

Play Policy

Aim

ICP Nurseries Ltd is committed to recognising and supporting the importance of play, both indoors and outdoors, and the value of providing risk and challenge to all children.

Importance of Play

The Key Person will support children's play throughout their session at the nursery, considering the age, interests and individual needs of each child. The nursery environment in which children can play is a safe and secure space with play activities throughout the day to meet the individual needs of the children. Transitions between daily activities, where possible, **MUST** not interrupt the children's play experiences and routines **MUST** remain flexible.

Children are encouraged to make choices and think critically through independent play on a one to one basis, in a small group or larger group. Play experiences should also promote the understanding and acceptance of diversity. Key Persons are to encourage children to experience spontaneous/unplanned activities where possible.

ICP Nurseries Ltd uses the current educational frameworks as guidance. The nursery is responsible for providing play opportunities at the setting or when off site on visits, e.g. Forest School or local outings.

Play is children's work. Free play, including the outdoors, is an integral part of the curriculum and is a fundamental part of a child's day. Through play, children can explore, investigate, discover, create, practice, rehearse, repeat, revise and consolidate knowledge already gained, to help develop new skills for now and in the future. It is essential for keeping children healthy and reaching important social, emotional and cognitive developmental milestones. It also helps children to manage anxiety and become resilient.

Play in Practice

The types of play to be incorporated in the nursery include:

- Water Play
- Sand Play
- Messy Play
- Malleable Play
- Physical Play
- Role Play
- Dramatic Play
- Heuristic Play
- Cognitive Play
- Emotional Play
- Creative Play
- Constructive Play

Opportunities can be structured, spontaneous, adult-led or child initiated.

- All experiences of play/activities **MUST** be made accessible to **ALL** children.
- A diverse variety of resources should be used to promote play.
- Key Persons are encouraged to be creative and use natural resources **ONLY** to enhance the learning and play experiences, e.g.:
 - Cornflour
 - Leaves
 - Mud
 - Herbs
 - Johnson's fresh bubble baby bath and wash, no more tears

Using these materials will enable many sensory experiences for the children. **NO** other item can be used.

The Emotional Environment

Babies and young children are very perceptive and aware of the feelings and atmosphere around them. Relationships between adults and children, between adults and other adults and between children themselves all have an important role to play in developing children's sense of themselves and their understanding of how to interact with others.

All ICP Nurseries will offer a daily activity using their:

- Feeling Box (0 - 2yrs)
- Emotions Box (2 - 3yrs)
- Relationships & Emotions Box (3 - 5yrs)

Young children build an understanding of themselves as individuals, which increases their confidence to engage with the people, objects and experiences in the world around them, whilst reinforcing:

- the development of a positive sense of themselves and others; and
- confidence in their own abilities

Physical Play

Children over the age of 2 years attending an ICP Nursery are encouraged to carry out a 'Wake Up & Shake Up' session every morning and afternoon. The physical movement session is enjoyable for the children and impacts on the below:

- Enjoyment of nursery life and a sense of well-being (staff too)
- Improved self-esteem impacting on other areas of learning: 'success breeds success'
- Improved co-ordination (gross motor skills then impacting on fine motor skills)
- Improved rhythm and timing (this has helped with listening skills for music and dance sessions)
- Improved concentration and interest in tasks immediately following the brief exercise session
- Increased stamina
- Improved behaviour
- Improved hydration (children get thirsty and drink more water)
- Beginning to understand the benefits of physical activities in a fun way

The session will be no longer than 10 minutes.

Child-Led Learning

A child-initiated activity is wholly decided upon by the child, based on their own motivation, and remains under the child's control. It will involve many types of play. It may be seen by the child as an activity with a serious purpose to explore a project or express an idea. It is guided by certain boundaries of safety within the nursery environment and the daily routine.

Children will have the opportunity and time to:

- become involved in their own interests in play, share their interests with peers and be excited and inspired by their own discoveries
- submerge themselves in their play and explore their individual ideas without constant interruption to do other 'more important' activities
- be able to reflect on their ideas and interests and return to them
- show deeper levels of learning as part of thinking critically or using their imagination
- either carry out the play indoors or outdoors
- invite an adult into their play to share their thinking

Adult-Led Learning

Adult-led play is play opportunities and activities that are organised and led by the adult. There is also adult-initiated play or an 'invitation to play' which are play opportunities set up by Key Persons for children to discover. This will include:

- new or natural materials added into the defined areas
- resources provided to represent diversity
- the provision of planned activities for children not sleeping as well as offering free choice
- planning and allowing the children to mix different resources together from different defined areas, where appropriate
- carrying out project work with older children to demonstrate progression of a subject matter. Remember to encourage the children to recall and predict the next stage of the project.

Parents and Play

Working in partnership with parents and/or carers is essential to the Early Years Foundation Stage. ICP Nurseries Ltd encourages parents/carers to play an active role in their children's development. The nurseries will encourage their contribution to play in various ways. This can include contribution to My Memory Book, visits to the nursery, attending outings, parents' evenings, curriculum evenings, etc. Parent and/or carer contributions are welcomed and valued.

Outdoor Play

The outdoors is a natural environment for children. It is expected that children have access to outdoor play at all times. Where the nursery garden is not accessible, the nursery will plan trips out following the **Outings Policy**.

When children play in an outdoor environment they are active, absorbed, motivated and purposeful.

Children will often be less inhibited outside and more willing to join in with activities and talk. Overcrowded spaces, in some instances, effect children's behaviour. Outdoors is the perfect place to learn through movement, which is one of the four vehicles through which children learn, the others being playing, talking and sensory experiences. All of these happen naturally outside, but with so much space and so many opportunities to move in different ways.

The children's environment indoors can, in some instances, effect their emotions or behaviour, especially in an overcrowded space. Children will often be less inhibited outside and more willing to join in with activities, talk and come out of their shells.

Procedure

- All areas of play are to be set up and accessible for all children, both indoors and outdoors, for the arrival of the children at the nursery.
- Areas must be set up and defined at all times. When children move off from an area the space **MUST** be returned to its original set-up.
- **ALL** activities presented to the children must offer extension and be exciting to trigger their curiosity and imagination.
- The space must be supported by furniture or storage that supports its function and be able to offer further extension to the learning within the defined area.
- Storage furniture using baskets or boxes **MUST** be labelled with text and a photograph of its contents.
- Children **MUST** be encouraged to return their play items to their original storage location once play has ceased.
- Tidy away time should not be used, instead the phase **MUST** be communicated or referred to as, 'let's put everything back where it belongs'. With all storage boxes labelled/photographed, children understand where the item 'belongs'.

- All rooms **MUST** have a quiet area, book area, construction area, baby care area, domestic area, maths and literacy area, small world area and sensory play must be provided for children.
- Older children must have sand and water available at all times, alongside a creative table and easel that offers a variety of tools or items to create their masterpieces.
- Staff **MUST** ensure children are allowed to play and to learn the following skills whilst enjoying themselves:
 - Exploring
 - Investigating
 - Discovering
 - Creating
 - Practicing
 - Rehearsing
 - Repeating

Capturing Play

Each child has a My Memory Book or an online electronic software programme. Staff record a child's progress to know what a child can do and what skills s/he needs support with. The files also demonstrate what learning objectives have been offered and/or achieved and allow Key Persons to plan effectively for the needs of their children.