

## Child/Self Initiated Learning Policy

### **Rationale**

The implementation of Child Initiated learning into the Foundation Stage has demonstrated the effectiveness of a teaching and learning style which is based upon the ways we know young children learn best. It is considered that such an approach can offer benefits to children of all ages.

"You will be aware that the children will be learning much more than is on a weekly plan, because they are initiating their own learning within carefully organised provision and because adults are working with them spontaneously".

*QCA Planning Guidance*

### **Our aims**

- To provide high quality education
- To develop learning skills such as speaking and listening, concentration and persistence
- To enable children to engage in sustained thinking
- To provide opportunity for children to co-operate and work together
- To encourage children to learn for themselves and to plan their own learning
- To enable children to consolidate learning and practice skills
- To respect the cultural differences and abilities of all children
- To be dynamic

### **Characteristics of good child/self initiated practice**

We endeavour to apply recent theory and research to maximise children's potential for learning. To prepare the climate and context for learning we have considered

- The basic needs of the children
- Emotional Literacy
- Providing children with the tools for learning
- Managing behaviour positively
- Fostering good relationships with parents

To foster and support independent learning we have considered

- The learning environment
- Development of children's attention skills
- The teaching and learning cycle
- Effective questioning techniques

We apply research from aspects such as

- Learning styles
- Engaging the multiple intelligences
- Mind Mapping
- The connections between music and learning
- The importance of physical development, and how movement is essential in the Early Years

### **Organisation of Child/Self Initiated**

1. The balance of Child/Self Initiated and Teacher Directed learning is carefully planned and will vary in each year group. In the Reception year, opportunities should be provided for Child Initiated learning for a large proportion of the time. During transition from Year R to Year 1, this balance should be reflected. The importance of a child-centred curriculum should be acknowledged, and it is with this in mind that the balance between child initiated and teacher directed sessions be addressed, along with the individual developmental needs of some of the children.
2. Children need to be given clear guidelines about how Child/Self Initiated learning sessions will work within each class. Expectations of the learning environment should be discussed.
3. The organisation of Child/Self Initiated learning sessions needs to be shared with all adults supporting the session.
4. Child/Self Initiated learning should be accessible to all children and not be part of a reward system. Children must not miss sessions as a sanction.

## **The Learning Environment**

An important factor in securing the engagement of learners is the environment in which they learn. Therefore, when planning Child/Self Initiated Learning, teachers need to consider the following:

- An engaging environment is familiar, giving children confidence. Clear instructions and consistent management are vital.
- It must be well organised with clear places for equipment, space for unfinished projects, good labelling and easy access. The environment will be personal to the children. This will enable the environment to be easily tidied and managed by the children.
- It must be well resourced, with plentiful supplies of equipment and ideas for their flexible use.
- It must be full of interest with interactive displays, unusual objects and items to handle and explore.
- The environment must be inviting, with areas to be quiet, to be noisy, to be active, to reflect and to be with friends.
- The environment must be flexible, giving opportunities for children to move and reorganise furniture, equipment and resources as they work.

## **Planning**

1. Child/Self Initiated sessions need to be timetabled, with adults involved having clear guidelines about each session.
2. Child/Self Initiated sessions should reflect all areas of the curriculum to enable development of the whole child.
3. An engaging and challenging environment should be provided, both indoors and, when possible, outdoors. In the Reception year, outdoor provision should be freely available during Child/Self Initiated sessions.
4. Child/Self Initiated learning will reflect Teacher Directed learning.
5. Child/Self Initiated learning should reflect the children's own interest and skills. Sessions should offer flexibility to accommodate such interest. It will build upon what the children already know and can do. It will encourage a positive attitude and disposition to learn and aim to prevent failure.

6. Planning should ensure that all children will feel included secure and valued.

7. Planning should ensure that children are allowed time to become fully involved in activities.

8. Planning should prioritise the development of children's learning dispositions over the planning for skills teaching, but will aim to develop both.

9. Child/Self Initiated sessions should offer an integrated, whole curriculum style, an active, doing curriculum.

### **Active Learning**

Active learning required that children have direct and immediate experience of objects, people ideas and events, opportunity and support to derive meaning from these experiences through reflection.

Active learning has its foundations in "doing". It involved handling, changing things, moving, making and not just looking. Action is in climbing, pretending, modelling, discovering and comparing. It is touching, tasting, feeling and exploring.

It has four critical elements:-

- Direct action on objects
- Reflection on actions
- Invention
- Problem Solving

An active learning environment should provide opportunities for children to engage in all these processes.

Planning needs to enable children to:

- Interact with materials
- Use and manipulate materials
- Make choices about how they work with materials
- Use language while they work with materials

- Have the support of an interested adult to encourage “sustained shared thinking”

“Smooth Transitions” Ross Bailey and Sally Featherstone

### **The Role of the Practitioner**

1. All sessions should include planned and focused observation, which will inform further planning (See Assessment).
2. Appropriate intervention by the adult is needed to engage the children in the learning process (See Active Learning).
3. Child/Self Initiated learning sessions should offer a context for the development of language, speaking and listening skills.
4. Child/Self Initiated learning can be used as a context for the development of thinking skills, through the use of open questions.
5. Child/Self Initiated learning provides a context for the development of different learning styles.
6. Children's personal, social and emotional well being can be developed.
7. A positive attitude and disposition to learning can be fostered.
8. Practitioners should focus on learning rather than teaching. This will enable us to concentrate on activities and methods, which meet the children's developmental needs.

### **Assessment**

During Child/Self Initiated learning sessions we put emphasis on learning rather than teaching. We can ensure that we are providing an appropriate curriculum for children and this requires that practitioners plan to observe, so that we can establish where children are on the continuum of development and what they require in order to move on in their learning.

Observation is essential to the provision of appropriate Child/Self Initiated learning sessions. Observational assessments can be used to identify learning priorities and provide appropriate learning experiences for children. It is important to have a focus for assessment while keeping an open mind for other evidence. Through focused observation we can:

- Find out what interests a child
- Assess their level of involvement
- Assess their emotional well being
- Assess appropriate challenge in an activity
- Understand what hinders progress
- Assess knowledge, skills, understanding and attitudes in curriculum areas
- Plan appropriate next steps in learning

Whenever available, teaching assistants should be fully involved in the assessment process.

In the Reception year, observations are used to inform completion of the Foundation Stage Profile, as the children achieve the Early Learning Goals. The Profile will continue to be used in Key Stage One and Two where appropriate. Early Year's goals will be on planning.