



## Curriculum and Play Ethos

### Our Vision

At Aspley Guise Pre-School we are committed to creating a nurturing and caring environment where children feel safe and secure, allowing them to flourish.

As a semi-rural setting, we have a strong focus on outdoor learning with daily in-out play and use of our Forest School.

With years of experience as childcare professionals, we know how fundamentally important the early years' experience is for a child. With this in mind, we are passionate about fostering a child centred approach and using our knowledge of individual children's interests and stages of development to implement in the moment planning.

From this solid foundation we then help children to build their confidence by experimenting through play, encouraging them to engage with their surroundings and peers.

We believe that by building on these positive beginnings, children are given the opportunity to fully explore their potential and take those first, fundamentally important, educational steps.

We believe that children should be free to play and develop their skills and imagination through independence and exciting play experiences.

The practitioners are involved in play at the children's level and are there to facilitate and guide deeper learning through modelling and extending play.

When children first start at preschool, the key worker will do some baseline assessments of each child's development. This is always done through play and gives the practitioners a sound starting point for each child's development and next steps.

The practitioners spend time with their key children during each session and this helps them to understand the interests of individual children and how they are developing their skills in education and play.

To be able to do this, practitioners do not routinely take photographs of children in play or spend time out of contact with the children and the learning environment to take part in written assessment.

The knowledge that staff build up by spending time with the children is key to understanding their abilities and next steps.

At the end of every day, practitioners discuss the children's interests and how we can extend their play for the following session based on their interests but also taking into account their individual development needs.

We do not believe in short 'snap shot' observations as they lack very little depth and no context of what has been happening before, after an activity or the involvement of the child. When a practitioner takes a photograph, it disrupts the flow of play.

For example;

**'Dave is building a tower with the blocks.'** This tells us that Dave can manipulate the blocks, has good hand eye coordination.

It does not tell us- how long he spent at the activity, if he was playing alone or in a group, if he was able to count how many blocks or know the colour of the blocks he was using, did he make a plan before building, did he adjust the building of the tower as he played, was he talking to anyone during his play etc

**‘Colin can count to 5’** This tells us that Colin could count up to 5.

It does not tell us- if he could count objects, did he use 1:1 correspondence (counting one object at a time and understand 1 means 1 object), was he able to recognise the numeral 5, could he match the number of objects to the correct numeral and most importantly was he just singing counting to 5?

Instead, we use longer observations where the practitioners spend half an hour every half term solely observing a child and noting;

what kind of play they are involved in- solitary, small group, large group

How engaged they are- are they extending play, are they interacting with peers, how are they using resources

The level of their wellbeing- are they excited to learn and play, are they able to maintain concentration

What language is being used- how are they using language to communicate

The staff will then use this knowledge to evaluate the environment and resources and build on areas of development for each child and how their learning could be extended and what their next steps will be.

Areas of development-

Personal, Social and Emotional- Prime area

Communication and Language-Prime area

Physical- Prime area

Literacy

Maths

Understanding the World

Expressive Arts and Design

In the time your child is with us, our focus is to ensure each child has the opportunity to develop across all areas of learning. Very often we see children who are more confident in one area than others and we value all of the areas of development equally. The areas of personal, social and emotional development, communication and language development and physical development are the prime areas of learning as they are the areas that children need a solid base in before they have the skills to build upon the other areas.

Our ethos is to encourage independence and have an emphasis on personal, social and emotional skills. All too often we are told by parents that their child is confident with counting and knows their alphabet but very often these are the children that are not confident to ask a friend to play, may not like to participate in messy or craft activities etc.

We do, of course, want children to be stimulated in the areas that they excel, but our objective is to focus on the prime areas of development in the early years.

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Children do not need to know the alphabet! It has very little value or relevance for them. Singing 'a, b, c, d' is not something that they can use in their real life play as when they begin early phonics, we are concentrating on the phonetic sound a letter makes and when children have been told that the letter A is called 'aay' it is then hugely confusing when practitioners are saying 'aa' as in the sound that the letter makes.

We will begin to develop children's early literacy skills by reading stories and having access to a variety of books. Children need to listen to stories to hear new vocabulary, they need to understand the difference between fiction and non-fiction to understand that information can be found from books, they need to see written word and see that in English books, print is read from left to right, top to bottom.

We then start to build upon listening skills- hearing quiet and loud sounds, environmental sounds, sound lotto to differentiate between sounds. All of these skills help children to be able to hear individual sounds which then help them later on to segment and blend when they are learning to read.

We are building up children's physical development in a variety of ways as children need good muscle tone to be able to sit at a table to write, to have the strength in their wrists and fingers to put the correct amount of pressure on a pencil, to be able to have the dexterity in their fingers and hands to form letters.

We do all of this by encouraging large scale movements outdoors, participating in malleable play such as playdough to build the muscles in children's hands and fingers and bilateral activities which focus on children being able to use their bodies to cross the 'midline' (use your left hand to touch your right leg etc). This helps children's brains develop vital connections from the left and right which help them to have good control and reflexes.

When we teach number, we are primarily focusing on numbers up to 10. Most children can count beyond this but they have little understanding of what number means. They have purely learnt to count to 10 on rote as they would singing a nursery rhyme.

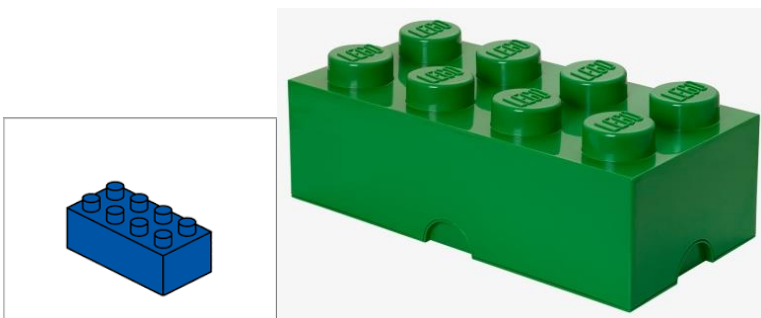
We need children to know that 2 means 2 objects.

2



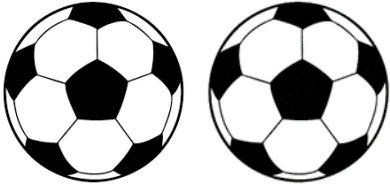
That 2 still means 2 if the objects are different sizes.

2



That 2 means 2 if they are arranged in different ways.

2



Or

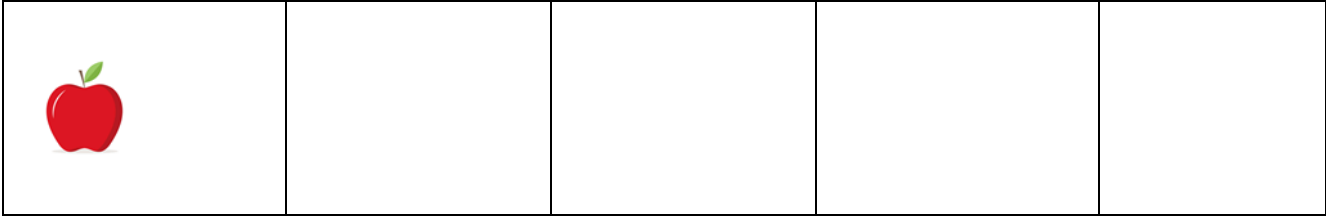


Or



We introduce number grids so children can quickly start to recognise quantities;





If children are able to recognise quantities by sight without counting this really helps their concept of number and quick recall.

Children must be secure in accurate counting, numeral recognition and matching to be confident with place value. We can then start to introduce the concept of 1 more and 1 less. We use patterns to help children understand number as there is a direct link between pattern and number solving and this is something that is now part of the EYFS.

We believe that personal, social and emotional development is the key starting point for all children. Children need to have a positive sense of self, be confident to have a go, gain independence in self help skills and understand rules and boundaries.

We encourage all children to take their own coats off, change into welly boots if they are playing in the water, ask a friend if they can play and take turns using a sand timer. If children can be confident to have a go, they will be able to participate in activities of their choosing without facing a barrier of having to ask for help to put an apron on or not be able to join in a really exciting game because they don't want to ask to play.

We support children to be able to solve their own problems and conflicts by giving them the skills to understand the rules and boundaries of the setting, to give them choice about how to manage a situation by asking them what they are upset about and how they think it could be solved, by using sand timers to learn to wait their turn, understanding what different emotions are and what they feel like (how does happy feel, what makes you happy) and give them strategies to use if they are feeling upset or frustrated such as deep breathing that they learn through our accredited yoga teaching, using our calm space or using an adult for support.

All of these skills are part of self-regulation which means that children become aware of themselves and how they feel. Regulating their emotions by learning that sometimes we have to wait for something to be our turn. All of these early skills have a direct link to how we deal with emotions and mental health later in life.

What we really want is your child to come in happy every day and excited to learn and play! We want them to build good relationships with the practitioners and children and for the practitioners to be able to build good relationships with you as parents.

If you have any questions, please speak to a member of staff who will be happy to speak to you in more detail about our ethos and pedagogy.