

## Playing and Learning at Playgroup



At each session there will be at least 1 qualified childcare worker and enough staff to adhere to the correct adult : child ratio.

**1 adult: 4 children under 3 years old**

**1 adult: 8 children over 3 years old**



Each child, on joining our Playgroup, is assigned a Key Person. Although your child's allocated Key Person may change during the time your child is with us, each Key Person duties are the same. They have a special responsibility for a small group of children and will ensure that the needs of each child are recognised within the Playgroup records and monitor the child's progress.

However, a Key Person does not shadow their allocated children throughout the session, liaise with only their key group of children, or prevent other adults from developing a relationship with their key children - all staff are able to assist any child or parent at any time. They will assist the child in settling into the Playgroup, liaise with parents/guardians, observe, keep records and monitor the child's progress.

It is our aim that each session we provide will include a wide variety of activities that will stimulate, challenge and encourage children to learn through the medium of play. We provide free-flow play activities that are both child initiated and adult led such as:

- Puzzles, games, play dough, role play, water & sand play, painting, handling of natural materials, cutting, gluing, dance, musical instruments & puppetry to name but a few.
- A free mid-session snack is provided (occasionally chosen and made by the children themselves). There are at least 2 choices of drinks and snacks available. Drinking water is available - both indoors and outdoors - throughout all sessions.
- There are trolleys provided throughout the room offering a wide selection of activities so that the children can independently exchange and alternate between them.
- We also have a comfortable quiet area available with cushions. If children want to sit quietly or nap they are able to do so.

Each child has their own 'pigeon pocket' hanging on the wall in the main hall where they can put the drawings etc. that they do during the day. Please check your child's regularly and take their masterpieces home with you.

We often spend time during sessions working together as a group, either in story time, music and movement, games or group discussions. This helps to build relationships, individual confidence, co-operation and respect for others. It also gives the children an opportunity to share their experiences together and begins the process of sitting, listening and taking turns, which is inevitable in their school years.

## Playing and Learning at Playgroup (EYFS Framework)



As previously explained in your registration pack, all registered providers of Early Years care are required to use The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) statutory framework. This sets standards for the development, learning and care of children from birth to five. It is based around 4 themes, each linked to an important principle. They are:

### THE UNIQUE CHILD

EYFS principle: Every child is a competent learner from birth, who can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured.

This principle celebrates the uniqueness of every child & urges practitioners to take the time to observe, listen & tune in, to understand what it is that makes each child tick. As children's strengths, interests, preferences and different developmental pathways begin to unfold, practitioners can plan responsively to capture experiences that are meaningful and tailored to individual needs.

### POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS

EYFS Principle: Children learn to be strong and independent from a base of loving and secure relationships with parents and/or a key person.

Creating a secure emotional environment is paramount if everyone in the setting is to flourish. No-one learns effectively when they are worried or afraid & everyone should be able to try new experiences, explore new resources and share their thoughts & feelings in an atmosphere of mutual trust and respect. When we are encouraged to think creatively and know that our ideas and contributions will be valued, we develop positive attitudes to learning and confidence in ourselves as learners. Mistakes are then seen in a positive light, as a natural part of the learning journey and an opportunity to grow and learn, rather than something to be ashamed of.

### ENABLING ENVIRONMENTS

EYFS principle: The environment plays a key role in supporting & extending children's development & learning.

The EYFS acknowledges the critical importance of both the emotional and the physical environment. We aim to ensure that there are sufficient opportunities for the children to get deeply involved, discover new lines of enquiry, experiment, explore, represent their thinking and solve problems. This enables us to see the environment from the child's point of view and reflect on the possibilities that it has to offer.

### LEARNING & DEVELOPMENT

EYFS Principle: Children develop and learn in different ways and at different rates. All areas of learning and development are equally important and inter-connected.

Children learn from everything they do and one of the best ways for this to happen is through carefully planned, play based experiences that start with their strengths, interests and capabilities. It acknowledges that young children are active learners and that they need opportunities to explore and make sense of the world, supported by knowledgeable, interested and sensitive adults.

## Playing and Learning at Playgroup



A Playgroup environment encourages children to develop socially, emotionally, physically and intellectually. It is our goal to provide your child with the maximum opportunities through play, in an environment that is non-threatening, safe, stimulating and interesting.

As a Playgroup we follow the EYFS curriculum as detailed earlier. We encourage and promote maximum learning through play and fun. The following list of activities, which will be provided during your child's stay with us, will inform you of how we intend to achieve this.

### **Home Corner-Role Play & Den Making**

Children love to dress up & pretend. The home corner and den areas provide the scope to do this. They can use this as an opportunity to act out their own experiences and home life as well as involve others in their fun. We often change the areas: transforming them into different types of shops, a restaurant, post office, library, camp area, seaside scene, etc. This helps the children to explore, be imaginative while building and expanding their knowledge of the world they live in.

### **Constructional Play**

Handling and playing with manipulative toys such as Lego, stickle bricks, pegboards and puzzles not only strengthens and stimulates children's smaller muscles but also helps to lay the foundations for maths: sorting, comparing, building and counting all come into play when construction is going on. Simple pre-math concepts such as smaller, bigger, over, under, longer, shorter, etc. are all experienced when using constructional toys. Children learn about size, shape and colour whilst being encouraged to do simple addition and subtraction as they play.

### **Physical Play**

Climbing, sliding, running, jumping, riding bikes and throwing balls are all important to young children as they grow. Children have lots of energy to use up, offering activities that provide an opportunity to do this safely and enjoyably, helps a child to develop self-confidence, a sense of balance and co-ordination while also building an awareness of space and speed.

### **Mark Making**

There are always materials available for children to 'mark make' - be it with pens, pencils, chalk or other writing materials. We know that in order for children to build pre-writing skills they must be given the opportunities to practice making squiggles, forming letters, drawing and handling writing equipment. The process of writing is easy to follow. Once the child has taken an interest in writing and drawing (which does not always happen for each child at the same time), squiggles, lines, circular shapes and dots soon turn into letters of their name and also numbers. Children need a lot of praise, not pressure, when tackling pre-literacy skills. Handling a pencil is a challenge in itself and praise and encouragement to keep trying are great incentives to a child especially if it comes from the people they love. We use other forms of writing, too, such as typewriters/computers, stamping letters and sponge painting with letters, so that children begin to realise that writing is not restricted to paper and pen only.

### **Manipulative Mediums**

Dough, play dough, clay and plasticine are brilliant tools for imaginative and creative play. They initiate lots of conversation and are great relationship builders. Children are full of new ideas and creations. Dough and other malleable objects can help them to express those ideas and their experiences. Children enjoy the varieties of dough we provide - some are sticky and stretchy whereas others are hard and less pliable, but children always enjoy the opportunity to stretch, twist, cut and shape dough!

## Playing and Learning at Playgroup



### **Painting, Drawing & Colouring**

Children's ability to learn through creativity is boundless. Art enhances a child's ability to learn colours and textures. At Playgroup the children are unrestricted in their use of colour and design. They are free to express their thoughts and preferences through artistic means. Do not be discouraged if your child brings home paintings that have multi-coloured skies or red grass etc. as exploration as individuality through colour is encouraged here. Children see through magical eyes and paint what's in their mind, not necessarily what we see. Painting for instance is not limited to brushes and sponges: children like to explore and experiment with paint so we give it texture by adding flour, make it shiny by adding sugar or water it down to do water paintings. Letting children be free to explore and experience the magic of paint, creates a great learning environment and opens doors to many other learning experiences.

### **Natural Materials**

This activity is boundless in its learning resource and it provides an opportunity for children to discover that the world that they live in is jam packed with interesting, fun and "free" materials that are safe and stimulating. Providing sand, soil or water on a regular basis helps children to keep this concept in their minds and can be a real benefit to parents as it is inexpensive and full of learning opportunities. Playing with and discovering natural materials is a good stepping stone to science and pre-math skills. This is because a lot of quantity, measurement and consistency ideas are formed at these activities. It also begins the first steps to environmental and multi-cultural issues. We begin to discover that not all soils, sands or waters are the same and other parts of the world have more or less of these resources than us. It is a good foundation for respecting our environment.

### **Collage & Creative Making**

This may include such things as collage, junk modelling, papier-mâché etc. Children love to be free to express their thoughts and ideas as they often have vastly different colour and shape concepts to adults. At Playgroup they are not bound by adult direction and are free to be as creative as they wish. Praise from adults when they have independently created something builds a great sense of self-worth and confidence that they will carry with them all their lives. Offering a wide variety of materials to work with helps children to learn what each material's value can be and how one may differ from another; e.g. a child may use glue to stick a piece of tissue paper onto card, but may have to use tape to hold a twig on it. This teaches not only that some things are heavier & not flat but also that different adhesive materials do different jobs.

### **Simple Science**

Tackling science in a way that is interesting, simple to understand and fun is always a challenge. Children have a built-in desire to want to know everything. They are always asking questions, forming opinions and showing an interest in new ideas. Because of this, teaching them simple science is very rewarding. Surprisingly for adults, children can retain a vast amount of information and never seem to be unwilling to learn. Discovering how their bodies function, how the air moves, how water, sun and soil feed the plants and trees, are all concepts that are new and exciting to young children. Learning about magnets and looking under microscopes - viewing a variety of leaves and plants - are all foundational steps in scientific skills.

## Playing and Learning at Playgroup



### Music & Dance

Singing, playing instruments, dancing and clapping all play a vital role in a child's development. As children learn to balance and co-ordinate their arms and legs, they become more aware of shape and speed. Children like to hear their own voices and are given opportunities to sing solo regularly. Children learn hand/eye co-ordination when playing instruments and they also begin to experience rhythm and sound. Having fun with music and dance encourages children who tend to be shy or inhibited to be more confident and outgoing. We often see remarkable developments in confidence, in children who normally are quite shy, when it comes to music and dance.

### Cookery

Children enjoy cooking and making foods, especially if they get to eat it at snack time. We often incorporate cookery into our snacks - food preparation is a lot of fun for us all. Cookery is a great opportunity for children to learn about quantities, textures and tastes. We try not to choose recipes that are rigid in their ingredients because we know that what we see as a tablespoonful of flour is different to what a child sees.

### Book Corner

Pre-reading and literacy skills inevitably begin here. Children love stories that are read with momentum and enthusiasm. They love the uniqueness of books and the magical qualities they contain. Books provide a variety of experiences such as humour, sadness, joy, wonder, make believe and reality. Reading has a vital role in our lives and allowing children to handle, look at and choose books for you to read to them builds a sense of importance about reading. Children find it easy to relate to books, when they read about things that they are feeling or experiencing - it helps them to realise that others may have had those experiences, too. We try to be very selective and wise about our book corner, hoping to provide a wide variety of books that are: multicultural, real life, fictional, funny, informative and challenging. Reading for us is a fun experience! We often use puppets, music or props to retell stories or make them more interesting. Of course the benefits of learning to sit with the rest of the group and listen for a short span of time are obvious. Reading on the mat with an adult - one to one - is sometimes just what a child needs especially if they have not had too brilliant a start to their day. We often find that reading and looking at books with a small group of children is relaxing and enjoyable for both them and us.

Please send your child in appropriate play clothes or our uniform t-shirts/sweatshirts and comfortable shoes so they can be involved in all of the lovely activities listed previously. Your child should also bring a change of clothes in a clearly named bag (in case of accidents). Please take into account a child who has to undo lots of buttons, buckles or belts to use the toilet is easily frustrated. We do provide aprons for wet and messy play which we like all the children to wear, but for craft sessions the children do not necessarily wear the aprons unless they want to.

Please dress children appropriately for the weather and remember to send a coat even if your child travels to and from Playgroup by car. On hot days please apply any sun cream to your child before they come to Playgroup. If they are spending the whole day with us and you would like more sun cream applied, you will need to supply the spray on type. This should have your child's name clearly written on it and given to a member of staff when you arrive. You will then be asked to sign a permission slip allowing us to apply the sun cream.

We hope that your child's stay with us at Playgroup is an enjoyable one, and that we meet our goal as a group to adequately equip your child in their early years of education.