

# Early Learning Opportunities and play philosophy

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At Mereside Farm Nursery we recognise that children learn in different ways and at different rates and plan for this accordingly. Our aim is to support all children attending the nursery to attain their maximum potential within their individual capabilities.

We provide a positive play environment for every child, so they may develop good social skills and an appreciation of all aspects of this country's multi-cultural society. We plan learning experiences to ensure, as far as practical, there is equality of opportunity for all children and a celebration of diversity.

We maintain a personalised record of every child's development, showing their abilities, progress, interests and areas needing further staff or parental assistance.

For children whose home language is not English, we will take reasonable steps to:

- Provide opportunities for children to develop and use their home language in play and learning and support their language development at home; and
- Ensure that children have sufficient opportunities to learn and reach a good standard in English language during the EYFS, ensuring that children are ready to benefit from the opportunities available to them when they begin school.

We ensure that the educational programmes are well planned and resourced to have depth and breadth across the seven areas of learning. They provide interesting and challenging experiences that meet the needs of all children. Planning is based on a secure knowledge and understanding of how to promote the learning and development of young children and what they can achieve.

We implement the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) set by the Department for Education that sets standards to ensure all children learn and develop well. We support and enhance children's learning and development holistically through play-based activities. We review all aspects of learning and development and ensure a flexible approach is maintained, which responds quickly to children's learning and developmental needs. We develop tailor-made activities based on observations which inform future planning and draw on children's needs

and interests. This is promoted through a balance of adult-led and child-initiated opportunities both indoors and outdoors.

Direct observation is supplemented by a range of other evidence to evaluate the impact that practitioners have on the progress children make in their learning including:

- evidence of assessment that includes the progress of different groups of children:
  - assessment on entry (starting point), including parental contributions
  - two-year-old progress checks (where applicable)
  - on-going (formative) assessments, including any parental contributions
  - Transition assessments when children leave for school.

We acknowledge parents as primary educators and encourage parental involvement as outlined in our Parents and Carers as Partners policy. We build strong home links to enhance and extend children's learning both within the nursery environment and in the child's home.

We share information about the EYFS curriculum with parents and signpost them to further support via the following website:

[www.foundationyears.org.uk/](http://www.foundationyears.org.uk/)

## **Play and its promotion**

At Mereside Farm we view play as a child's 'work'.

### **The staff team aim to:**

- Foster the child's perception and perspective allowing them to paint or create what they think, to move or dance in the way they feel and to act as they imagine.
- Promote creativity by giving children the opportunity to think, ask and choose for themselves, express their feelings, invent things, share their ideas and create collaboration
- Place value on a child's 'work' allowing them to feel confident and secure about their achievements.
- Encourage learning through exploration, enjoyment and discovery.
- Encourage play in groups, pairs and on an individual basis. Ideally this play should be initiated through the child or group.
- Make activities 'fun' and enjoyable, building on the child's enthusiasm for learning.
- Extend learning through educational trips and visits, aiming to enhance experiences.
- Involve the children in decision making, actively encouraging them to solve problems for themselves

## **Parents as partners**

Being the child's first educator, parents have a key role to play in their child's development. At Mereside Farm we endeavor to create partnership with parents by:

- Building a positive relationship with parents to work effectively with them and their children.
- Offering support and advice to parents and helping them to extend their child's play in the home environment
- Offering an 'open door' approach.
- Keeping parents informed regularly.
- Listening to and valuing parental contributions to their child's education.

## **Our environment, resources and activities**

We aim to empower children to take control of their environment by giving as much free access as possible and by encouraging all children to help to tidy up and take care of their own environment.

The activities we provide and support in the nursery are based on the interests of the children, so for example if a child has shown a particular interest in building with small Lego we may then encourage this interest in different forms, such as big plastic blocks, magnetic construction or large construction outside.

The aim of using this approach is that the children continue to stay motivated and eager to learn if they are interested in the activity it can help them to develop in other areas connected to their interest. For example, construction on both small and large scales can help to develop fine and gross motor skills, problem solving skills, such as how to balance a block in a certain position to make it stable, or communication with their friends while building, as well as many other areas.

We aim to give the children in our care new and exciting experiences such as playing out in snow, making up messy mixtures, painting with different parts of their body such as hands and feet, exploring new materials and exploring with all their senses to really gain the most from every experience they are offered.

Equipment is purchased from reputable catalogues with resources designed for young children or are checked for suitability if from other sources such as recycled materials or preowned items.

Some resources may be purchased from supermarkets such as items for messy play like flour, salt; pasta etc. and children are supervised while using these resources

There are some resources in the nursery which parents may feel they do not want their child to have free access to, for example scissors. However, we strongly believe that if children are given responsibility and shown how to use resources in the right way, for example not walking around with scissors and cutting correctly, they can become competent and confident with all resources offered to them.

All children are competent learners from birth, exploring their environment from a very early age and being keen to explore every aspect of their day. Overall, we want our environment to help enable those processes and make the children's time with us enjoyable and meaningful.

### **Continuous provision**

Our aim is to have the following resources available for the children to ensure a good quality continuous provision alongside many other opportunities for learning such as roleplay and group activities such as circle time.

- Sand
- Water
- Paint
- Books
- Mark making/writing resources
- I.T resources, e.g. computer, whiteboard.
- Construction.
- Physical equipment
- Creative resources, e.g. paper, glue etc.

We also provide a variety of 'messy' activities for children to explore.

Some of these continuous provisions may always not be available dependent on the ages of the children and the space available but we will endeavor to have all available as often as possible.

### **Indoor and outdoor ethos**

We strongly believe that both the indoor and outdoor environments are rich for learning opportunities and this is also stated in the Early Years foundation stage document, which focuses on the learning and development of children aged 0 to 5 years.

Therefore, we use our outdoor spaces as much as possible during the nursery day. We do encourage children to go outside in all weathers as it is a valuable learning experience for

them to see the outdoors in all seasons, experiencing cold snow, splashing in rain puddles and feeling hot sun.

We understand that some parents may not feel comfortable with their child being outside in some weather conditions, but we always ensure children are dressed appropriately and monitor the time they are outside for; we will not exclude any child from the learning opportunities and access to fresh air which is so important in all weathers. If parents ask us not to take their child outside due to being unwell, unfortunately we may ask for them to be taken back home as they should not be in nursery that day if too unwell to access all areas of the nursery.

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