

Organising play - EYFS 2012

A lot of childminders are asking me if play is still important in the revised EYFS. They are confused because they keep seeing reference to learning and development, relationships and environments, characteristics and 'educational outcomes', preparing children for school etc... you cannot blame them for being a little concerned!

Yes, play is still very important in the revised EYFS. The requirements state that each of the 7 areas of learning and development must be implemented through...

- **Planned, purposeful play** – this means that you should be able to talk confidently about why different types of play have been provided and know what a child is learning during their play (also known as learning intentions).
- **Adult led activities** - these are activities you have put out for the children to enjoy. You will probably work with the children during the activities. Adult led activities tend to be planned because of something a child has said or done in their previous sessions with you. For example, a child is a sensory learner and you see that he really enjoys touching and stroking things so you plan his week of adult-led activities to include...

Monday - sensory books

Tuesday - gloop in the messy tray

Wednesday - playdough with glitter added

Thursday - sand mousse

Friday - treasure hunt to find leaves and conkers

- **Adult guided activities** – these are activities you set out for children or activities the children choose to do by themselves - and you guide them to use the resources, supporting their learning and extending their experiences.

Sometimes, during adult guided activities, you might leave the children to play independently after showing them how the resources might be used, watching and listening to their play so you can learn more about how they learn.

- **Child initiated play** – these are times when children will learn by going off and doing their own thing (leading their own play), using your resources to enhance their play. Child initiated play should be available every day for as long as the children want to concentrate - babies might enjoy kicking or playing with their treasure baskets while older children can enjoy role play experiences or small world adventures.

What play needs to be planned?

You need to plan for...

- **Inside play** - using all your resources including your continuous provision (toys, games, books etc), activity ideas you know the children will enjoy etc.
- **Outside play** - the EYFS says that, 'Providers must provide access to an outdoor play area or, if that is not possible, ensure that outdoor activities are planned and taken on a daily basis'.
- **Outings** - so parents understand the value of outings for their children and you are aware of what the children are learning, so that you can complement their experiences when you get back to the provision. When you take children to toddler groups etc you can plan their time there to ensure they get the most from the experiences.

A lot of your planning will be delivered through your daily and weekly routines... some might need to be written down... much of it can be noted after it has happened, especially if it is child led.

Your planning must not take you away from the children or stop you from being available to meet their needs... it must be flexible too so that you can respond quickly to a snowfall or a child's new interest. Think about how you organise your time with the children and set out their days and consider whether you currently offer a range of activities which include all 3 types of play planning.

Balancing play can also be tricky for some childminders, especially if they have been told to separate their days into different play types or to show play types on their planning sheets! The EYFS 2012 does **not** state that you must allow children a certain percentage of their time to play their own games or that half the day must be adult-led... it is up to you to judge how the experiences you offer children are balanced.

In some instances your reflections might lead you to change the way you meet a child's play needs. For example you might think that you can support the child better if you give him more one-to-one time or you might plan some themed activities using your continuous provision areas to enhance the child's learning experience. However, this is for you to judge depending on the individual child. It is not good practice to drag a happy child away from his games because you have an adult-led session planned. You can suggest to the child that he might enjoy joining in and provide enthusiasm and support for him - but if he continues his games that is his choice.

As children get slightly older, the EYFS requires a 'shift towards more activities led by adults' as we prepare children for more formal learning in Year 1. However this requirement is aimed at other settings because, once children attend school and we only provide wrap around or holiday care for them, we no longer have to deliver the full EYFS. Our role changes and we must instead talk to parents and the child's other setting about how we complement their care.