

Planning to follow children's interests

All planning starts with observation... you watch and listen and note what the child likes to do. You then reflect on the observations you have written and what they tell you about the child and their current interests.

When you are planning for children's interests, you want to make sure you are helping them to learn about all areas of learning and development.

For younger children (under 3s) the EYFS (2012) tells us that the focus must be on the 3 prime areas of learning –

- Personal, social and emotional development (PSED)
- Physical development (PD)
- Communication and language (C & L)

However, you will also be incorporating the 4 specific areas of learning into your plans to make sure children's learning is exciting and challenging.

The specific areas of learning are –

- Literacy (Lit) which includes reading and writing
- Mathematics (Maths)
- Understanding the world (UW)
- Art and design (A & D)

Here is some sample planning to follow a child's interest in worms in the garden.

Area of learning	Activity ideas	Learning intentions
PSED	Talk about how worms make the children feel – do they like worms?	Discuss and express feelings
PD	Make worms from playdough – add googly eyes	Develop fine motor skills
C & L	Find out about and discuss the world worm hunting championships - http://www.wormcharming.com/ . Introduce vocabulary to describe worms	Introduce new ideas for discussion Use ICT (U W) Extend vocabulary
Lit	Read 'Lowly Worm' books by Richard Scarry Make worm pictures – give them different expressions	Read books Mark making – learning how shapes are formed (Maths)

Area of learning	Activity ideas	Learning intentions
Maths	Go outside (after the rain is best) and look for worm casts on the grass. See how many children can count.	Using numbers in sequence
U W	Take photos of playdough worms for LJs Make a wormery with the children – there are lots of ideas online	Use ICT resources Find out about how worms live, what they eat, their tunnels etc
A & D	Make a worm headband by colouring and decorating a measured length of stiff paper or thin card. Put a worm mouth at one end so it looks like it is eating its tail. Sing along to the song 'There's a worm at the bottom of the garden' on You Tube	Design something that can be worn Be proud of creations (PSED) Sing and dance Use ICT (U W)

To support children's relationships - involve other children in worm activities if they are interested. Encourage all the children to find food for the wormery.

To enhance the environment - set up an interest basket – laminated pictures of worms, words to the worm song, worm books, buckets and spades for digging up worms, paper and pencils to draw worms, chalk for making worms on the patio, small world minibeasts for the messy tray.

Comments / feedback / further observations –

Mum says that xx is looking in the garden for worms and showing her worm castes

Xx has developed a new interest in making playdough as a result of our worm activities.

I hope you can see that individual planning to follow a child's interests does not need to be complicated! You just need to...

- Spot what the child enjoys
- Think about different activities to follow their interest
- Think about how the activities link through all the areas of learning and development
- Carry out more observations to reflect on how the child has enjoyed the activities you planned and what he has learned.