

## TAMSIN'S LITTLE ACORNS

### The value of play in supporting children's learning and development

The World Health Organisation defines health as:

A COMPLETE PHYSICAL, EMOTIONAL AND SOCIAL WELL-BEING AND NOT MERELY THE ABSENCE OF DISEASE OR INFIRMITY.

For children to achieve a complete state of physical, emotional and social well-being children need to have rights and adults and practitioners need to recognise these rights. By making the children aware of these rights we can teach them how to protect themselves.

- These rights include:
  - The right to life and the best chance to develop
  - The right to enjoy a decent standard of living
    - The right to a free education
    - The right to be as healthy as possible
- The right to live in a safe, healthy, unpolluted environment and the right to safe and nutritious food and drinking water

### What are the rights of children in relation to play as detailed in the UN CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF A CHILD?

The UNCRC is an international agreement that sets out the rights for all children and young people under the age of 18 and the UK agreed to obey the UNCRC in 1991. It brings together all articles of human rights into one Convention.

There are three main forms of rights:

- PROVISION – Provision of appropriate support and services for their healthy development
  - PROTECTION – From exploitation and abuse
- PARTICIPATION – Participation in decisions made about their upbringing and care

There is a particular article that relates to children's rights to play. It states we must recognise the right for the child to rest and leisure and to engage in play and recreational activities that are appropriate to the age of the child. Also they are to participate freely in cultural life and the arts. We need to encourage the provision of appropriate and equal opportunities for cultural, artistic, recreational and leisure activity.

**I promote and value the rights of the children and promote these through play. I recognise from the minute babies are born that they are ready to play and I need to encourage this and provide the appropriate activities and equipment.**

### How is Play Necessary for Children's Development?

Through play children explore social, material and imaginary worlds and learn and develop as individuals.

Children have a 'play drive' within them, a natural impulse to play without purpose or end product. I help the children in my care to develop very good play skills by encouraging them to play with other children. I actively encourage imaginative play and representation play, which develops their language and speech. I provide role play equipment to promote this play, ie kitchen and utensils, food, telephones, hoovers and many more.

I introduce the children to exploratory and sensory play where the children can develop their fine motor skills and develop their hand-eye co-ordination. I provide a 'Treasure Basket' full of everyday objects: sponges, acorns, wooden and metal spoons, different materials and brushes.

#### The Characteristics of Play:

- Play is enjoyable and pleasurable
- Play is intrinsically motivated and without extrinsic goals – play can be inherently unproductive
  - Play is spontaneous and freely chosen
  - Play requires active engagement by the player
- Play is related to creativity, problem solving, language learning and development of social skills

Play enables children to learn and practice skills and develop thinking. Play has a therapeutic effect and allows them to gather information and learn from their peers and surroundings. Most importantly play enables children to adapt to their environment and respond to different circumstances in life.

Play can help activate neural pathways that would otherwise be unused, therefore helping children use their brain to its full potential.

#### Types of Play and how I promote these:

Symbolic Play – Using a piece of wood to represent a person or a stone to represent an Island

Rough and Tumble Play – Play that involves close contact, ie tickling or gauging relative strength

Socio-Dramatic Play – Re-enacting real experiences, ie playing mums and dads or playing house

Social Play – Play where the children can play together and the rules explored. I encourage children to make things and work together, discussing the problems and solutions.

Creative Play – Play that allows the children to explore, design and try out new ideas. I encourage self-expression and provide different tools and materials for the children to experiment with.

Communication Play – Play that explores words, for example singing and rhyming and play acting.

**Dramatic Play – Viewing and dramatising an event that the child is not a direct participant. Ie watching a film or TV programme**

**Locomotor Play – Play where the child moves in anyway or direction, ie playing tag.**

**Deep Play – Play where the child can encounter risky experiences that help to conquer fear and develop survival skills. Ie visiting a farm and handling creepy crawlies.**

**Exploratory Play - Play where children can handle objects by throwing, banging, mouthing or handling them. They can either move or manipulate objects to learn their properties and learn their content, ie stacking bricks.**

**Fantasy Play – Children’s make-believe world where the children get to rearrange the world into whatever they wish. They can let their imagination run wild and we encourage this by providing fantasy dressing up clothes, like pirates and fairies.**

**Imaginative Play – Pretending to be a tree or talking to an imaginary friend**

**Mastery Play – Control of the environment – digging holes and building dens and forts**

**Object Play – Handling and moving an object in a sequence, ie painting**

**Role Play – Pretending to be or do something, although not too intense, ie talking to someone on the phone or playing with the toy brooms**

**Recapulative Play – Play that allows children to explore history, ie when we are discussing world events and human evolution**

### **Characteristics of Effective Teaching and Learning:**

**Playing and Exploring – Children need to find out and explore the objects around them and use their senses. They need to play with what they know and re-enact their experiences. If they are experiencing new activities they need to have a ‘can do’ attitude.**

**Active Learning – Children need to be motivated and have high levels of energy. They must show a certain amount of concentration, despite any distractions. When faced with challenges children should keep trying and demonstrate aspects of problem solving. They should be proud of their accomplishments and enjoy meeting challenges for their own sakes, not just reward.**

**Creating and Thinking Critically – Children should be able to come up with their own ideas and find solutions. They should make links and recognise patterns and sequences and be able to make predictions as to what will happen next and test their own ideas. They should reflect how their activity is going and make a decision to change strategy if required.**

### Balancing Adult-Led and Child-Led Play Activities

The EYFS states that each area of learning and development must be implemented through purposeful play through a mix of adult led and child-initiated activity. In planning and guiding children's activities, I will reflect on the different ways they learn.

There is always time in our day where I allow children to choose their own activities. Children should be given the time to finish the activity they have chosen and I intervene only when necessary. Child Initiated play provides the best platform for extending and developing their learning. If they have chosen the activity themselves they are more likely to be motivated and make their own discoveries.

When children initiate play, I ask open questions to encourage them to think creatively about what they're doing and I spark curiosity by 'wondering' about things, ie. I wonder what we could use to put the sand in the bucket?

I carefully plan our Adult-Led play, whilst thinking about the needs and stage of each unique child. I think about the interests of the child and plan exciting and interesting activities. I focus the children and their learning and ensure they meet their Early Learning goals and are making progress within the EYFS. I plan one planned Adult-Led activity every day, that is reflective of the child's developmental stage.

Getting the balance of both Child Initiated Play and Adult-Led Play is essential, as the overuse of the Early Learning Goals can involve too much Adult-Led Play and not allow the children time to express themselves and come up with new ideas of their own. It is so important that we get the balance right now, as this provides the learning foundations for all future learning.

Throughout the Early Years I constantly observe and monitor each unique child and as their interests and capabilities develop, I change the activities offered and tailor them to the child's needs. As children grow older and nearer reception age, the balance between Child-Initiated play and Adult-Led Play changes and gradually shifts more towards Adult-Led Activities.

### The importance of Inclusive Play

I ensure all children feel welcomed and included and that each child's individual needs are met. I focus on their individual strengths and regularly observe the children and adapt their environment and activities to help them progress to the next stage.

I provide activities that reflect each child's developmental stage and adapt certain tasks so that each child can be involved. For example I provide both small and large cotton reels for threading. This is a task that develops fine motor skills, however the large cotton reels may be more suitable for children with a developmental delay or children with an additional need, or indeed younger children who are developing their fine motor skills. It is important that all children can engage in the activities and their requirements are considered.

If you have any questions about The Value of Play Policy please do not hesitate to ask.