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# Teaching and Learning at Stockingford Nursery School



To reflect our pedagogy, teaching and learning at Stockingford Nursery School is based, as developmentally informed, on a blend of adult directed and supported teaching experiences that ultimately enhance ‘In the Moment Planning’ – child-led learning. Child-led learning is a simple and logical process – let the children choose what to do, join them, support and extend learning.

### **Brain Development:**

Babies are born with billions of brain cells and with stimulation these cells connect and form synapses. This is brain development, this is a child making “progress”, this is when a brain is “lit up”. Without stimulation the brain will not develop fully. This has been illustrated in the case of the children from Romanian orphanages. These children were fed and clean but they were left in cots without interaction or stimulation, for up to three years of their lives. Their brain scans show huge gaps in their brains, particularly in the temporal lobes – areas which regulate emotions and receive input from the senses. These children struggle to develop empathy and have cognitive delays.

It is vital, therefore, that young children are stimulated and that the opportunities for synapse development are maximised. We need their brains to be “lit up” as much as possible. Brain activity and synapse formation are at their highest when a child is deeply engrossed in something which fascinates, challenges and makes them happy. At Stockingford Nursery School we recognise that every child is unique and we cannot always predict or impose what will spark that deep fascination. Each child is at a different level of development and therefore something that will challenge one child will be mundane for the next. Equally one child will be at their happiest digging in the mud while another will enjoy sitting and drawing a picture.

Children are born with a natural desire to explore and learn and practitioners can support them in this. We do this by creating an enabling environment (both physical and emotional) and through the relationships and interactions that the children experience. In continuous provision we do not plan ahead, rather we remain “in the moment” with the children as they explore and learn. We observe carefully, and enhance the learning through provocation and the role of the adult whenever we spot a “teachable moment”. Our observations, interactions and outcomes inform our assessment processes. As a result our children can make outstanding progress.

## Enabling Environment:

An enabling environment is critical. *When children arrive to session, opportunities to learn are available and accessible.* The doors to the outside environment will be open as soon as possible, as some children only become deeply engaged in learning outdoors. From day one, the children are supported to explore the environment to see what is available, to select the resources they would like, to use them appropriately and to help to tidy the area when they have finished. Our Nursery School expectations are essential when so much freedom is given – all the children need to feel safe within consistent routine. Clear and consistent expectations are key. For example, indoors the children will walk and use quieter voices – running and using louder voices can be done outside.





### **The role of the adult:**

Practitioners are aware that child-initiated activity is a powerful opportunity for learning, and make the most of this. Practitioners:

- maintain their focus on learning, and actively use a range of strategies to support and extend learning through engagement with the children – including introducing new words and new ideas, thinking out loud, modelling more complex ways of speaking, posing new problems,

encouraging negotiation of conflicts, explaining, or demonstrating approaches

- offer assistance and support as needed to help children to be successful in following their ideas, including talking about or suggesting strategies, and practical support such as holding an object in place as the child works with it
- ensure that the learning environment offers a range of stimulating open-ended materials, outdoors and indoors, which children can use and combine in their own way to meet their own purposes
- ensure that children have sustained time to develop their activities
- encourage children to use the language of learning as they make their plans and carry out and review their activities, talking about things such as 'I remembered, I tried, we found out, we know, I can, we thought, we solved the problem.'
- use a problem-solving approach to resolving conflicts or behavioural issues, helping children to be aware of others' points of view and thinking together to agree on a solution
- observe children's activities carefully, trying to discover what the child is thinking about and learning and the goals of the play, so they can accurately support and extend the child's learning focus either at the time, or later by changes to the environment or in planned activities.

#### **Sessions:**

Sessions are organised to maximise the amount of "free-flow" time available. The children complete their routine on arrival, and go off to play where they choose. Children can then engage in learning experiences in continuous provision for the rest of the session. **Staff support the children in their chosen activity.** The adults will usually **go to the children**— they don't call the children to them – unless staff observe children who would benefit from being cued into learning. Just making this one change in the behaviour of staff can bring about a complete shift in emphasis and focus. The children become the focus instead of a particular activity that the adult has planned.

Some children may also engage in an adult led intervention group or group activity during this time, or in 1:1 activities with an adult to support

their individual intervention plans. About 15 minutes before the end of the session, the children help to tidy up and come together ready for the end of session. The nursery staff team all contribute to extend teaching and learning opportunities to ensure that all children develop holistically to their full potential.

### **Setting targets for children:**

Next steps for children's learning are identified through our assessment process and are also explored 'in the moment' - adults extend learning opportunities as and when they happen. Staff know the children and as they interact, choose the best way to respond to further extend learning.

### **Adult –led and supported learning:**

Teaching and Learning in the moment is supported by opportunities for adult led learning as developmentally informed which include:

- Daily group time sessions with the keyworker, with an emphasis on PSED and belonging.
- Intervention groups as identified by knowledge of the children, to support and extend learning.
- Group time altogether or in small groups in Big and Little Nursery.
- Our curriculum map identifies opportunities for taught programmes of study such as keeping ourselves safe and emotional well-being, as well as identifying key vocabulary.
- Group learning experiences in response to provocations.