

Activity ideas for all areas of learning

I initially wrote this information for members of the Independent Childminders Facebook group who told me that it was a useful planning prompt. It is not a definitive list of everything you can do with children – it is just a few ideas to support children in each of the areas of learning.

During your Ofsted inspection, your inspector will be looking to see how well you teach each of the children in your care. Part of teaching is showing evidence that the planning you have in place ensures you have appropriate resources available – because children cannot learn well if they are not challenged and stimulated in their play.

We all know that the most important and effective type of planning is individual, linked to each child's interests, learning styles, schemas, previous observations, learning characteristics etc. You can use this activity ideas list as an enhancement to your individual planning, to help you prepare 'invitations to play' which children can access through the day in addition to the individual learning you have planned for them.

For example...

Jane enjoys playing with the dolls and would happily wrap her doll up and take it for a walk round the garden all morning. You offer this activity and add some water play so she can bathe her doll.

As additional 'invitations to play' you also have some of the following outside experiences available –

- C & L – role play flower shops as part of your spring themed activity planning;
- PD – flower sewing cards to promote fine motor skills;
- PSED – games where Jane is encouraged to play cooperatively with other children eg playing flower shops with friends etc...

John enjoys playing with cars and garages. Dad is a mechanic and has taken John to work with him recently. You have observed John using a lot more garage role play in his learning. you set up a garage for him and add a notepad and pen along with a phone so he can take bookings for his garage from other children.

As additional 'invitations to play' you also have some of the following outside experiences available –

- C & L – spring themed activities linked to your spring words display to support John's extending vocabulary and cooperative games to support John's developing listening skills;
- PD – flower sewing cards to promote fine motor skills;
- PSED – discussion with John about his favourite spring changes which will lead to arts and crafts as part of his individual / next steps planning.

Activity ideas for the PRIME areas of learning...

Communication & Language

1. Listening & attention
2. Understanding
3. Speaking / communicating

Activity ideas include -

- Books, comics & stories*
- CDs* – music, stories
- Chatting to friends – communication friendly spaces
- Helping with jobs
- Library visits
- Listening games* – listening lotto, listening walks, recording sounds (ICT)
- Question & answer games*
- Role play
- Sign language
- Singing and rhymes*
- Story sets / bags* extend learning
- Story telling*

*Letters and Sounds phase 1

Physical Development

1. Moving (gross motor skills)
2. Handling (fine motor skills)
3. Health & self-care

Activity ideas include -

- Art & crafts – rubbing, stencils
- Climbing – up & down steps & stairs
- Cooking – learning about healthy food and healthy eating
- Construction toys
- Fine motor practice – cutting, stickers, glue, pencil control, tracing
- Hand washing - germs
- Mark making – chalk, crayons & pencils
- Outside gross motor skills – bike, scooter, rocker, slide, swing, dancing etc
- Park visits & soft play – climbing, jumping, running, kicking a ball
- Threading reels & treading cards
- Throwing & catching - balls, bean bags & balloons

Personal, Social and Emotional Development

1. Self-confidence & awareness
2. Managing feelings & behaviour
3. Making relationships

Activity ideas include -

- Body parts – songs, pointing & naming games
- Books & games to promote sympathy, understanding of others, empathy
- Cuddles – tickling games
- Dressing up
- Games
- Group activities – working together to make something, talking in a group
- Helping with little jobs
- Meeting / visiting friends
- Sharing / taking turns – games, with resources
- Time – to speak & make themselves heard, to be with adults & children, to be alone & daydream, to be bored

Activity ideas for the SPECIFIC areas of learning...

Literacy

1. Reading
2. Writing

Activity ideas include -

- Alliteration games*
- Books* – different sizes, types & shapes
- Initial sounds games – phonics*
- Letter shapes – in the air, on paper, outside with chalk, at the easel, with playdough, in salt or sand
- Poems / poetry*
- Print in the environment – shops, labels, computer
- Rhyming games*
- Signs - words in displays, labels on toy boxes
- Songs & rhymes*
- Story telling* – with or without puppets & other resources
- Writing (not mark making – that's PD) – pencils, crayons, paper, labels, captions, name writing

*Letters and Sounds phase 1

Maths

1. Numbers
2. Shape, space & measures

Activity ideas include -

- Cooking – weights, measures, time, capacity
- Counting & numbers
- Jigsaws – shapes, sizes
- Matching & sorting
- Money – shopping, café
- Number activities, games, books, jigsaws etc
- Number rhymes – counting forwards & backwards
- Positional language – up, down, over, under, through, behind, in front
- Quantity language – heavy, light, more, less
- Sequencing – colours, shapes, sizes, numbers
- Shapes – stencils, pictures, freehand, playdough
- Size – big, small, bigger, smaller, emptying, filling
- Sorting – size, shape, colour, weight
- Time – visual timetables
- Weight – heavy, light – sand & water play

Understanding the world

1. People & communities
2. The world
3. Technology (ICT)

Activity ideas include -

- Environmental awareness – recycling, walks in the woods, map making
- Equality & disability awareness – small world people, dolls house
- Experimenting – cooking, finding out how things work
- Festivals from around the world – themes for over 3s
- ICT – computer, dance mat, toys that do something, finding out how things work
- Listening to music on CDs, YouTube etc
- Matching games
- Messy play – sand, water, gloop, playdough, foam
- Model making
- Nature & the natural world – plants, animals
- Relationships & friendships
- Role play – home & community influences in pretend play

- Seasons – time & changes
- Weather
- World around us themes

Expressive arts & design

1. Media & materials
2. Imagination

Activity ideas include -

- Collages
- Colour mixing & experiments
- Colouring sheets
- Construction & tools
- Dancing
- Glue & tape – joining things together, taking them apart
- Imaginative / pretend – role play, dressing up clothes
- Malleable & messy play – sand, water, playdough etc
- Music – CDs, radio, creating with instruments
- Outings to gain experiences that can be used to develop imagination
- Painting
- Rhythm & rhyme
- Sensory learning
- Singing songs & rhymes
- Small world resources – dolls house, little people, farm, under the sea, zoo, cars, trains, insects
- Textures

Remember when planning group activities for children that the most important planning is individual, following each child's learning styles, schemas, interests etc. Group planning enhances their learning – you don't need to think about new things for the children to do – much of what you are planning will complement their current learning.

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