

# Early Years at the Walnuts School



# The Areas of Learning in the Early Years Curriculum

Prime Areas	Aspect
Personal, Social and Emotional Development	Making Relationships
	Self-confidence and Self-awareness
	Managing feelings and behaviour
Physical Development	Health and self care
	Moving and Handling
Communication and Language	Listening and Attention
	Speaking
	Understanding

# The Areas of Learning in the Early Years Curriculum

Specific Areas	Aspect
Understanding the world	The World
	Technology
	People and communities
Literacy	Reading
	Writing
Mathematics	Numbers
	Shape, space and measure
Expressive Arts and Design	Exploring and using media and materials
	Being Imaginative

# Characteristics of Effective Learning

- Playing and Exploring –engagement
- Active Learning – motivation
- Creating and thinking critically – thinking

# Statutory Guidance for EYFS

- Each area of learning and development must be implemented through planned, purposeful play and through a mix of adult-led and child-initiated activity. Play is essential for children's development, building their confidence as they learn to explore, to think about problems, and relate to others. Children learn by leading their own play, and by taking part in play which is guided by adults.
- Practitioners must consider the individual needs, interests, and stage of development of each child in their care, and must use this information to plan a challenging and enjoyable experience for each child in all of the areas of learning and development. Practitioners working with the youngest children are expected to focus strongly on the three prime areas, which are the basis for successful learning in the other four specific areas. The three prime areas reflect the key skills and 9 capacities all children need to develop and learn effectively, and become ready for school.

# How do we facilitate effective learning for children on the autism spectrum?

- Clearly structured low arousal environment
- Visual cues to support understanding
- Teaching through routine
- Repetition
- Focus on relaxation and well-being
- Teaching play skills
- Learning through play and exploration
- Speech and language support throughout the day
- Use of motivators
- Breaking skills into small steps



# Evidence-Based Practices

- We use an informed eclectic approach to at the Walnuts based on the evidence based practices of TEACCH, SCERTS, PECS, Intensive Interaction, Attention Autism and Occupational Therapy amongst others.
- No one approach is used exclusively in classes but rather the strategies that best support the individual child are utilised.

# Online Resources

- <http://www.interactingwithautism.com>
- <http://www.autism.org.uk/>
- <https://www.autismspeaks.org/>
- <http://researchautism.net/>
- <http://www.autismwestmidlands.org.uk/>
- <http://www.aettraininghubs.org.uk/parent-guide/>
- Just a note of caution regarding the authenticity of claims made by some online resources – always cross reference claims with the reputable sites such as those listed above and always feel free to discuss with staff in school.



# Interaction and Play skills

- In the Early Years at The Walnuts we will give additional focus to the Prime Areas of Learning particularly focusing on developing self-help, interaction and play skills.
- Interaction and play skills underpin social and communication skills which we know are one of the core difficulties for people with ASD.
- We are going to have a look at some of the strategies that we use at school which can help, support and develop these skills at home.
- Today we are going to have a look at
  - Shared Attention
  - Imitation
  - Play

# Shared Attention



Does your activity inspire  
your child's attention?



Gina Davis Video

# Shared Attention

## Top Tips for Shared Attention

- Find the things your child finds exciting e.g. wind up toys, balls, light up toys noise makers, whistles.
- Make a show of showing them so they want to look and they want to be part of the experience.
- Keep these special toys separate - do not give them to the child, this takes you out of the interaction.
- Build a repeated routine e.g. 'What's in the box?'
- Build anticipation
- Use simple words and sounds to label the action.

# Imitation and Play

- Imitation skills are a crucial foundation to social communication and learning. We work on these skills by directly teaching children to imitate our actions and through intensive interaction approaches where we will let the child lead, and imitate their actions.
  - **body movements** e.g. arms up, clap, stamp feet, touch head, jump.
  - **Small body movements** e.g. wiggling fingers, touching thumb and finger together, thumbs up, open mouth, wiggle tongue.
  - **Big actions with sound** e.g. roar with hands up, play 'boo' moving hands from face, shout bang and clap hands together,
  - **Small actions with sound** e.g. walk fingers on the desk saying tip-toe, tip-toe, jolly phonics actions with sounds.
  - **Multi-step actions** – action songs e.g. head, shoulders, knees and toes,
  - **Objects one step** e.g. put one brick on top of another, put a toy cup on a saucer, put rubbish in a bin next to them.
  - **Objects multi-step** e.g. walk the toy along the desk, dial phone pick it up and say hello.

# Why Play?

- Children with autism may not respond to play activities in a traditional way due to difficulties with flexible thinking, social interaction and sensory processing.
- Play enables learning across the curriculum and contexts
- Play offers a safe way to explore new or anxiety provoking situations and emotions.
- In children with autism spectrum disorders interactive play uniquely addresses the core deficits of relating and communicating as no other approach can. (Stanley Greenspan)
- Development of play skills is highly correlated to development of language and thinking skills.

# Playing

In their free time children with ASD tend to engage in repetitive play activities and tend to have difficulty understanding what is and isn't appropriate to play with. There are a few simple strategies you can use to support them to play more appropriately in their free time.

- Define where it is ok to play
- Limit the choices
- Have other choices hidden from sight
- Teach how to play with the different toys and games
- Give them a plan of what to do so they don't fix on one toy e.g. first pop-up pirate, then a puzzle then ipad (have something rewarding at the end)

# Teaching Play with Toys

When teaching children with ASD to play with toys it can be useful to do so in a structured and predictable way.

Children with ASD can struggle to understand the purpose of the activity and can have difficulties with organisation and planning. By making some simple adaptations to toys to organise them and give them a clear start, middle and finish you can make them much more accessible and less daunting!



# Teaching Play with Toys





# Play

- **Minimise distractions.**
- Keep activities **short** enough for your child to enjoy.
- **Organise** the activity before inviting them to join you.
- Give the activity a clear **start, middle and end.**
- Restructure activity so that child can achieve **independently.**
- Play alongside them, extending their play through modelling.

# How will we share your child's learning journey with you?

- Home/school books
- Learning Journeys
- Parents evenings
- Individual Education and Care Plans (IECP)
- End of year report
- Annual review meetings
- Open door policy
- Behaviour and Stress management plans (BSMP)
- Please share/work with us too as you are the experts on your children!