

The Importance of Play at Walton House Nursery



Play underpins the Early Years Foundation Stage. It also underpins learning and all aspects of children's development.

Through play, children develop language and communication skills, emotional, social and creative skills and intellectual skills. For most children their play is natural and spontaneous although some children may need extra support from adults.

Play takes place indoors and outdoors and it's in these different environments children explore and discover their immediate world. It is here they practise new ideas and skills, take risks, show imagination and solve problems on their own or with others.

At Walton House Nursery, we give our children their own voice by asking them what they would like to play with. We ask our children what they want to learn about and provide adult led activities and child led play inspired by the children and their interests.

Please see the link below for more information on the Early Years Foundation Stage:

<https://www.gov.uk/early-years-foundation-stage>

Babies & Play



Babies and young children love to play with anything from their fingers and toes, to their toys, as well as with sounds and with adults and children. When babies play, they are learning at the same time. Play is a crucial time for babies to learn and they don't always need other children or adults to contribute. Babies are quite happy playing alone, sometimes only needing the comfort of hearing others around them.

When babies play, their whole bodies are involved in reaching, grasping, rolling and touching things. As they become more mobile and gain control over their bodies, babies enjoy putting things together such as piling blocks on top of one another or banging balls together, another favourite is filling and emptying containers.

Babies also enjoy looking at books, listening to stories and rhymes and joining in with songs. As they hear and join in with stories, songs and rhymes, and look at books, babies become familiar with different sounds and words. Babies learn through looking, listening, touching, tasting, investigating, exploring, experimenting and through playing and talking.

Our baby room is equipped with toys and sensory equipment to stimulate your little one whilst learning through play!

Toddlers & Play



Toddlers love to pretend, basing their play on imitating things they have seen people do, like vacuuming, talking on the telephone or playing a guitar. When toddlers play in this way, they don't always need the real thing, as they will make do with anything that they can adapt to their pretend play.

Toddlers also learn through looking, listening, touching, tasting, investigating, exploring, experimenting and through playing and talking. This means that young children need to have opportunities to:

- look at interesting things such as birds, animals, plants, trees, mobiles, shells, stones, boxes, tubes, mirrors
- listen to a range of sounds such as songs, rhymes, jingles, stories, music
- touch a variety of objects – hard, soft, bumpy, smooth, rough, cold, warm
- taste a range of flavours such as those in fruit, milk, vegetables, bread
- investigate things that open, close, float, sink, twist, turn
- explore objects such as large boxes, things that make noises, things that move
- experiment with water, sand, clay, dough, paint, glue, felt pens
- play for uninterrupted periods of time, alone or alongside others, with help from adults, and in their own way
- talk to other children and adults and to have their efforts rewarded

Pre-school & Play



Providing high quality planned experiences for children's play is an important way for practitioners to support children's learning, that is both enjoyable and challenging. When pre-school children play, they are learning at the highest level. Play can extend certain areas of their learning – for example, developing language skills by promoting talk between children or introducing new vocabulary that they use and act out in their play.

Examples of a planned experience for older children in the Early Years Foundation Stage would be setting up a cafe. Children enjoy learning about different foods, providing role play costumes to enhance learning about different cultures and job roles, the list of opportunities is endless. Such a playful approach to learning builds on children's interests and responds to their ideas for play and allows scope for structured activities to teach specific skills and knowledge, sometimes relating to a child's learning priorities.

The role our practitioners have is crucial. It is also important that practitioners provide time, space and appropriate resources that will inspire play and inspire children's imaginations. Our practitioners observe play and join in when invited. It is important to watch and listen before intervening and disrupting children's play. At Walton House Nursery, our practitioners value play and provide safe but challenging environments, supporting and extending learning development.

Our Rooms & Play

Our Curiosity Room is a wonderful example of how we support child led play. This environment is inspired by, Reggio Emilia. The Reggio Emilia Approach is an innovative and inspiring approach to early childhood education which values the child as *strong, capable* and *resilient*; rich with wonder and knowledge. Every child brings with them deep curiosity and potential and this innate curiosity drives their interest to understand their world and their place within it. Whether children choose to play with 'loose parts' or 'our range of natural resources', read in our fairy light lit den or combine all three, it is their freedom of choice. The environment becomes the 'third teacher' and invites curiosity and a world of imagination.



You can find out more about the Reggio Emilia Approach by clicking on the link below:

<https://education.gov.scot/improvement/learning-resources/The%20Reggio%20Emilia%20Approach%20to%20Early%20Years%20Education>

Our role play area at Walton House Nursery showcases an excellent array of role play equipment from dolls, our home corner, dressing up, puppets and much more. But exactly what way does pretend play help benefit babies' toddlers and pre-school aged children?



Developing social skills - Role play is an extremely social act and is imperative in young children. All walls of reality are broken in imaginary and role play as children pretend to be something or someone different from themselves. In being assigned and accepting different roles and then acting them out, this type of play practises both verbal and non-verbal communication skills. When children group together and practice imaginary play, they negotiate roles and mutually agree different terms. This helps youngsters develop the skills they need to socialise and cooperate with their peers. They learn how to control impulses and how to respect the decisions of others, which is a central aspect of sound social skills.

Communication and language skills - Imaginary play and role play typically involves verbal communication. When children participate in dramatic types of play, they copy and practice the words they have heard others saying which ultimately develop vocabulary and language skills. In addition, children are aware that in order to participate well in the game they need to listen to others in order to respond and follow the game in an appropriate manner. Not only does this type of play therefore promote the use of speaking but it also promotes collaborative and listening skills.

Cognitive development - Make believe play involves children recalling pictures they have built up in their mind from past experiences. Whether it is their mum paying for goods at a supermarket or a nurse bandaging their knee at the doctor's, with imaginary play children recreate these scenes they have built up in their heads and practice solving problems that are often part of these pretend scenarios. In observing, discovering and carrying out deductive reasoning, pretend play is critical for cognitive skills and helping children build the ability to solve problems and draw their own conclusions.

Physical development - In pretending to be someone or something else in a theatrical way, pretend play can help develop a child's gross and fine motor skills. From putting their character's costume on to putting the props away when the game has finished, role play builds hand-eye coordination as well as developing visual discrimination.

For ideas on creating role play at home, please click on the link below:

<https://www.bigeyedowl.co.uk/roleplay.htm>

Our mathematics area features an abundance of equipment to enhance learning in all areas of mathematics such as:



- Pattern
- Measure
- Counting
- Shape
- Space

All our equipment aids learning in how to recognise mathematical rules, create patterns, compare and measure quantities, acquire knowledge of prepositions and matching and mastering mathematical terms.

For ideas on mathematics play, please click on the link below:

<https://family.co/blog/inspiration/10-creative-early-years-maths-activities/>

Our literacy area consists of writing and reading equipment, as well as stencils and other equipment to enhance fine motor skills. Literacy also includes talking about books, print in the environment, early mark making and writing, as well as sharing books and reading.



The development of literacy skills in the Early Years involves encouragement of children's communication skills. Children can express themselves and communicate through a variety of ways including verbal communication and non-verbal communication.

At Walton House Nursery we encourage and extend our children's speech through phonics and song. Breaking down words into syllables and into sounds helps children to understand that individual words are composed of different sounds which can help to improve their speech and pronunciation. Becoming familiar with phonics verbally is a great stepping stone for children when they begin the process of learning to read.

For inspiration on books to read with your child/ren, please click on the link below:

<https://literacytrust.org.uk/resources/choose-perfect-book-your-child-these-book-lists/>

Our Arts & Crafts Room inhabits a world of sensory and craft play where making a mess contributes to learning in a whole new way.



In a well-equipped arts and crafts area, and with appropriate adult support, children can:

- use their senses to learn about their environment and connect with what they already know
- respond to physical challenge
- improve fine and gross motor skills of co-ordination, control, manipulation, and movement
- develop concentration and learn from mistakes
- become confident in their physical skills
- explore language associated with materials and their use, for example, words to describe texture or actions
- develop and consolidate preference for using their left or right hand
- become confident users of tools and equipment
- design, evaluate and refine their models and artwork
- manipulate tools and materials
- explore 'joining' and 'assembling'.

Children exploring their physical dexterity through creative work are often acquiring skills that are useful in other areas of their life. Children who pour and mix paint or water, for example, will become more confident pouring drinks. Manipulating small items helps children develop the dexterity to hold and control a pencil. Clearing up after a messy activity raises children's awareness of taking responsibility for themselves (by, for example, washing their hands) and their environment.

For a multitude of arts and crafts ideas, please click on the link below:

<https://www.pinterest.co.uk/>

Sensory play allows children to use all their senses, it is a great way for children of all ages to learn about different textures as well as using their noses to determine what it smells like.



For children, sensory play is about letting them explore new textures and learning new skills. This type of play can be beneficial for children's development; this is because when children are investigating materials adults are helping them to develop their cognitive, social & emotional, physical, creative and linguistic skills. It has also been said that sensory play aids children's brain development.

Here are some sensory play activities we use at Walton House Nursery

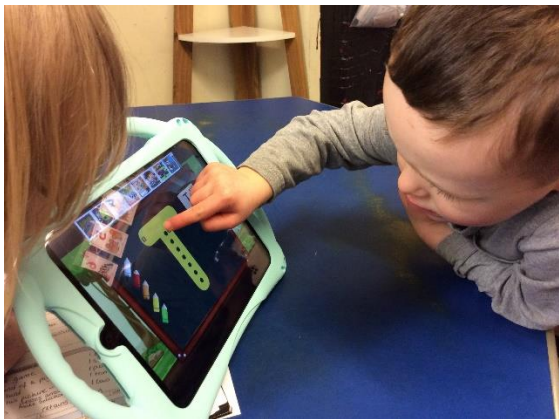
- Play dough
- Shaving foam
- Dry and wet sand
- Finger paints
- Coloured rice
- Cornflour and water
- Pasta
- Oats
- Mud
- Slime

Our children thoroughly enjoy our sensory play and find this engaging and exciting! The more mess the more fun the children are having!

If you would like to provide sensory play at home, please see the link below for ideas:

<https://www.learning4kids.net/list-of-sensory-play-ideas/>

I.C.T. allows children to use their literacy and mathematic skills in an exciting, innovative way. From building their own farm, to solving puzzles, practicing writing letters, colouring and listening to stories and music, we offer a range of I.C.T. to broaden our children's minds and senses.



Apps we use:

- Make a scene – Farmyard
- Toonia colourbook
- Dino puzzle
- ABC Typing learning (dotted alphabet)
- Baby Drums
- Kildotland

Online programmes we use:

- Jolly Toy Art
- The Learning Station
- Chu Chu TV
- Pre-school prep company
- Little Baby Bum

Our Garden

Our garden offers a haven of freedom and adventure! We have a range of equipment in the garden and we spend as much time outside as the weather permits. We even have umbrellas during light rain so we can still be outside having fun. We have also put up our own bird boxes and are waiting to see if we get any visitors.



Outside we provide everything we do inside! We paint, draw, count, read and run in our garden providing play across the entire Early Years framework spectrum.

At Walton House Nursery we recognise the value of outdoor play and how this advances children's play and learning immeasurably.

We also have our Tiny Tekkers ball skills classes outside which the children love!

For more information on the importance of outdoor play, please click on the link below:

<https://www.nct.org.uk/baby-toddler/learning-talk-and-communication-your-baby/benefits-outdoor-play-for-children>