

The Learning Environment

'Children learn and develop well in enabling environments with teaching and support from adults, who respond to their individual interests and needs and help them to build their learning over time', (Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage, 2020)

Continuous Provision

In addition to direct teaching input, children in the Reception phase independently access continuous provision which we refer to as 'areas'. These areas remain the core provision of high quality specifically selected resources available throughout the year but are also added to and extended following the children's interests or natural topic extensions. The Ofsted Early Years Inspection Handbook (2019), states: 'Practitioners and leaders create an environment that supports the intent of an ambitious and coherently planned and sequenced curriculum. The available resources meet the children's needs and promote their focus on learning.'

Areas

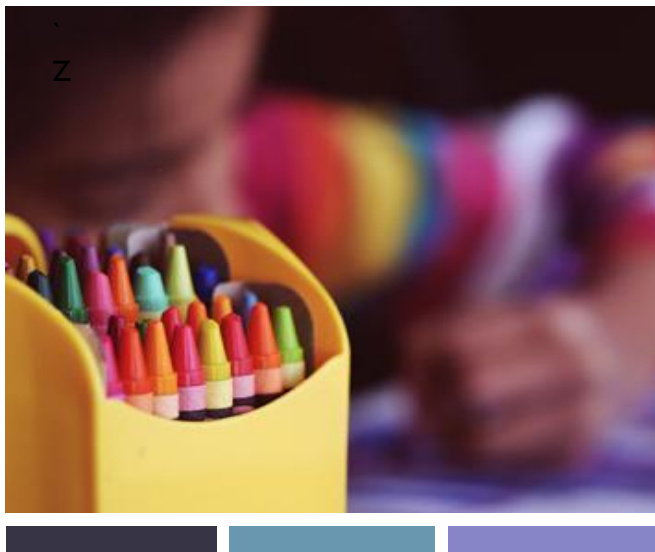
The areas we have selected for independent/ adult supported learning cover the statutory 3 Prime Areas (communication and language, physical development, and Personal, Social and Emotional Development), which are fundamental to children's development, and 4 Specific Areas (Literacy, Maths, Understanding the World, and Expressive Arts and Design), which include essential skills and knowledge, laid out in the Early Years Framework.

Adult Guide to EYFS

How to support and extend children's learning in our unique setting: a guide to interactions, conversations, adult support, and independence,.



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Areas of Continuous Provision

The indoor areas of continuous provision have been implemented to encompass the prime and specific areas of learning. Some areas may cover more than one area of learning, but all areas have been carefully selected to allow independent choice and encourage peer to peer interactions.

Communication and Language

Communication and language underpins every area in the Reception setting., from new vocabulary acquisition via adult input to building peer to peer relationships during independent exploration. A questioning, inquisitive, vocabulary rich environment promotes and values every aspect of communication and language development.

Maths area: supports number and pattern development, communication and language, and physical development.

Writing area: supports communication and language, physical development, literacy, and expressive arts and design

Small world area: supports understanding the world, communication and language, and physical development.

Building area: supports communication and language, maths, and physical development.

Design area: supports communication and language, physical development, literacy, and expressive arts and design

‘Through conversation, story-telling and role play, where children share their ideas with support and modelling from their teacher, and sensitive questioning that invites them to elaborate, children become comfortable using a rich range of vocabulary and language structures.’ (EYFS Framework, 2020)

Reading area: supports communication and language, physical development, literacy, and expressive arts and design

Home area supports understanding the world, communication and language, and physical development.

Outdoor area:

Outdoor provision encompasses and encourages all of the skills that are promoted during indoor continuous provision, but on a larger scale with more space to explore and investigate. It offers opportunities for doing things in different ways and on different scales from being indoors and gives children first-hand contact with weather, seasons and the natural world.





Sustained shared thinking:

SST is important because it supports children's deep level learning. Laevers (2005: 3) explains deep level learning as the "paradigm shift through which more of the complexities of the world [...] can be experienced and become meaningful". Thus, deep-level learning encourages children not to simply learn facts, but also to think critically, and supports a positive learning disposition. SST supports this in three ways: encouraging, modelling and extending children's thinking

[A]n episode in which two or more individuals 'work together' in an intellectual way to solve a problem, clarify a concept, evaluate activities, extend a narrative, etc. Both parties must contribute to the thinking and it must develop and extend. (Sylva et al, 2004: 36) The adult's role in SST: watchfulness, responsiveness and intention may be conveyed by the adult standing back, the adult intervening, the adult modelling, the adult questioning, the adult provoking or the adult joining in.

Ways to support SST:

- Tuning in
- Showing genuine interest
- Respecting children's own interests and choices
- Recapping
- Offering your own experience
- Clarifying ideas
- Inviting children to elaborate
- Suggesting
- Reminding
- Using encouragement to extend thinking
- Offering an alternative viewpoint
- Speculating
- Reciprocating
- Asking open questions
- Modelling thinking

Adapted from Early Education SST project, Marion Dowling.



Examples of SST support:

- Listen carefully and observe what the child is focused on
- Allow risk taking
- Give a running commentary
- Talk about your own likes and dislikes
- Repeat ideas and suggestions
- Offer alternative ideas
- How did you...?
- Why does this...?
- What might happen next...?
- What do you think...?



Interactions:

Quality interactions in the Early Years take place in a variety of ways, from formal adult input such as that experienced during phonics sessions, to informal peer interactions during independent time in areas.

Continuous provision

For typically developing children, interactions in continuous provision follow a progressive format in a linear sequential model. This ensures that children are fully supported at the beginning of their reception journey, with increasing independence and child led interactions in the summer term to ready children for their entry into Year 1.

Quality adult interactions could include instruction, explanation, questioning, challenging, reciprocal turn taking, conversational, and deliberation modes dependent on the situation and/or the interests of the child.

At the start of Reception year most children may need support to fully interact with the potential of all the areas in continuous provision. Adult interactions during the Autumn term will include modelling, scaffolding and subtle questioning to fully engage children.

In the late Spring and summer term children will be encouraged to independently request adult interactions when they wish an adult to join their conversation, or assist them when designing and creating.

SEN

Children with SEN (diagnosed or undiagnosed) may not follow the same developmental route as typical children of the same age. It is important to be aware that not all children respond to adult interactions or are able to build sustained adult and/or peer relationships. However, this does not mean that

these children should not have the same opportunities as typically developing children. Interactions will need to be adapted to respond to the strengths of the individual child and may rely on visual representations rather than conversational interactions.



'The purpose of any interaction is to consolidate, extend or provoke children's learning and development,' (Fisher, 2016).



Silence

‘... against all expectations people respond positively to silence... with both further thought and more complex thought. Practitioners feel they are being judged if they do not constantly intervene in children’s activity and thought processes,’ (Fisher, 2016).

Give children time to respond and don’t always try to fill the silence with unnecessary words.

Purpose of an interaction:

Adult led learning focuses children’s thinking.

Adult initiated learning fathoms children’s thinking.

Child led learning follows children’s thinking. (Fisher, 2016).

Modelling – thinking, doing, speaking.

Modelled interactions can encompass any or all of these. Sharing our thought processes out loud may demonstrate to children that ‘having a go’ and ‘trying new things’ develops a ‘can do’ mindset.

Scaffolding – involves levels of appropriate support to enable a child to reach a particular end point. This can be effective in either adult or child led activities and should be effectively reduced to encourage independence.

Questioning – does not always require an answer.

Questions can be reframed as a statement to avoid the anxiety many children feel when faced with a question that requires a response (Fisher, 2016).

Characteristics of effective learning (COEL)

- **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
- **Creating and thinking critically** -children have and develop their own ideas, make links between ideas, and develop strategies for doing things

Independence

‘When children learn independently, they test out what they know and what has been modelled by adults,’ (Fisher, 2016).

As children move towards more independent activity, in preparation for year 1, the majority of them will be meeting the targets of COEL. During independent activity, adults can take the time to observe and assess where any difficulties may arise, and celebrate the independent achievements with children. Independent learning should be celebrated and valued

