

Listening with Children

At Daisy and Rainbow Childcare we are keen to encourage children to be able to express their views and to learn that their opinions are important. Children need to learn about choices and what effect they can have upon those choices. Children's feelings and emotions need to be acknowledged and children given the opportunity to learn how to express them in an open and acceptable way. We use our THRIVE training and approach to underpin this. We have further developed an ethos of SOLA (Stop, Observe, Listen, Attend) which entails that as a team we give time to children to enable them to respond without unnecessary trigger or interruption from an adult. We aspire to listen to children with both our ears and our eyes to better understand their communications with us.

During a management meeting in March 2012, and following some individual practitioner research, we discussed and appraised the mosaic approach as a model which might help us to review this policy and give our listening time with children a more genuine basis. Please see the appendix to this policy for further information about the Mosaic approach.

We listen with the Children who attend our setting in the following ways;

Parent Liaison

The children who come in to our setting are necessarily very young. We therefore respect that parents and carers may initially give the voice of their child to enable us to start to get to know them as individuals better.

- Parents complete "All About Me and My Family" booklets on entry to Nursery and Pre-school which seeks a full insight in to the child's personal history, character and interests.
- Parents spend at least one session with their child in the setting to enable staff to learn about a child from their parent/carer. We also hope that parents will use this valuable time to get to know and trust us.
- Parents are always welcome to stay with their child whilst enabling "settling-in" and we encourage parents to "come and play", allowing for further information exchange.
- We ask parents to complete a "Settling in Check" form prior to a meeting with the child's key person after the child's first half term with us. This is then used to broaden the conversation at the "settling meeting."
- Parents are invited to parent meetings at key times in their child's time with us – settling-in and as needs arise.
- We welcome all parents and carers at the beginning and close of the day with a 2-way opportunity to share information about their child.

- We recognise that some children live in separated families and that each parent should be given opportunity to share and celebrate their child with us and to be involved in any joint decisions.
- We may invite parents to share information about their child with us through the Multi Agency Early Help Assessment to enable the child's needs to be better met by a multi-agency team.
- We encourage and enable parents to share their child's significant progress with us by completing a "Wow moment".

Golden Rules

- Children discuss and adopt their own Golden rules which are used across the whole setting to support children to feel safe and listened to.
- The Golden rules are shared with the children on a regular basis and when need arises children are given the opportunity to add further rules with adult negotiation.

Provision of Play

It is only through our observations of children at play, using SOLA alongside what children tell us, that we are able to provide appropriate resources and play experiences to match childrens' wishes and needs.

- Children are given regular opportunity to ask for the toys or resources they wish to play with. We have used ECCERS and ITERS as a model for enabling this within the sessions. Further choices are made available informally and through a photo selection display board.
- Pre-verbal children are given wide access to resources and their selection and choices are observed by practitioners to be better able to support their interests.
- Role-play areas are developed according to children's observed interests or requests.
- When children create drawings and paintings we celebrate them through display and by notating the children's own narrative and story about their "masterpiece".
- We have developed "Treasure Play" schemes across the setting which enable the very youngest of our children to exercise choice and to be observed in their play. Parents are enabled to support this process by sharing their observations with us thus leading our selection of suitable play materials. Treasure Play enables us to listen to children "with our eyes."

Eylog

- All children have a digital record of observations made of their play and learning which are shared with both the child and his/her parents. This record is used to understand the child further and to encourage their voice.

Observation – Assessment – Planning

- Children are observed during their play, observations are made and this information used to plan for their future play and learning provision.
- Particular observations are made when children are the “Focus Child” for the session, when a keen interest is paid in that particular individual.
- Children accessing Treasure Play are observed in detail to be able to better understand their current play and learning interests.

Levels of Wellbeing and Involvement

- Children are assessed against the scales of wellbeing and involvement to assess if appropriate interventions may be needed and to notice when a child is most involved and happy, to replicate those circumstances.

Happy High Fives

- Children are given some simple options which they can use to express how to improve their wellbeing supported by adults based upon the 5 steps to wellbeing.

Group Times

- Children are encouraged to share their feelings and observations within a group for mutual discussion.
- Songs are sung enabling children to demonstrate their feelings i.e. “how do you feel today”, “When I’m happy and I know it.”
- Children are given opportunity to celebrate and share their achievements and personal news with their peers and adults present.

Key-person

- Each child accessing childcare has a named key-person who establishes a close bond with the child and develops effective communication with the parents/carers. (see our separate keyperson guidance)

Family Group Times

We recognise just how important it is for children to have a peer social group and a key-person to whom they can turn to.

- During family group times we are keen to recognise both the voice of the individual and that of the peer group as a whole, to this end activities support opportunities to listen to each other respectfully and share feelings and ideas.
- The family group time allows the still voice to be heard.
- We recognise that the relationship between the key-person and the group of children is crucial to the positive participation and outcomes achieved through family group time.
- Through family group time we may seek children’s views and develop a mind map to demonstrate their thinking.

- We encourage children to use their “Thinking Brain.”
- During family group time we may seek children’s views about their play environment by exploring just one play resource or play area i.e. exploring play dough or investigating the blocks, with a very specific focus.
- We are keen to enable children to develop sustained shared thinking and believe that working within a small group enables this best.

Resources

- Happy and Sad faces are used to communicate emotions with children.
- We utilise the “box of emotions” when sharing conversations with children which may be difficult without a visual resource to aid us.
- Through THRIVE we know that resources which will allow for playful creativity will enable children to better communicate with us i.e. puppets, story props, small world play, musical instruments, sand, water and paint.
- We may use cameras with children to capture photographs which may illustrate something they have enjoyed making or doing.

Meal and Snack Times

- Children are given self selection choices at snack time and can elect when they wish to have the snack and with whom.
- We encourage children, whenever possible to use any snack or meal time as an opportunity to develop their social skills and share thoughts and feelings with their peers and adults.

Policy formulated on: March 2008

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Signed: Judy Westacott/