

Supporting Play in the Early Years



The magic of play!



'Play is one of the most misunderstood concepts. In today's educational world it is also one of the most underrated. And yet it is the most vital component for development - *the gift of play is the greatest thing we can ever possibly give a child.*'

*Greg Bottrill (2018)
Early Years Teacher in an Outstanding Primary
School*

Why is play important?

At Surrey Hills we recognise that play is one of the main ways in which children learn and develop.

It is an integral part of a child's Early Years Foundation Stage and supports their learning journey too.

- *It helps to build self worth by giving a child a sense of his or her own abilities and to feel good about themselves.*
- *It's fun! Children become very absorbed in what they are doing and explore, try out and talk about new ideas.*
- *The benefits of playing together can not be underestimated!*



Developing skills through play.

Young children can develop many skills through the power of play. These include:

- Language skills
 - Personal, social and emotional skills
 - Creativity
 - Imagination
 - Developing a sense of adventure
 - Problem solving
 - Assessing risk
 - Gross and fine motor skills
 - Working with others, sharing etc
- and much more.



Playthings!

Providing children with a range of playthings will help them learn in a number of ways:

- *Sand and water play can be an early introduction to science and maths, e.g. learning that water is fluid, not solid, and that it can be measured in different sized containers.*
- *Playing with dough or clay, drawing and painting pictures, dressing up, playing with dolls can encourage creativity, imagination and expression of feelings.*
- *Building blocks, jigsaws and shape sorters can help with recognising different shapes and sizes, putting things in order and developing logic.*
- *Playing ball games, dancing, running, climbing all help to develop body movement, strength, flexibility and co-ordination skills.*
- *Games help with turn taking, sharing and mixing with others.*
- *Singing, playing simple musical instruments help to develop rhythm, listening and hearing.*

Characteristics of Learning

At Surrey Hills we recognise that learning is so much more than just reading, writing and maths. We aim to inspire children to become life long lovers of learning!

This is where we strive to develop each child's Characteristics of Learning in three broad areas:

- Playing and exploring (engagement)
- Active learning (motivation)
- Creating and thinking critically



How can you support your child's Play and Exploration?

- **Finding out and exploring:**

Follow your child's lead.

If they are interested in Dinosaurs ...

find facts and play!

If it is mud pies Get stuck in and explore!

If it's fairy kingdoms help them develop

their imagination and vocabulary by playing along!



- **Playing with what they know:**

Children have favourite toys which they like to return to again and again. Let them explore, role play and experiment.

- **Being willing to have a go:**

Encourage your child to have a go, initiate new activities and learn by trial and error. Model what this means!

How can you support your child's Active Learning ?

- ***Being involved and concentrating:***

This is where playing along with your child or inviting friends to play really pays off! If you are fascinated and engaged by your child's play, it creates energy and helps them to maintain focus.

- ***Keeping on trying:***

Staying motivated when the going gets tough is tricky for us all at times! Stand back and allow your child to work things out for a while before jumping in to help. Learning by trial and error is one of the best ways to learn.

- ***Enjoying achieving what they set out to do:***

Nothing is more motivating than success! Celebrate the process and the achievements!

How can you support your child's Creativity and Critical thinking?

- ***Having their own ideas:***

Encourage your child to have their own ideas, find different ways of doing things and different approaches to finding a solution.

- ***Making links:***

Help your child look for patterns and links in their play.

Ask lots of questions - what may look like chaos to us may just need a little explanation!!

- ***Choosing ways of doing things:***

Encourage conversation through questions. Ask your child what their plan is and how they are going to go about it? Stand back and think about how well things went and what might make it even better next time?

Asking questions

Asking questions shows you are interested and value what your child is up to!

Encouraging talk and thinking things through is an integral part of developing your child's ability to learn.

- *'What's happening here?'*
- *"Does this remind you of when ...?"*
- *'What happened last time?'*
- *'What do you think will happen if ...'*
- *'What do you think will happen next?'*
- *'Does it work?'*
- *'Why do you think that isn't working?'*
- *'What can you do to make it work better?'*
- *'What if ...??'*



Relax and Enjoy!

Cherish the time spent playing with your child - they are not little long!

At first, some children need a little support so modelling how to play is really important. They will watch those around them and copy language and behaviour.

Talk to them a lot, everywhere, about everyday things while you are cooking, cleaning, gardening or in the car. Talk to them about how things work and encourage questions. Be aware of the changes in the weather, the seasons and the natural environment. Get ready for lots of "why's?"

...but most of all ... enjoy the magic of play and have fun!



Any questions?



