**How we promote and encourage ‘Playing and Exploring’**

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| **Children will be learning to:**  | **Examples of how to support this:**  |
| Realise that their actions have an effect on the world, so they want to keep repeating them.  | Encourage babies’ exploration of the world around them. Suggestions: investigating the feel of their key person’s hair or reaching for a blanket in their cot. Offer open-ended resources like large smooth shells and pebbles, blocks and lengths of fabric for babies and toddlers to play freely with, outdoors and inside.  |
| Plan and think ahead about how they will explore or play with objects.  | When playing with blocks: encourage children to discuss what they will make before and while making it, or draw a picture before building.  |
| Guide their own thinking and actions by referring to visual aids or by talking to themselves while playing. For example, a child doing a jigsaw might whisper under their breath: “Where does that one go? – I need to find the big horse next.”  | Visual aids can help children to keep track of what they need to do next, for example counting on their fingers or referring to a series of pictures on the wall to remind them what they must do before lunch. Verbal mental aids include providing a sensitive commentary on what a child is doing. You might comment: “I see you are looking for the biggest pieces first’” or ask “how well do you think that’s going?” Children may copy your commentary by talking out loud to themselves first. In time, this will develop into their ‘inner voice’.  |
| Make independent choices.  | Provide a well-organised environment so that children know where materials and tools are and can access them easily. Provide enough materials and arrange spaces so that children can collaborate and learn alongside peers. Give children enough time and space to engage in large-scale projects that may continue over several days. Explore the reasons behind children’s choices e.g. ‘I’m interested that you’re using a paintbrush rather than a pencil to make your picture.’  |
| Bring their own interests and fascinations into early years settings. This helps them to develop their learning.  | Extend children’s interests by providing stimulating resources for them to play with, on their own and with peers, in response to their fascinations. Join in with children’s play and investigations, without taking over. Talk with them about what they are doing and what they are noticing. Provide appropriate non-fiction books and links to information online to help them follow their interests.  |
| Respond to new experiences that you bring to their attention.  | Regularly provide new materials and interesting things for children to explore and investigate. Introduce children to different styles of music and art. Give them the opportunity to observe changes in living things in the setting, and around the local environment. Take children to new places, like a local theatre, a museum, a National Trust heritage site, a fire station, a farm or an elderly people’s home. Involve children in making decisions about science experiments: what might we feed the plants to make them grow? Why do you think fizzy water might work? How will we know if one is growing faster than another?’ |