to individual children (observation), always thinking about what it tells us about the child’s thinking (assessment), and always ready to respond by using appropriate strategies at the right moment to support children’s well-being and learning (planning for the next moment).” From National Standards document Learning, Playing and Interacting P.22 - 23 The revised EYFS advises us to continue using this document.

We have focus children NOT focus activities. The adult goes to the child. The child is NOT called to come to the adult. We work this

way because high level involvement occurs in child initiated activity.

We use the observation cycle on a moment by moment basis. The focus children are given extra attention, but all the children are busy and learning all the time. The planning sheets are a record of activities that have occurred. It is particularly important that the adults' input is recorded. The symbol "T" indicates "adult". Adult input (**teaching**) is highlighted in yellow:- "T suggests ... encourages ... models ... asks ponders ... helps ... offers resources ... etc." The child's voice is highlighted in green.

The "planning sheets" are blank at the start of the week. They are then filled up gradually during the week starting with the child/family 'voice' at home. All adults contribute to these sheets. When possible, photos are printed and added to the records. In addition, "Wow" moments are recorded for all children as and when they occur. The 'WOW' moment recordings are observations of learning and development that evidence an individual child's PROGRESS in a particular area of the curriculum.

THREE CHARACTERISTICS OF EFFECTIVE LEARNING

(Revised EYFS) The Characteristics of Effective Learning essentially help to describe and evaluate 'how' individual children are learning and link closely to and are built upon with the whole school 'Learning Behaviours' at Maltby Lilly Hall Academy.

Playing and Exploring – do they investigate and experience things, and 'have ago'?

Learning Actively – do they concentrate and keep on trying if they encounter difficulties, and enjoy achievements?

Creating and Thinking Critically – do they have and develop their own ideas, make links between ideas, and develop strategies for doing things?

With a system of focus children, a workshop style environment and records kept on spontaneous planning sheets and learning

journeys, the children are learning effectively all the time in our Early Years Foundation Stage.

KEEPING THE BALANCE

The children initiate their own learning and the adults support and guide them to extend the learning opportunities. Throughout the year we assess and review the progress of all the children. We introduce teaching of specific skills as and when appropriate to individual children and groups of children.

The detail of our expectations for outstanding Early Years practice is set out in Anna Ephgrave's books 'The Nursery Year in Action' and 'The Reception Year in Action' The additional pages at the end of this document explain our approach in more detail.

PROGRESS & DEVELOPMENT

When children show high levels of involvement, that is when there is progress and development occurring – when the brain is at its most active. High level involvement occurs most often when children are able to pursue their own interests in an enabling environment, supported by skilful staff. Planning in the moment helps to make this possible.

AN ENABLING ENVIRONMENT

We have a workshop style environment indoors and outside. All resources are available to the children. The children select what they want to do in each area. The principle is that resources are accessible to the children and they are varied, open-ended and high quality. This gives children the opportunity to select resources to support their chosen activity. Children can choose to play and learn inside or outside all day long and can move around freely between and adults do the same.

THE ROLE OF THE ADULT

The adults are there to teach. They do this through observing and interacting. Our adults know the children very well and have a

sound understanding of child development. This ensures that the adults enhance and extend the learning at the appropriate level for each unique child.

QUALITY INTERACTIONS

The children become involved in activities of their choice. The adults observe the children carefully, join them, when appropriate, and engage in quality interactions (**teaching**) to move the learning on. Sir Michael Wilshaw says: - “Early years provision is only as good as the quality of interaction between adults and children.”

ASSESSMENT

In addition to the formative – ‘in the moment’ / ‘on the spot’ observational assessment, some of which is recorded, some of which is not, we use the electronic Early Excellence Assessment and Tracking System (EEXAT) to monitor, track and analyse each child’s individual progress and attainment across the two years they spend with us in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

At the end of Foundation Stage 2 each child’s level of development is assessed against the Early Learning Goals (EYFS Profile). The EYFS Profile summarises all of the formative assessment undertaken and makes statements about the each child’s achievements against seventeen Early Learning Goals and the three characteristics of effective learning. The characteristics of effective learning describe factors which play a central role in a child becoming an effective learner. They are vital elements of support for the transition process from the EYFS to Year 1. The characteristics of effective learning run through and underpin all seven areas of learning and development.

PARENT PARTNERSHIP

We recognise that parents/guardians are the child’s first and most enduring educators. When parents/guardians and practitioners work together in early years settings, the results have a positive

impact on the child's development. A successful partnership needs to be a two-way flow of information, knowledge, care and expertise. We aim to develop this by:

- Outlining the EYFS curriculum to parents/guardians during the new parents meeting to enable them to understand the value of supporting their child's learning at home.
- Publishing information on the school website and notice board.
- Holding meetings to outline the teaching of phonics and how to best support children's development at home.
- Operating an "open door" policy, whereby parents/guardians can come and talk to staff at anytime.
- Supporting families and staff to use and communicate through the 'Home School Diary' provided by school.
- Welcoming parents to be involved and contribute to their child's 'Learning Journey' at all times but more specifically during the focus weeks.
- Inviting parents to come to regular parents meetings about their children after the focus week when they can take home a copy of their child's learning journey and will have the knowledge to support their child in their next steps as well as to celebrate their achievements.
- Encouraging parents to share their child's 'Proud Moments' and 'Special Achievements' that contribute to the child's Learning Journey.

SEND/EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

At the Woodlands Maltby Lilly Hall Academy we aim to provide all pupils, regardless of ethnicity, culture, religion, home language, family background, learning difficulties, disabilities, gender or ability, equal access to all aspects of school life and work to ensure that every child is valued fully as an individual. Children

with Special Educational Needs will be given support as appropriate to enable them to access the curriculum. This includes children that are more able and those with specific learning difficulties and disabilities. Quality First Teaching Plans and Special Educational Needs Support Plans identify individual targets in specific areas of learning for those children who require additional support, in line with the school's Special Educational Needs Policy. The school's SENDCO/Inclusion Leader is responsible for providing additional information and advice to practitioners and parents, and for arranging external intervention and support where necessary.

HEALTH & SAFETY

Children participate in learning activities indoor and outdoor environments daily. The risk assessments for Early Years are firmly in place with key guidelines to follow. Maltby Lilly Hall Academy carry out regular official 'Site Walks' to monitor and assess the environmental risks and ensure that the policies are adhered to. Children are given the responsibility of making decisions around taking risks and keeping safe. Adults are pro-active to maintain our environment and safeguard against risk and also actively support the management of risks as they arise during learning. Please refer to 'Safeguarding Children' Policy for further information.

TRANSITION

At Maltby Lilly Hall Academy we have close links between the PVI's, Childminders and our Foundation stage setting. The Foundation Stage 1 and Foundation Stage 2 teachers meet regularly to discuss assessment and induction issues, and attend training together. Since The Woodlands operates as a 'Unit' a weekly EYFS Staff meeting (Teachers) and a weekly Phase meeting (Teachers and Teaching Assistants) is held in the 'unit' and ran by the EYFS Leader.

The Foundation Stage and Year1 teachers have worked together to make the transition from the Early Years Foundation Stage to Key Stage 1 as smooth and happy as possible.

- F2 teachers meet Year 1 teachers during the year and support effective partnership practice and training.
- They EYFS Profiles and pastoral information is passed on to year 1 teachers and discussed in July and September.
- Year 1 teachers visit F2 children in setting throughout the year and spend additional time in setting in July.
- F2 children visit Year 1 teachers in their new class in July.
- F2 children and families are invited to stay for a school meal in July.
- F2 parents are invited to a transition meeting in July.
- There is an overlap in approach and routines which is supported and valued.

MONITORING & REVIEW

This policy has been produced by the EYFS Leader Mrs S. Searson. The EYFS Leader is responsible for monitoring the implementation of the guidelines outlined in this document. The effectiveness of this policy will be monitored and evaluated by the school Principal and EYFS Leader and will be reviewed on an annual basis.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

Nursery Year in Action – 'In the Moment' – Anna Ephgrave

Reception Year in Action – 'In the Moment' – Anna Ephgrave

EEXBA Early Excellence Baseline Assessment

EEXAT Early Excellence Assessment and Tracking System

Early Years Outcomes / Development Matters

Letters and Sounds Phonics Programme

RWI Ruth Miskin Phonics Programme

www.foundation years.org.uk

www.gov.uk/early-years-foundation-stage

An enabling indoor environment

An outstanding early years' setting is a complex organisation and the environment is one piece of the jigsaw. The environment can support all children to be fully engaged in purposeful play of their own choice and interest. As with the outdoor area, the indoor area should allow for learning in all areas of development, but the two areas should not mirror each other. There are many advantages indoors that should be exploited – it is dry, with a controllable temperature and no wind. Therefore, this is the ideal place for children to be calm and quiet (and we enforce this requirement firmly and consistently), pursuing activities which require small equipment and using resources that will not survive the outdoor elements. People who visit comment on how calm and purposeful the children are; and yet no one is telling them what to do. So how is this organised? In the nursery and reception classes, the children choose where to go and what to do from the moment they arrive – they initiate their own learning and adults join them and support them in their pursuits. In many settings, the practitioners say that the children can choose what to do, but the choice is limited by what the practitioners have already selected and put on the tables. In order to support genuine choice we have a workshop setup in both the nursery and reception classes. This means that in all areas, the resources are available and accessible to the children at all times, but nothing is set out. So, therefore, the areas are clear, stocked and tidy at the start of the day: - the tables and carpet areas are free of equipment but the resources are available next to these areas. For example, a unit contains a box of playdough and resources to be used with the playdough. It is placed near a table and the children can choose whether or not to go to this area and what to do if they do go there.

When a class is organised in this way, the children are in control of their learning. They are able to select the area in which to play, the resources to use in that area and what to do with them. Obviously their choices are limited by the areas and resources available and it is therefore crucial to have appropriate areas with varied, high quality, open-ended resources. It is also vital that the areas are well stocked, tidy, clearly labelled (with picture and word) or shadowed and arranged to allow optimum access. We constantly review and reflect on the environment to see which areas are proving productive and which need altering.

Shadowing resources helps children to be independent when tidying up. The “shadows” are cut from coloured card or paper and glued to the shelf. Once the shelf is covered in ‘sticky back’ plastic, the shadowing will remain in place for several years – a task worth doing! Open shelving, is a great way to display and store resources for young children. They can see the resources easily and select the ones they want to use. This is a great improvement on trays or drawers. “Less is more” is definitely the case with indoor equipment too: - with fewer, carefully selected resources, they are well used and easy to tidy up. If the resources are carefully selected, the majority can be used all year – the children will use them differently every day.

The resources (as well as the areas) are assessed and reviewed constantly with changes made as necessary. For example, we noticed that a very large wooden house was rarely, if ever, used and we therefore removed it from the nursery classroom. In some settings, the carpet area is only in use for group times and there is another (often tiny) area for construction and small world play in another area of the class. It is more logical to place the construction toys and small world equipment around and facing onto the carpet. In that way, when it is not group time, the carpet area is still being used productively.

Another example of change was in one of the reception classes where we noticed how the workshop/creative table was always over-crowded and so we extended the area, making the table larger so that more children could access it at once

We review our provision in terms of levels of involvement. If an area or a resource is not engaging children in purposeful play, then we remove it or change it. For example, threading beads might engage a few children in nursery, but cutting fabric and sewing it to make a real bag will be far more engaging and lead to higher levels of learning. Areas that deliver the highest levels of involvement are the role play areas, creative area (including sewing), small blocks, sand, water, playdough and small world equipment (including cars and dinosaurs). With regard to role play, we ensure that there is always a “home corner” (either indoors or outside) as this is what is familiar to the children – this is where they can practise being the adults that they know (and in doing so, develop the vital life skill of empathy). Other role play is set up as and when an interest emerges.

We have ipads, digital cameras, CD players, computers and interactive white boards to support learning in our classes. We ensure that our book areas are as inviting as possible. We have cushions, puppets and props to make the experience engaging. We also have books in numerous areas of the indoor classroom – craft books in the creative area, cookery books in the role play, construction and reference books in the small world area. The children also have a ‘Learning Journey’ folder each and these are stored in low units so that the children can take them out and look at them whenever they wish.

The most valuable resource in any setting is the group of adults. We ensure that our adults receive training so that they can spot a ‘teachable moment’ while the children are engaged. The adults go to the children (they never call the children to them). They observe carefully and will “teach” through modelling, suggesting,

providing vocabulary or resources, explaining or encouraging. In this way, if a child encounters a challenge, then they will not give up. Rather they will be supported to persevere, overcome the challenge and move forward in their learning.

In summary, any area or resource can be evaluated by assessing the levels of involvement that the children display. Children display the highest levels of involvement when they are pursuing their own interests in an environment that allows them to take risks and challenge themselves in their endeavours. The physical environment needs to be well laid out and equipped with high quality, open-ended, varied resources. The adults are key in creating the emotional environment that supports them in this – ensuring that they feel confident and independent, ready to try new things in the knowledge that the adults will help them if necessary, without taking over. As Sugata Mitra says “Children will learn to do what children want to learn to do” so let’s support them by creating a superb enabling environment including superb enabling adults.

‘In the moment’ planning “Practitioners must consider the individual needs, interests, and stage of development of each child in their care, and must use this information to plan a challenging and enjoyable experience for each child in all the areas of learning and development.” (Revised EYFS) This is a statutory requirement and is being interpreted in different ways by individual practitioners, settings and inspectors! The verb “plan” has been interpreted to mean “written plan” and/or “forward plan”. It is this interpretation that we would challenge. This quote could mean that for one class, we ‘must’ write 30 individual plans for each of the seven areas of development! That’s 210 plans! Is that per week, per day or per session? Whatever the answer – it is clearly impossible. And yet, we would argue that the skilful practitioner is making several hundred “in the moment” plans every week. Each time they interact with a child, they are observing, assessing, planning for, and responding to, that

individual child. Sadly, such interactions go largely unnoticed and unrecorded and yet they are the most important and powerful teaching moments. The traditional cycle of observation, assessment and planning is recommended in numerous documents including Development Matters and The National Strategies document "Learning, Playing and Interacting". In this document we wish to highlight the section that states:- "Babies and young children are experiencing and learning in the here and now, not storing up their questions until tomorrow or next week. It is in that moment of curiosity, puzzlement, effort or interest – the 'teachable moment' – that the skilful adult makes a difference. By using this cycle on a moment-by-moment basis, the adult will be always alert to individual children (observation), always thinking about what it tells us about the child's thinking (assessment), and always ready to respond by using appropriate strategies at the right moment to support children's well-being and learning (planning for the next moment)." This idea echoes the starting point for the planning system that has been developed by a group of teachers in Enfield and came about following a visit to Melbourne, Australia. One Australian provider, which ran two children's centres, had been working with a team from Melbourne University over a period of three years researching effective planning systems for young children. The conclusion was that we should not plan ahead for young children! Rather, as the quote above suggests, we should respond to their interests and efforts immediately. We can then record such interactions afterwards. OFSTED inspectors are trained to assess levels of engagement and independence. Ferre Laevers talks about levels of involvement. The quote above mentions "teachable moments". Brain development research has looked into synapse formation. The CfBT (2010) research stresses the importance of autonomy and self-regulation. Everyone is actually sending the same message, but framed in different language. We use the following words "When children pursue their own interests, in an enabling environment, supported by skilful adults, they make the

best possible progress." Thus the environment and the interactions are key to progress – written plans are not! So what then does this look like in practice? The indoor environment has been explained above and the same principals apply outdoors. The aim is to organise the setting - including the time, the resources and the adults - to ensure that the majority of the children display deep level engagement for the majority of the time. If that happens, then we can be confident that they are making good progress. When deeply engaged, their brains will be "lit up", adults will notice when support is needed, interactions will ensure that obstacles are overcome or that new directions and possibilities are available and learning will be meaningful and fun!! As mentioned, an enabling environment is critical. When the children arrive, nothing is set out but everything is available and accessible. The doors to the outside are open immediately. From day one, the children are supported to explore the environment to see what is available, to select the resources they would like, to use them appropriately and to tidy the area when they have finished. Tidy up time is very short – most areas have been tidied during the session. Because the children have got the resources out themselves, they know where to return them to! The induction period is always critical – even more so when the children have so much autonomy and choice. Small groups with high ratios of adults is the ideal and can ensure that the routines and expectations are established efficiently. Ground rules are essential when so much freedom is given – all the children need to feel safe. Clear and consistent expectations are key. For example, indoors the children will walk and use quieter voices – running and shouting can be done outside. To give a flavour of the environment, I will describe a few outdoor areas (indoors is explained in detail above). The sand area is large and is surrounded by shelving and baskets stocked with resources. (Shopping baskets attached to the fence with cable ties are a wonderful way to store plastic sand toys – they can stay out in all weathers and the rain just goes straight through!) The resources

available are traditional sand toys, as well as natural shells, sticks, stones, etc and cooking utensils, plates, cups, cutlery etc. to support a variety of play ideas. A water supply is essential – a tap, a water butt or puddles will do – this allows for cooking, chemistry, cement mixing, moat filling or alchemy! There should be lots of opportunities for risk – rope ladders, trees to climb, PE equipment for the children to set up, woodwork with hammers and saws, two-wheeler bikes. Again the crucial induction period ensures that the children know how to use equipment and are encouraged to think about the risks themselves. (All our “risk assessments” have been re-written as “benefit/risk assessments” – listing all the benefits of the activities before the few possible risks. This has been a rewarding exercise – leading practitioners to evaluate why we encourage certain activities, even though there is a small risk attached). The sessions are organised to maximise the amount of “free-flow” time available. Thus the children arrive, self register and go off to play where they choose. All staff support the children in their chosen activity – there are no focus activities. The adults go to the children – they don’t call the children to them. Just making this one change in the behaviour of staff can bring about a complete shift in emphasis and focus. The children become the focus instead of a particular activity that the adult has planned. About 40 minutes before the end of the session, the children tidy up and come together for about 20 minutes before lunch or home time. (These group times may be used for phonics, stories, songs, etc, as appropriate.)

The weekly organisation is as follows:- On Friday, the staff select 10% of the class (usually 3 children) who will be the “focus children” for the following week. These children are given a form to take home for their parents to complete – asking about current interests of the child, any special events in the family and any questions the parents may have. We also send home cameras with the focus children and the families take photos over the

weekend and return the camera and form on the Monday. On Monday an A3 "Learning Journey" sheet for each of the three focus children is put on the planning board. These sheets are blank (except for a couple of words to indicate areas that the staff or parents would like to try and capture). During the week any adult who has a productive interaction with a focus child records the event on the learning journey. It is important that the whole cycle is recorded – i.e. the initial observation, the assessment, the planning, teaching and the outcome. An example of such an entry might read:- "Ross was looking at the plants and said 'I need some carrots for my soup'. He started to pull up some onions. I joined him and explained how to look carefully at the leaves and told him what the leaves on the carrot plants looked like. He examined the plants carefully and then pulled up three carrots." Another example might be:- "Jenna was standing by the rope bridge watching a boy go across and back. I joined her and she said 'I want a turn on there!' I encouraged her to repeat the phrase 'Can I have a turn please?' After a few minutes Jenna approached the boy and said 'Can I have a turn please?' The boy went across once more and then jumped down 'there you go'. Jenna played with the boy for a long period taking turns independently." Practitioners often worry about how they can possibly show progress in the short period of an observation. Both these children made progress in a matter of seconds! Quality interactions should, and usually do, lead to progress. In both the examples above, the "plan" was formulated and delivered "in the moment". Entries on the learning journeys are often accompanied by a photo. The sheets are gradually filled up over the course of the week and become a wonderful individual record. Staff meet with the parents of the focus children in the week following their focus week – they therefore do 3 parent meetings each week throughout the year. The discussion revolves around the completed learning journey – a truly individual picture of the child's experience.

So, “What about all the other children?” Well they too are pursuing their own learning, in the same environment, supported by the same adults. However, their journey is not recorded in such a detailed way, except when they are a focus child. Any “Wow!” moments are recorded for individual children and added to individual records – whether focus children or not. In addition staff complete another sheet which is really a group learning journey to record any significant events that occur in the class and that involve a group of children and essentially it contains the same observation cycle – observation, assessment, planning, observation. An example might read:- “Group building a bridge with blocks. The bridge was very wobbly. T joined the group and encouraged them to consider if the bridge was safe and how it could be improved. Several children had ideas and the group tried several different designs. The final bridge was much more stable.” In almost all cases, the “next step” is completed immediately - in this case ‘discuss safety and re-design the bridge.’ “In the moment” planning is a very simple idea – observing and interacting with children as they pursue their own interests and also assessing and moving the learning on in that moment. The written account of these interactions becomes a learning journey. This approach leads to deep level learning and wonderful surprises occur daily.

WOODWORK

Woodwork in the Early Years If we could scan the brain of this three year old child, we would see great activity – powerful learning and rapid progress. Such deep-level involvement is always found at the woodwork benches at our school. Woodwork can always be seen in both the nursery and reception classes, with children accessing the resources and tools independently, working safely and creatively at the very limits of their capabilities. No adult tells the children to go to the work bench – it is their choice. No adult tells them what to make – they can make whatever they want. Adults are available, when needed, to model skills and techniques, to give vocabulary, to encourage and to make suggestions. The interactions, therefore, allow the children to realise their ideas and to overcome any obstacles. The assessment below demonstrates that the benefits of woodwork clearly outweigh the risks. Benefits Woodwork is the perfect activity in which children can demonstrate the characteristics of effective learning:-

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.

Also all the seven areas of learning in the current EYFS framework will be developed:-

Physical development:- With the use of real tools and hard wood (rather than balsa wood), the muscles in the hands and arms become stronger and the children develop more control of these muscles. They learn to vary the amount of force used - with hammers and saws. They also develop hand-eye co-ordination in order to hit the nails. Fine motor control is developed as children

hold the thin nails in place. Through experience they learn how to keep their fingers out of the way of the hammer.

Personal, social and emotional development:- children demonstrate deep levels of involvement when undertaking a woodwork task. It is often noticeable that children who normally will not persevere at a task are prepared to try for far longer at woodwork - perhaps because they realise it is something truly challenging but also "real". Children will return to unfinished work the following day if necessary. They learn to share and take turns, negotiating and discussing routines and rules. They learn how to keep themselves and others safe. They realise that a real hammer can do serious harm and they do treat the tools with respect. They learn to follow agreed rules. Children who find it difficult to conform are often so keen to participate, that they do manage to comply with requests and boundaries at the woodwork bench - just so that they get their turn. They take great pride in their achievements and therefore their self-esteem is boosted. For most children woodwork is a new activity and therefore they are taking a risk just by becoming involved - they take further risks using the equipment but learn to do this safely and independently and the results are greatly appreciated.

Communication and language development:- There is always a lot of discussion at the work bench and therefore language is developed. Children have to follow instructions and will often be heard explaining the rules to other children. They encounter problems all the time and discuss solutions. They explain what they are doing and learn the vocabulary associated with the activity.

Creative development:- With many activities for young children, the process is as important (if not more important) than the product. This is definitely the case when children are first starting at woodwork. They need to develop the techniques. Eventually, they will start to use their imagination, combined with their knowledge

of the task, to plan what to make. With support, they will have learnt how it is possible to combine various materials and media and this will increase their options and possibilities. Many of the models become the starting point for a story which also supports creative development (as well as language skills).

Knowledge of the World:- Clearly through working with wood, the children will learn about its properties and the properties of other materials that they combine with the wood. They will learn about how to use tools and how to combine different materials. With appropriate interactions, they could learn about the source of wood and various types of wood. They will be experiencing the process of 'design, make, review'.

Mathematical development:- This pervades every aspect of the task - from experiencing the weight and size of the wood to deciding how many wheels to add to a truck. Children will be thinking about size and shape, as well as number. Again, with appropriate interaction, their thoughts can be vocalised, refined and developed.

Literacy development:- Children will often combine mark-making with woodwork - adding drawn features to their models. They also add their name to ensure their work is not lost. They will use books to refer to for ideas or information. Also, as mentioned above, many models will feature in stories and the literacy possibilities within this are infinite.

There are not many activities which appeal to so many children and have such broad and deep learning potential.

Risks and actions:-

Hazard	Possible scale of injury	Precautions to put in place to reduce risk.
Risk rating	General risk of injury through use & misuse	sandpaper.
Low	Sharp nails cause injury	Low
Protruding nails will be hammered down.	Children will not remove nails from work	

area. Low Clearly the benefits are great and the risks can be managed.

OUTDOOR PLAY

All children will be given the opportunity to play outside throughout most of the day whatever the weather. It is important that you dress your child for school appropriately: warm clothes and waterproof coat when it's cold and wet; sun hat and sun screen when it's sunny. Children get wet, muddy and messy when they play outside. Please provide the blue two piece waterproof suits (which are part of the school uniform requirements) as well as including wellington boots. We teach children how to minimise how messy they get and they do get better at this as they get older, but it's part of their learning and development – you can't expect them not to get messed up playing in mud. We will not compromise on allowing children to play outdoors as we believe it to be an essential component of young children's learning and development. Children must be allowed to experience the world around them in a full, messy, muddy, wet environment if they are to make useful meaning of it. Getting wet does not cause us to catch a cold. If the cold virus is around, we will pick it up regardless of whether we are wet or dry.