

Personal, social and emotional development



What the EYFS says: *Personal, social and emotional development* involves helping children to develop a positive sense of themselves, and others; to form positive relationships and develop respect for others; to develop social skills and learn how to manage their feelings; to understand appropriate behaviour in groups; and to have confidence in their own abilities.

As one of the prime areas of learning and development, personal, social and emotional development (PSED) involves helping and supporting children to develop a positive sense of themselves and others, and forms the basis for all other learning. By taking a positive, proactive and innovative approach to PSED, practitioners can help to ensure that children feel safe, secure and happy as they learn.

The role of the key person in supporting PSED is a central theme in the *Development Matters* guidance. The EYFS framework breaks PSED down into three main aspects: self-confidence and self-awareness, managing feelings and behaviour, and making relationships. Though these areas are inter-linked, this leaflet focuses on self-confidence and self-awareness and how we can help children develop strong self-esteem and gain independence.

The role that parents and carers play cannot be understated. It is a child's family who, through showing affection, engaging in play and celebrating achievements, give that child the confidence to continually extend their learning. As such, it is important that, through the key person role, we encourage active parental engagement by providing a friendly, supportive, non-judgmental environment. This helps parents to feel comfortable talking about issues, concerns and the progress of their child. Simple things, such as displaying information about your activities and how they relate to the requirements of the EYFS, can help parents to view their relationship with key persons as a partnership;

and, in turn, ensure that the child is fully supported in their learning and development both in the provision and at home.

Working with parents

- Ensure that settling-in and induction establishes the important key person-parent relationship from the outset.
- Get parents involved in, and enthusiastic about, any fundraising efforts to help them feel part of your provision's life.
- Consider running a workshop on a topic such as music or literacy, where parents can learn about how their children engage in play to further their learning and development.
- Share ideas with parents about simple activities they can do with their children at home, linking experiences between home and the provision.

Reflect on all the activities you provide. Observe what the child does during the activity, how he or she uses the equipment and resources and utilises the characteristics of effective learning, then feed this into future planning. Adapt activities as necessary so that the child has the opportunity to create and think critically, play and explore, and learn through doing. This could involve, for example, simply changing the room layout slightly, or putting some music on, and observing their reaction.

Lunch and snack-times are excellent opportunities to build self-confidence and self-awareness. Practitioners should adapt their practice, where necessary, to increase the opportunities for self-service; for example, encouraging children to pour their own drinks and decide on their own portions. Focus on the importance of social interaction at meal times, the potential for wonderful conversation and the discovery of new words, tastes and textures.

Big adventures at Ilsington Pre-school

This term, we started using a floor book planner with the children with great success. We cut out pictures to support the topic of the term - 'Big Adventures' - and asked the children to give key words based on what they saw, which we used to build our planning. We also included a home learning section in our newsletter to support parents in discussing the topic with their children.

We started with a variety of pictures; including pirates, astronauts, safari animals, divers, a compass and a magnifying glass. Some of the key words the children came up with included 'treasure chests', 'maps', 'hunting', 'spaceships', 'planets' and 'X marks the spot'.

We worked on the planning with the children for a whole week so that every child had the opportunity to get involved. The floor book planner is now used by all the children. We also write down their key words on thought clouds.

As part of the Big Adventures theme, we recently organised bear and wolf hunts, which involved setting up the whole room as our hunt headquarters. The children all worked on a big floor map, adding pictures they cut out from magazines as well as their own drawings. We

then added notes to the map to support conversations between children and staff.

Through group discussions, the children came up with the idea of travelling by train to the various areas on the map. We built a big 'igloo' for the Arctic, used benches and mats to create the mountains and built a medical centre for injuries. We also used magnifying glasses to track footprints – some of the older children helped identify footprints using a children's encyclopaedia, while the younger children collected footprints placed around the room and counted them. We role-played all of these scenarios both indoors and outdoors.

We have found that allowing a whole week for each 'topic' fully engages the younger children while also encouraging the older children to develop their role-play alongside table-based learning activities, both with adult support and independently. We have worked on weekly projects like this, underpinned by an overarching termly topic, for the past three years and have found that it allows for greater flexibility in all aspects of our planning.

Niki Garrish, Manager

Top tips

- It is important to know individual children – what they like, what they need, what they can already do. Active parental engagement is vital in order to make this happen.
- It is important that the children feel safe and secure. The key person procedures should be firmly embedded in all aspects of practice and the provision should feel like a home from home. Implementing a consistent settling-in procedure will ensure a smooth

transition, and minimise separation anxiety and distress.

- With younger children, use key words and Makaton to encourage them to contribute to conversations, to be listened to, and to raise their self-esteem.
- Allow children to self-select age-appropriate resources to help them to feel part of the activities, and allow their interests to be developed and their needs to be met.
- Provision outdoors needs to replicate that of the indoors. Consider creating a role-play area which will allow the children to have fluid imaginative play experiences, extending their thoughts and ideas from the inside out, and vice-versa.

Try it yourself – painting

Move away from the norm of a paint easel. Squirt paints onto a covered table and provide paper for children to help themselves to. This encourages them to get their hands right into the paint and experience the texture and colour change, make patterns, prints and explore what they can portray. This kind of activity boosts self-esteem, as children enjoy feeling proud of their creations and sharing them with their peers and parents.

Ensure that the activity is well positioned, well supervised and close to hand-washing facilities. Stress to parents that children should wear old clothes and that aprons will be worn.

Adapted from *Supporting Growth (Under 5, March 2013)*



Useful publications

Being Me (Pre-school Learning Alliance 2008) celebrates the uniqueness of each child and how families support this early construction of identity by tuning into children's particular needs. For further details please visit www.pre-school.org.uk/shop.

The Pre-school Learning Alliance is the largest and most representative early years membership organisation in England. An educational charity, the Alliance represents the interests of over 14,000 member settings who deliver care and learning to over 800,000 families every year. We offer information and advice, produce specialist publications, run acclaimed training and accreditation schemes and campaign to influence early years policy and practice.

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