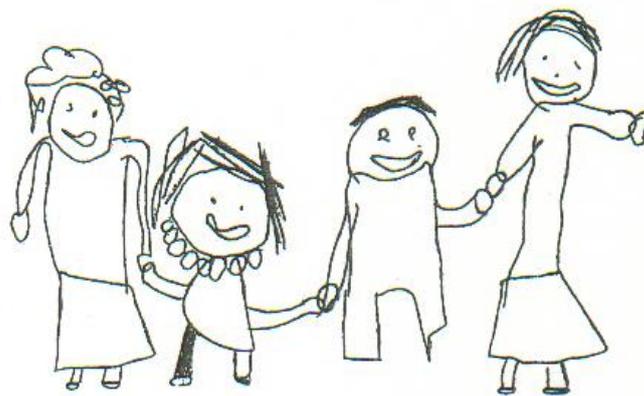


THE AMBLESIDE CENTRE



Learning in The Meadows



**WOKINGHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL**

Learning in the Meadows

Learning begins at birth, occurs at a phenomenal rate in the early years and continues throughout life. Early experiences lay the foundations for future learning. Research over many years has proved that the most effective learning occurs with other children and adults when the child is totally involved and has choice and control over the experience, supported by highly skilled adults. They 'tune in' to the interests of the child and 'scaffold' the next steps. When parents and professionals work together in this way, the child has the greater chance of realising her/his potential.

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Framework became statutory in September 2008 and was revised in 2012. This sets out the requirements for anyone working with young children. The Framework is based on four 'themes':

- A Unique Child
- Positive Relationships
- Enabling Environments
- Learning and Development

The Framework sets out a 'picture' of what quality experiences for young children might look like.

A UNIQUE CHILD

The EYFS is based very firmly on recognising the individuality of every child and their family, knowing each child well in order to meet their needs, following their interests and building on their strengths.

POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS

Parents are children's first and most enduring educators, and EYFS says very strongly that practitioners working with young children must work in real partnership with parents and other carers in order to support each child's learning and development. We really want to work closely with you to offer the best possible opportunities for your child.

ENABLING ENVIRONMENTS

We have set up a learning environment that covers the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum and includes materials that interest young children and that can be used in many different ways. Indoors there are several areas called painting and making, big room, blue room and yellow room. Areas have suitable materials that are set out to encourage children to choose independently which to use.



They are labelled to help selection and return, and to help children learn as they sort, match and 'read' the symbols.

The outdoor area is just as important an area for learning as indoors. It has different resources that also cover the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum, accessible to children in a similar way.



Organisation

Children are placed in a keyworker group of around 10 children aged between 3 and 5. The keyworker has overall responsibility for supporting each child's learning and wellbeing throughout her/his time in the Meadows. The whole staff team work with all children using a consistent approach.

The Daily Routine

Sessions include:

Mark Making and Planning Time

Keyworkers use different ways of helping children to decide what they would like to do, e.g. using telephones, drawing, singing games.



Work Time

Children work with the available materials, supported by the adults in that area. They observe, encourage and extend the learning that is taking place. They do this by playing alongside the children, developing their interests by offering ideas, suggesting or offering other materials, by teaching a skill and by posing questions that challenge their thinking.

Tidy Up Time

Everything has a place and everyone helps to return things to their place: sorting, matching and 'reading' labels.

Recall Time and Group Snack Time

Children return to their keyworker and share some of the things they have been doing with their group. This helps to 'fix' the learning and gives a real reason for speaking and listening. The adult encourages them, the children gain in self-confidence and get ideas of things they might like to try another day.



Small Group Time

The keyworker group follow an activity that the adult introduces. It will cover an aspect of the curriculum and will be based on interests shown by children in Meadows recently. Most of these activities are planned by the staff team and all groups participate in them on a rota basis. Some are planned by the keyworker to follow the interests of their group. The activities enable children to explore all materials available, to develop all areas of learning and to engage in an activity with a familiar group of children and adults. The notice board in the corridor gives information about the activities that your child will be taking part in.

Please read them and talk to your child about them, perhaps following up with ideas at home.



Story Time

The groups share books, developing literary skills in a variety of ways, e.g.

- by talking about pictures 'telling the story'
- by pointing to words, recognising familiar letters and words that are repeated
- by acting out the story and/or using props
- by predicting and anticipating what might come next



Songs and Rhymes

Songs, rhymes and action games are enjoyed during group times and once a week in a larger group.

Writing and Reading

The written word is a series of marks that stand for a spoken word that relates to a real experience. Children have many opportunities to experience one thing 'standing for' an object or an experience, e.g. an outline drawing shows where an object should be placed on a shelf, a photograph of a spade is used to 'stand for' playing in the sand, a picture of a tree with a cross through it means 'the garden is not available right now'. Children 'read' these signs and symbols daily.

Children are encouraged to make their own marks to 'stand for' an object or an experience, to 'read' it and to inform others.

There is a natural developmental process from a mark on a surface to the formal written word. Adults encourage children to write and read at their own level, offering help with the next steps as appropriate.



Phonics

One of the necessary tools in the writing and reading process is phonics – the sound represented by a letter. Adults use fun ways to introduce these to children and use them to help children to write. Please see the display in Meadows corridor and help yourself to leaflets.

STORY SACKS LIBRARY

Story sacks are an exciting extension to any story book. They consist of:

- a story book
- characters from the book in soft toy or hard plastic form
- a game linked to the story
- a non-fiction book linked to the story
- the story on tape

Each sack comes with helpful tips on its use. If you and your child would like to use our Story Sacks, please sign the separate form in your New Parents Pack or ask for a copy at Reception. If you have any questions regarding Story Sacks please discuss with your Keyworker.

LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

At the Ambleside Centre we are firmly committed to the development of independent learners who have a high self-esteem, self-confidence and care for others.

We aim to be a learning community where adults constantly strive to learn more about learning and teaching, and about each individual child and family we work with. We respect and celebrate each child's unique quality, constantly striving to develop their learning.

Play

Young children learn by exploring their world, taking risks, posing and solving problems and learning from their mistakes. They need time and space to do so in their own way and at their own pace. This happens naturally when children play.

This is not 'playing' as opposed to working or even structured play activities set out by adults to achieve a pre-determined outcome. The activity we refer to is best termed 'free flow play' (a phrase suggested by Professor Tina Bruce). This kind of play allows ideas, feelings and relationships to be freely explored and newly found skills to be demonstrated. It is concerned with 'possible' worlds and includes supposing, imagining and creating as well as reflecting on things known. In play, children function at their highest level, regulating the amount of challenge they can cope with.

Play results in children and adults who are self-motivated, self-confident learners who are not reliant on tests, reward systems or adult approval to motivate them.

".....any heavy emphasis on direct teaching or programmed instruction should be avoided in the Early Years."

'Researching Effective Pedagogy in the Early Years'
Department of Educational Studies, University of Oxford, 2002

Children learn all of the time whatever they are doing. To help adults ensure that nothing is left out 3 prime areas and 4 specific areas of learning and development have been identified:

Prime –

- Personal, Social and Emotional development
- Physical development
- Communication Language and Literacy

Specific –

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

The government has identified a set of Early Learning Goals – expectations that most children will reach by the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage (the end of the academic year following a child's fifth birthday).

Children make their own unique pathway towards these goals. Adults observe and record the children's learning demonstrated through their spontaneous play.

Planning to Support Children's Needs

We have a clear vision of confident, independent learners supporting each other to develop their potential. We are constantly observing and evaluating and then planning to develop the environment, the routines and ways of interacting in order to realise our vision.

All staff observe children very closely, noting their interests, their learning and their engagement with materials. They share these observations with the whole team and parents. Then they discuss together and plan for the possible next steps for each child.

Encouragement

Learning experiences are recognised and acknowledged by adults and children. Adults help children to recognise the steps they have taken and celebrate what they have achieved:

- by telling others
- by a photograph capturing the moment
- by a 'post-it' note being written
- by work (or a photocopy of work) being displayed or taken home or kept in a record book.

Each child has his/her own board on which they have their chosen work displayed. Ask your child to show you where it is.



How can I help prepare my child for the Centre?

Your child will benefit if you spend time talking, reading and singing together. Encourage your child to do simple tasks independently, e.g. putting on and taking off clothes, going to the toilet, washing hands. Encourage them to make choices about some of the things they would like to do.

How can I help make things better for my child?

- Always read and act on notices on boards and particularly any letters or notices that are sent home.
- Attend meetings for parents; these will include one during your child's first term to discuss how your child has settled and how you can be involved in record keeping and one during the second half term when you will be invited to spend a session in Meadows seeing how the children learn. You will have an opportunity for discussion before spending time in Meadows.
- Tell the staff any information you feel they should know about your child.
- Share this booklet and information in letters with anyone who drops off or collects your child.

Parents' Involvement in Children's Learning

Early Years professionals have expertise with children, parents are experts with their own child.

Children learn vital, life-lasting attitudes, concepts and skills within the unique, intimate relationships of their family, who remain the most significant factor in their success.

We strive to find ways of combining our different knowledge in order to provide the best opportunities for your children.

Conflict Resolution

At The Ambleside Centre we are committed to supporting children to become confident, independent learners.

Learning at this age is best achieved through first hand experience.

The learning environment is attractively presented for children to explore at their own level with skilled adults on hand to support the learning. They do this by encouraging, challenging, suggesting and teaching skills.

As children encounter problems in their play – with materials or with social interactions – adults help them to think through and if appropriate try out possible solutions.

Whenever conflict arises the same strategy is used. The situation is approached calmly – conflict is not to be feared or denied. The cause of the conflict is stopped and each person is asked or helped to express how they are feeling.

Details of the problem are discovered and stated calmly. Everyone is invited to suggest a way of resolving the problem, talking through the details of any suggestion. When a solution that is acceptable to all is discovered, the adult stays around to help put the suggestion into practice.

These strategies help everyone to feel respected and safe: knowing that they are able to have their needs and feelings known and taken into account.

It works with adults as well as children.

Sessions are offered through our Children's Centre to discuss this in more detail with parents. Please watch out for them and come along.

We are influenced and supported in our thinking about the best provision for young children by:

- Early Years Foundation Stage framework – Department for Education (2012)
- Children's Act 2004
- The High/Scope (UK) approach
- Effective Provision for Pre-School Education research project
- Our own research and analysis.
- Working in collaboration with other Early Years Settings

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