

## **Examples of activities organised and why we offer them**

### **Sounds and Music**

Children's natural pleasure in rhythm is picked up and extended by opportunities to:

- Experiment individually with sound making equipment, both purchased and homemade.
- Listen to songs and musical instruments.
- Join together to sing songs and learn rhymes.

The fun of making music encourages children to:

- Listen carefully.
- Understand more about language by hearing and responding to rhyme.
- Hear and enjoy the songs of more than one culture.
- Learn to share in a group activity.

### **Energetic Play**

Young children's joy in movement leads to healthy growth by encouraging them to challenge and exercise their own bodies. Children need to test and develop their physical skills on safe climbing equipment, wheeled toys and games. In doing so, they also develop:

- A better sense of overall control and balance.
- Judgement of direction, speed and distance.
- Strength and stamina.
- Understanding of spatial relationships as they move around, through and alongside things.
- Hand – eye co-ordination as they throw and catch balls and beanbags.
- Confidence in their own skill, strength and judgement, which is so important for all future development.

### **Paint**

Children love painting. As they enjoy colours and the feeling of being in control of the marks they can create with fingers and brushes, they are learning:

- Those feelings, which cannot be expressed in words, can find other acceptable outlets.
- Identification of colours.
- What happens to colours when they are mixed.
- How to order shapes and lines within a given space – which develops mathematical understanding.
- How paint behaves in various thicknesses.
- How to control the marks made on paper by varying the angle of the brush, the pressure and the direction.

These learning experiences are what is important and not the end product. A child's painting may not look like anything recognisable but the process itself will have assisted in his/her development.

## Water

Playing with water is very relaxing and eases tension. It also allows children to explore and gather information about a substance in a scientific way by feeling, pouring, weighing, smelling, listening and looking.

- Practice in tipping and pouring water from one container to another develops muscular strength and hand-eye co-ordination.
- There are mathematical ideas to be developed too. Children begin to understand the principle of capacity as they discover that the same quantity of water can fill containers of many different shapes. As they tip and pour, they also learn to think in terms of *full or half-full, more or less*.
- As children become confident about what water is, they can move on to experiment with what it can do. There are several tools to use with water tubing, water wheels, pumps, siphons etc, which add to children's development and understanding.
- In addition to learning about water itself, children can also accumulate wider understanding about things which float and things which sink; things which absorb water and things which don't; containers which retain water and those which allow it to pass through in a cascade, a stream or a trickle.

## Sand

Most children enjoy playing with sand. Like other natural materials, sand can be very soothing. It is capable of being broken down and reshaped without damage and it presents no threat of failure because there is no right or wrong way of using it.

At the same time, because sand can be shaped and moulded, it provides scope for children's creativity.

As they play with sand, children are learning to:

- Find out what the material will and will not do.
- Develop the physical skills of moulding and pouring.
- Understand, as they experiment with dry and damp sand, that a single material can take different forms.
- Use their imagination and perseverance as they follow through schemes for making roadways, gardens and tunnels.

As they use a range of containers and moulds to create shapes, children develop ideas of matching, volume and symmetry, which are all necessary for mathematical understanding.

## Dough

Almost everyone – adult or child – enjoys squeezing a piece of dough. It is a very soothing material to handle and is easier to use than clay for those with small fingers.

- As they knead, stretch and pummel dough, children learn about volume and quantity, especially if they are personally involved in the mixing.
- They also begin to understand the mathematical concept of capacity when they find out that the same piece of dough can become a ball, a long snake, a flat sheet and then a ball again.
- Children develop strength and skill in their hands and fingers as they handle material like dough. They will need this manual strength and agility if they are to handle pens and pencils competently later on.
- Because playing with dough is such a relaxing activity, conversation often flourishes at the dough table. While playing there, the children also learn about *bigger, biggest, more or less*, as they discuss and compare their pieces of dough.

## **Gluing**

The objects, which children produce at the sticking table, are unlikely to have any value of their own but the activity does offer valuable experience for them.

As they select, cut up, arrange and stick collage materials, children are learning:

- To exercise choice.
- To handle a range of materials.
- To make decisions of their own in an open-ended situation with no structure imposed from outside.
- More skilful use of their hands and fingers.
- To exercise their imaginations freely.
- To make judgements about size, position and balance.

Sometimes children decide to create a model of something in particular and they can show great resourcefulness in achieving the effect intended but for most children the pleasure and learning comes from the activity itself, not from what is created.

## **Not just play**

Please don't expect too much of me,  
I am learning more than you can see.  
Being here to enjoy and play,  
Means more to me than I can say.

Please don't feel fret at the end of the day,  
If I have nothing to display.  
I really do gain so much from play,  
Social skills, and come what may.

So when I come home empty handed  
From such a busy place,  
Please, please don't say,  
Haven't you done anything today?