



Combe Pre-school Planning Information for Parents

Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (2014)

We use the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) curriculum to help us plan activities for the children each week at Pre-school. There are seven areas of learning which are as follows:

1. Personal, Social and Emotional Development,
2. Communication and Language,
3. Physical Development,
4. Literacy,
5. Mathematical Development,
6. Understanding of the World, and
7. Expressive Art and Design.

The first three areas are known as the 'Prime areas' and are fundamental to supporting children's development in the last four areas. The remaining four areas are called the 'Specific areas' which help children to learn skills and knowledge in readiness for school, and to help them contribute successfully to society. If you would like to know more about the EYFS (2014) then you can download it from the Gov.uk website.

Topics and Themes

Each term we have a set topic which is broken down into weekly themes. The staff carry out daily observations on each child, and use this information to plan weekly activities based on the children's interests and progress.

Weekly Planning

Every staff member types up their planned activity onto our weekly planning sheets; stating the activity name, learning intentions from the EYFS, the adult's role and differentiation for the younger and older children. The differentiation shows the difference in the level of support that the different aged children will receive, based on their abilities. You can view our planning sheets on the display board in Pre-school or on our website, on our 'Calendar and Planning page' at www.combepreschool.co.uk.

On the reverse side of our planning sheets, the staff set children individual targets based on observations, progress or the children's set targets for the term, which help to challenge their learning and development.

We place the same activities out each day as not all the children attend every day and we like to give them plenty of opportunities to play at each activity and revisit their favourite activities. Repetition is incredibly important in the early years, as it helps to cement the children's knowledge, extend their learning and helps to strengthen neurons in their brains. Please read the following:

“Each time a child (or adult) encounters a sensory stimulus, a neuron (brain cell) connects to another neuron, establishing new connections in the brain. Signals flow along these complex neural networks, from one neuron to another, allowing the brain cells to communicate with each other by relying information about emotions as well as everything we see, hear, taste, touch and smell. Each new sensory stimulus adds to the network, while repeated experiences increase the thickness and strength of the connections, helping signals to travel faster” (Wartik and Carlson-Flannerty, 1993, cited in Gascoyne, 2013:3). This means that “the richer our experiences the more intricate will be the patterns for learning, thought and creativity” (Hannaford, 1995:30, cited in Gascoyne, 2013:3).

To find out more information, please read our “Sensory Play” leaflet which is available to download from our website on our documents page.

Evaluations

At the end of each week the staff evaluate their planning and use this information to help make any necessary changes to future activities, such as using different types of paints to achieve a different effect, how could the activity be improved, which children enjoyed the activity and what did they learn.

Child Initiated and Adult-led Play

We use a combination of adult-led and child initiated (child-led) activities when we are planning. Children grow in confidence as they explore, attempt to solve problems and play with their peers, through leading their own play. Children also learn through the support of adults as they guide children through their play.

Lev Vygotsky, a Russian theorist on cognitive development in children (1896-1934), carried out research in Russia where he discovered that adults can guide children's learning and support them to make progress in their understanding. He also witnessed how social interactions with adults helped children to develop their intellect.

Vygotsky developed a theory called the ‘Zone of Proximal Development’ where children are “able to work within their own capabilities in the zone of actual development, but with assistance from adults or more skilled peers they are able to extend their thoughts and work within the zone of proximal development. The zone of proximal development can be defined as the difference between what a child can do alone and what a child can do with help” (Daly, et al, 2006, p58). Please see the diagram on the next page:

Zone of Proximal Development

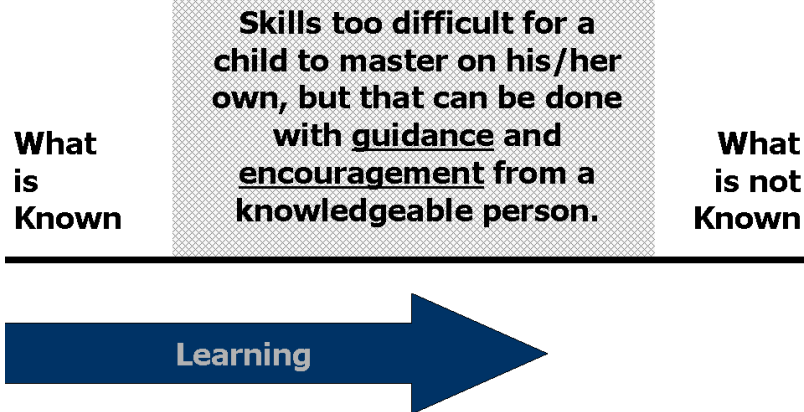


Image from <http://www.simplypsychology.org/vygotsky.html>

Jerome Bruner, an American psychologist (born 1915) has continued to develop Vygotsky's theories and also shares the view of the importance of the adult role in children's learning. Bruner believes that adults can help children to develop in ways that would not be possible unaided and called this "scaffolding". Adults support children so that they can learn a new skill, but when children achieve success, the adult's slowly removes the support, until the children are capable of doing the skill on their own (Daly et al, 2006).

It is important that we get the right balance between child initiated and adult-led play, as too much formal learning at a young age can be damaging to children. As the children grow older, the balance will move more towards adult-led activities, such as our Rising Five's sessions and reception classes in school, in readiness for children to enter Year 1.

Afternoon Planning

Our afternoon planning is more relaxed, as we realise that the children are more tired and that their concentration is not at their best. We encourage the children to choose some activities, but also place other activities that are different from our morning activities, on the tables.

Rising Five's Planning

Our Supervisor plans our Rising Five's planning, which is completely adult-led. We only plan three main activities, due to time limitations, but the areas of learning will change from week to week. These can also be viewed on our display board or on our website.

Thank you for taking the time to read this leaflet. If you have any more questions regarding our planning, please ask a member of staff.

References

Daly et al, (2006), Understanding Early Years Theory in Practice, Oxford: Heinemann.

Gascoyne, S.(2013), Sensory Play, London: Practical Pre-school Books.