

Dear Parents,

Welcome to another edition of our Greenacres newsletter, packed full of interesting information and an insight to our day here at Oldfield Road.

Each edition allows our staff team to share their wealth of knowledge with you, but please do get in touch if you would like to know more, would like to add to the newsletter or have information you would like us to tell you more about.

Happy Reading.

### **Interesting Information – Nature and the Outdoors**

#### **The importance of nature and outdoor exploration in the early years**

Now more than ever, we must recognise the importance of outdoor play when it comes to the impact it has on early years development.

Not only does it act as an integral part of a child's learning opportunities, but it can help massively benefit children's mental and physical health and wellbeing.

Mental health issues among children are rapidly on the rise, so it's important for us to find ways to combat this, ensuring that mental wellbeing is at the forefront of children's learning, through early years and beyond.

Spending time outdoors can have a positive impact on both mental and physical health at any age, so it's important that we encourage it from a young age.

Children are often really fascinated by nature and natural things. Consider a toddler handling pebbles, leaves, shells and sticks – the engagement and deep fascination with the objects are powerful because of their variety of properties, which differ so radically from the more standardised play items found indoors. Our children of today are becoming more and more distant from nature, and it is inherent in this technological age that our children are spending less time outdoors. How can children then learn to love and respect something that they have little or no relationship with?

Through experiential experience they learn to use their imagination more, developing their thinking and problem-solving skills in a developmentally appropriate manner led by their own interests and drive. Such core experience as being cooler, feeling rain, snow and sun on your skin are so important.

As pressure on space increases particularly in urban areas, the freedom to play outside has also declined. Homes have become smaller, and many children have no access to a



garden to play in. Parents are increasingly busy with work and thus choose to play indoors with their children at the end of a long day. The demands of modern life also mean they are transported by cars and buggies and are far less likely to interact with nature.

The other major influence are risk-averse adults who whilst naturally wishing to protect children from harm choose to over-protect them so they will not learn essential life skills such as assessing risk and hazards. By allowing them to take “considered risks” like walking across a log over a shallow stream or climbing to the next branch of a tree can have numerous benefits for all children, not least helping their sense of balance and confidence in their own abilities. Children are pre-programmed to take risks and children are often more capable than we give them credit for and so rather than stifling their sense of adventure, outdoor play in nature can actually help to develop it.

There is a great deal of research and evidence from varied sources, which demonstrates the importance of children being outdoors and learning about risk benefits, but nature offers rich stimuli and the chance to be inquisitive, exploratory, adventurous, innovative and messy in ways never feasible indoors. The need for children to play freely outdoors in nature in all sorts of weathers leads to a variety of informal learning as well as lifelong interests.

Through being outdoors young children can learn many skills of social interaction and friendship through first-hand experience with a range of natural materials. Their curiosity and ability to become “lost in the experience” satisfy deep urges and allows them to also become part of a rich culturally diverse community. This in turn gives them a sense of belonging. These create like any good recipe, an environment of interactions which in turn build relationships, social skills, fun and enjoyment of being with peers and adults.

Thus, by embedding an outdoor approach to play and learning, nature will assist us in helping all young children to both learn holistically across the whole curriculum and become better future citizens just as the pioneers suggested all those years ago!

### **Encouraging essential physical fitness**

Spending time outdoors daily helps keep children fit and healthy physically. Encouraging children to run, jump, climb and chase develops good physical fitness, as well as helping aid in critical development such as stability, bone density, and muscle development. Staying healthy from a young age can help prevent future

problems too. To encourage this, create games and activities to get everyone involved.



### **Provides a break from the everyday**

Time spent in nature provides children with the opportunity to switch off and give their brains a well-earned break from the demands of everyday life. Allowing children playtime helps them burn off energy and improve their ability to concentrate, helping them to excel in the classroom. The outdoors presents a

different and exciting environment where children can have fun, letting imaginations run wild and offer an escape from reality.

### **Helps to reduce anxiety and stress**

Exercise releases chemicals helping us regulate our mental health. Participation in just ten minutes of physical activity can have a significant impact on the psychological and emotional wellbeing of children - boosting self-esteem, lowering anxiety, and reducing stress.

The outdoors is the perfect place to encourage and engage children in physical activity. Providing different equipment and making it easily accessible enables physical activity and the benefits it brings whilst improving physical development too.



### **Aids in topping up vitamin D**

This important vitamin is crucial for child development, helping to maintain a healthy body and mind, and one of the best natural sources is the sun. Vitamin D helps our bodies to regulate calcium and phosphate, keeping bones, muscles, and teeth healthy. Vitamin D increases the production of serotonin, essential for stabilising our mood and is linked to happiness. Serotonin affects our brains and nervous system, aiding cognitive development, improving memory and concentration.

### **Supports emotional and social skills**

Playing outside offers children a chance to explore and process feelings in a situation that they can control. The increased space lends itself well to group activities providing opportunities to practice empathy and develop an understanding of others. Outside is the perfect place for children to make friends, helping develop their social and emotional skills, by engaging in group activities and problem-solving.



### **Facilitates discovering the natural environment**

Having an outside area allowing children to connect with nature and explore different types of plants can have a calming effect. Spending time outdoors allows children to explore their natural environment and the world around them. Creating a sensory garden featuring plants known for their calming properties such as lavender or rosemary provides a quiet and safe space for children to time-out, explore the environment around them, and discover sensory information, such as scents and sounds.

So, with the sun shining why not grab your shoes and head out into the fresh air and enjoy, and we're sure your rooms would love to see some photos of your adventures!!

**Recipes** – Here is an example of some of the cooking we do here at nursery.



Our Chilli Con Carne is prepared by our cook for Lunch and the children love it, so we wanted to share it with you, and the Ice Cream the children cooked as part of our learning through cooking within the rooms when exploring different cooking skills. Hope they are making you feel hungry.

## Chilli Con Carne

### Ingredients:

Onion	Lean minced beef
Garlic	Beef stock cube
Peppers	Tinned chopped tomatoes
Mild chilli powder	Tomato purée
Paprika	Red kidney beans
Ground cumin	

We serve ours with plain boiled long grain rice but of course, you could jazz it up and serve with soured cream, sliced jalapeno and/or tortilla chips

### Method:

Prepare your vegetables. Chop your onion into small dice, your garlic minced and peppers into stripes.

Start by adding the onion to your pan and cook, stirring fairly frequently, for about 5 minutes, or until the onion is soft, squidgy and slightly translucent.

Tip in the garlic, red pepper, chilli powder, paprika and ground cumin.

Give it a good stir, then leave it to cook for another 5 minutes, stirring occasionally.

Brown the lean minced beef. Turn the heat up a bit, add the meat to the pan and break it up with your spoon or spatula. The mix should sizzle a bit when you add the mince.

Keep stirring and prodding for at least 5 minutes, until all the mince is in uniform, mince-sized lumps and there are no more pink bits. Make sure you keep the heat hot enough for the meat to fry and become brown, rather than just stew.

Make the sauce. Crumble beef stock cube into hot water. Pour this into the pan with the mince mixture.

Add a can of chopped tomatoes and tomato purée and stir the sauce well.

Simmer it gently. Bring the whole thing to the boil, give it a good stir and put a lid on the pan. Turn down the heat until it is gently bubbling and leave it for 20 minutes.

Check on the pan occasionally to stir it and make sure the sauce doesn't catch on the bottom of the pan or isn't drying out. If it is, add a couple of tablespoons of water and make sure that the heat really is low enough. After simmering gently, the saucy mince mixture should look thick, moist and juicy.

Drain and rinse your can of red kidney beans in a sieve and stir them into the chilli pot. Bring to the boil again and gently bubble without the lid for another 10 minutes, adding a little more water if it looks too dry.

Taste a bit of the chilli and season. It will probably take a lot more seasoning than you think.

Now replace the lid, turn off the heat and leave your chilli to stand for 10 minutes before serving. This is really important as it allows the flavours to mingle.

Serve with rice.



## Chocolate Ice Cream

### Ingredients:

- 300 millilitres double cream
- 175 grams condensed milk
- 2 tablespoons cocoa powder
  - Chocolate brownies
- White Chocolate chip pieces

### Method

Whisk cream, milk and cocoa powder together until soft peaks form, and you have a gorgeous, airy mixture. Stir in brownies and chips.

Fill 2 x 500ml / 2 x 1-pint airtight containers and

freeze for 6 hours or overnight.

Serve straight from the freezer.

Why not try so different flavours...

Blend some raspberries and swirl through for raspberry ripple

Soak the mint leaves in the cream overnight and add a drop of mint extract for mint choc chip

Dissolve coffee in a tiny amount of hot water to make a paste and make coffee ice cream.

Slice a vanilla pod and scrap out all the seeds, add a drop of vanilla extract for yummy vanilla

Dissolve ground ginger in a tiny amount of hot water into a paste and add stem ginger pieces

To add a little bit extra why not add a few toppings too...

Chocolate flakes, sprinkles and sauce of course but what about slices of banana, strawberries whizzed into a drizzle, cherries or blueberries. And down in Cornwall it wouldn't be frowned upon to add a good-sized scoop of clotted cream!!

Why not give it a go and let us know how yummy they taste – some pictures please to share with our friends!!



## What's been happening around the branch



Lions have been out and about on trips to Squires. While out at the garden centre we got lots of smiles and giggles from members of the public when they learnt we were looking for plants and seeds of fruit and vegetable, rather than flowers that we couldn't eat.



We have been getting ready for summer and thinking about what we can grow. We have planted some beautiful fruit trees at the front of the building and are very excited to see the blossom growing already, fingers crossed we get to the fruit before the birds do!! In our garden we got our pots nice and clean, ready for fresh flowers, started our seedlings on the windowsills and tended our strawberry plants.

It has been wonderful to open our doors and invite you in for Macmillan events, Mother's Day events, Easter parades and hunts and parties, plays and concerts.



Have you been introduced to our new characters, Learning Lion and Grizzly Bear. They are always on hand to share fun, giggles and different themes to the rooms. They come in regularly to share new ideas, bring fun activities and join in with stories and songs.

Our Lions room has been transformed into a sensory room for the children to relax and self-regulate with lights, bubbles, sequins, spinning chair, cosy cushions and lots to explore and move.







All rooms have been getting to know the children and revamping the rooms to ensure we are using them to the maximum learning potential for the children using them.

Our staff teams have grown with some wonderful new staff and staff from other branches joining us here at Oldfield Road – check out



our staff team board in the foyer to see everyone. There is a little fact about all of us on there that might interest you.



We have also been out and about celebrating Easter at the hub, trips to the farm, walks around woodland gardens and many more. It's great to get out and about in the community and explore the world. Being in the fresh air, exploring the world and meeting lots of new people.



### Upcoming plans over next few months

We like to explore a range of different themes and topics within our nursery day. Each month we will send you a Monthly liaison letter explaining in detail about the theme for the following month. Each month brings new experiences, conversations, ideas, and experiments. Whilst we have an idea of where we would like to begin, we always let the children guide their learning making each month individual to the children and what they are processing at this point. We would love your input into how we can support your child's learning, here at the nursery and at home and evaluate what they have enjoyed of gained from these experiences, so we can plan and tailor these experiences even more strongly. Over the next few months, we will be exploring:

- Minibeasts
- Science
- Things that Move
- Summer and Holidays

Any suggestions on any other these topics or others will always be gratefully received.

Watch out for all our BBQ Celebrations, Extra Curriculum and all the summer fun.

## Cosy Cubs



Why is it important to introduce babies to different kinds of books in Cubs?

Babies first form of literacy is through use of textures and pictures books, introducing this to them is the foundation for learning literacy in the future. Reading to babies helps with their communication skills. Sensory books are powerful tools for promoting language development in infants.

In cubs we use puppet stories as a way for the babies to interact with the story and become immersed in it, it also stimulates their imagination. This also helps with the concentration. We have our books kept at low reach and this helps babies to access the books easy. As part of our routine, we do puppet or story book every day to keep the interest and love of books growing. Cubs also do “my favourite bedtime book” where parents come and read their child’s favourite book to the room, and this encourage parents to get involved with the reading. If you would like to get involved, please let us know!

Another form of books we have are texture and sensory books, these are great ways for babies to develop different senses like rough, shiny, soft and with mirror are some great ways of sensory stimulation for the babies which they need. Touch and feel books support the development of hand-eye coordination as babies scratch or stroke textures, and open flaps.

Reading to babies encourages them to listen, observe, and engage - skills that lay the groundwork for developing strong concentration and attention spans. The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) framework reiterates this when it says, “it is crucial for children to develop a life-long love of reading”. Which we definitely agree with in Cubs

Reading together can also be wonderful bonding moment between their peers and their teachers, giving them a love for reading from young age. In today’s world we have lost the touch of books and go more to the digital technology. We should keep the love for books growing and what better way the starting at a very young age.

Some of our favourites are:

Rumble in the Jungle

Hungry Caterpillar

That’s Not My... series

Julia Donaldson rhyming stories.



## Tiger Tales



Ever wondered how your child can make so much mess and what benefit does messy play bring them.

Here in tigers, we love to get messy but there is a good reason why.

Messy play in early years offers significant developmental benefits, including enhanced cognitive, motor, and sensory skills, along with opportunities for creativity, problem-solving, and social interaction. It allows children to explore materials, textures, and shapes in a safe and open-ended manner, fostering their natural curiosity and encouraging learning through experimentation.

Messy play helps to enhance children's development by giving them sensory experiences and the exploration of textures. Children can grow and explore by developing their physical skills, from big gross motor to more fine manipulative skills. Squashing and squeezing different materials, building up resistance in their hands, promoting the skills needed in later life for holding a pencil to write.

Messy play also gives children the chance to explore freely and be creative. It allows children to explore, discover, negotiate, take risks, create meaning and solve problems. In tigers we use messy play to explore all of our five senses. We incorporate our favourite toys to personalise the play, making it individual.

Our favourite messy plays are, ice cream making, sand, water, jelly, shaving foam, gloop, and many more. We think everyone should experience the science of gloop in their lifetime, if you haven't you've got to give it a go. It's a simple mixture of cornflour and a little water. Mix together into a paste. When squeezed in your hand it will become a solid ball, then allow it to sit in your palm and it will turn back into a liquid and run through your fingers (it can also be done with custard powder)!



Some children find textures quite daunting so starting out with dry ingredients can help. We often set up our farm animals using Weetabix and shredded wheat as the hay bales. Cornflakes sound great being trodden on by the animals too. Another great way to get started is dried rice or pasta. In a shallow tray, running your fingers through it and letting it drop from a height creating the sound of rain, you could always colour it in small portions with food colouring to create a rainbow effect!

Of course, some children love the wet, sticky, gooey textures. Setting fruit inside jelly and having to let it free (be aware pineapple will stop the jelly from setting so worth avoiding here). Ice cream cones, shaving foam, sprinkles and ice cream scoops create an ice cream parlour which are great fun too. Vegetables cooked to different firmness, with potato mashers and forks to explore the textures and strength needed to mush the vegetables is a great way to get children involved with food, smells and trying new foods.



Messy play really encourages independence and choice. Having dried sand and little jugs with water can give the children confidence to add as much water as they wish, changing the consistency to suit their needs.

Messy play doesn't need to be a huge mess, it's about exploring your senses and being enthralled into a world of creativity, wonder and a place where anything can happen. We do use big tuff trays for a big messy play but equally we have deep baking sheet style trays to explore individually, adding whatever the children feel they could use. So why not give it a go, most important thing is to have fun experimenting.

## Lions Laughter



During our consultations and conversations at the door we have been talking a lot about the journey of learning to write. In lions we believe in promoting life skills and instilling a belief that we can achieve anything we put our minds too.

In a day and age where writing is less and less used, are we good role models for children to see the need and benefits of writing on a daily basis? Many of us type on computers, text, email information, or send ecards rather than writing a card or letter to someone. Writing needs to be fun and for a reason – think about what you write, why not make cards to send, signed with your names, write a shopping list together to take to the shops or party invitations. Whatever you write, make it meaningful and useful in everyday life.

Your child has been working hard for the last 4 years of their lives, they have all the skills ready to tackle anything. It is no big worry if they are not writing their name before they go to school, let them develop and practice their skills in different environments at their own pace. It is also worth noting that fine motor skills develop later in males than females, so some boys find writing even more of a challenge.

So how have they been getting ready to write and what can you do to help support this learning?

As young children begin to grow the big movements come first followed by the smaller ones. From a very early age the shoulder pivot strengthens and is used to move our bodies around, this is quickly followed by the elbows and wrists. Yes, that tummy time as a baby is helping the body be ready to write!!

As children's core muscles begin to develop the smaller muscle movements like their wrist, ankles and elbows grow in order to allow their hands to grip and grasp objects for long enough and with power to complete their task. These movements can be stiff with most of the movement still coming from the shoulder. This is why big movements are really important to get them moving and used freely. It is important to keep the core body healthy too. Building these muscles will support in holding and controlling a pencil, scissors, zips, knives, and forks and many more tasks that require our fingers.

A great way to help relax the joints and get them working is using malleable materials to work your fingers and especially thumbs but also the upper body, shoulders, and arms. Malleable materials are a great way to get children ready for writing. The resistance allows the child to squeeze, roll, poke, and mould with their hands. Examples of this could be play dough, bread dough (even better that you can eat it afterwards), sand, cooked pasta, rice, cous cous, or cornflour and water (mixed together makes a fabulous gloop, that is solid and liquid at the same time!)

Learning as we are playing and having fun is the best way to learn at all. By creating wonder and openness to our activities we create a quest to want to do more and come back to try and try again. There are always going to be reluctant writers who just don't see the need to write.

But of course, the more fun and exciting something seems the more likely we are all to join in and have fun. Why not stick some paper under the dining room table and lay underneath and draw on it – with your arms stretched high or lay the paper out on the floor and draw around each other. Add pens to the back of cars and drive the pen to create the patterns or pop the pen between your toes see what marks you make. You could chalk letters on the floor outdoor and let you child draw over with water and a paint brush to watch the wonder of them disappearing.

With all that work then comes strong happy children who love picking up any mark making utensil to write, draw and create. Most letters are formed with patterns, by working on lines up and down, side to side and circle's, you have created the ability to form most letters. Start with the letters of their name, M for mummy, D for daddy, letters that have meaning and are useful to them. Look at formation and try to encourage fluid whole letters rather than broken lines connected to look like letters.

Few hints and tips:

It is easier to have control of a felt tip pen that pencils as less pressure is needed get the mark on the paper.

Thick pens are easier to grip than thin ones.

Dots to draw over are hard to see and follow, why not do a thin light pencil line for your child to go over with a felt tip pen.

Dry wipe boards are fabulous as it is exciting to rub out and try again.

Sometimes the angle of the paper can help – try placing a small folder under the paper so it leans slightly towards the child, giving a better angle to the wrist.

Here are a few activities that provide a recurring theme of moving our fingers in different ways to help support the muscles and movements, ready to write; why not give them a go. But please most importantly have fun writing, drawing, and generally making marks.

**Twig twisting** –To practice using both hands. When you're out and about collect some twigs and little branches of all sizes. Hold the twig in one hand and wrap a few pipe cleaners or wool around in with the other. It will involve moving your hands in different directions, working the wrists, arms, shoulders and learning co-ordination.

**Elastic band stretching** – Why not use wooden discs to hammer tacks into. This gives us the skills to hold heavy tools. After you get the tacks in place, use elastic or hair bands to stretch over the tacks, making patterns, but also stretching your muscles out.



**Water spray bottles** – Using Garden water spray bottles we have to use both hands to steady the bottle and spray the water. You could water the plants, aim for a target or trying to move a cup along a piece of wool, racing from one side to the other.

**Big brush painting** –This supports your arm movements and bending your elbows but also finding a comfortable position in one hand, jiggling it about if needed. Why not use water and a big brush in the garden, that way you can work up a wall, down on the ground, or while balancing round the side of a planter or shed.

**Pipettes** –Freeze some water into ice, maybe a dino in a balloon. Place the frozen object onto a tray and use the pipettes to spray warm or cold water over, the top, using your fingers and thumbs and freeing the dinosaur.

**Threading** –Grab a kebab stick and Blu Tac it to the table. Then using a bowl full of Cheerios, thread them onto the stick. You could also use a shoelace and pasta to thready using both hands. Or pipe cleaners and a colander.

**Pegs** –Wow we don't know where to start, pegs are one of those wonderful objects you could never be without. Why not have a length of string, pair and peg out the socks, use paper plates and pegs to make the sunshine, draw a happy face on one and peg it to everything that makes you smile, or draw a crocodile and make it chomp chomp chomp!

### Bread rolls

#### Ingredients

500g Bread flour (white or wholemeal)  
7g (One sachet) Fast-action yeast  
1 1/2 tsp Caster Sugar  
2 tsp Salt  
300ml Lukewarm water (45oC)  
3 TBSP Olive oil  
Plus, extra flour for dusting

#### How to make

Mix the flour, yeast, salt, and caster sugar in a large bowl, make a hole in the centre of the flour.  
In a jug measure 300ml of Lukewarm water and add 3 TBSP of olive oil. Pour the water in and gradually mix into a dough.  
Knead the dough, Cover dough in a bowl and leave to rise. Knead the dough again and make balls of dough, placing them on a tray to rise again.  
Once they have risen cook in the oven for 10-15 minutes. Once out of the oven transfer to a cooling rack, tapping the bottom of the rolls to check that they sound hollow.  
And then enjoy warm with a little butter.

### Playdough

#### You need:

2 cups plain flour  
2 tablespoons vegetable oil  
½ cup salt  
2 tablespoons cream of tartar  
Up to 1 ½ cups boiling water  
food colouring  
few drops glycerine (adds more shine!)

#### Method:

Mix the flour, salt, cream of tartar and oil in a large mixing bowl  
Add food colouring to the boiling water then into the dry ingredients  
Stir continuously until it becomes a sticky, combined dough  
Add the glycerine (optional)  
Allow it to cool down then take it out of the bowl and knead it vigorously for a couple of minutes until all the stickiness has gone. \* This is the most important part of the process, so keep at it until it's the perfect consistency! \*  
(If it remains a little sticky then add a touch more flour until just right)

## Policy update – Behaviour Management

At Greenacres we aim to provide a stimulating range of experiences and activities for the children to make sense of the world through play.

We aim to provide situations in which children can develop self-discipline and self-esteem in an atmosphere of mutual respect and encouragement. We recognise the importance of adults providing good role models.

We acknowledge that conflicts occur in childhood and adulthood and through viewing conflict as a learning opportunity children will gain valuable lifelong skills that benefit themselves, their families and society. We believe in the use of positive discipline as an effective way of setting limits for children. Thus, giving children, the appropriate skills and strategies to deal with difficult situations.

Our policy ensures staff are provided with guidance to ensure a consistent and positive approach, ensuing good role modelling through interactions with the children, each other and visitors, maintaining a happy, caring, structured ethos. Staffs' expectations for children's behaviour are high and lead by example.

The staff will be encouraging the children to..

Be confident in familiar and unfamiliar situations.

Participate in activities, developing skills of turn taking and sharing.

Understand how to except help when needed and the joy of helping others.

Demonstrate good manners.

Show consideration and respect for others, resources and equipment.

Staf will be doing this whilst..

Recognising individuality of all children and families

Supporting children in developing self-esteem, confidence and feeling of competence.

Building a strong bond with children and families.

Working in parenthood with parents.

Praising children and acknowledging their positive actions, attitudes and therefore ensuing children see and feel that they are valued and respected.

Practitioners at Greenacres make sure children are respected as individuals and build on their strengths and interests. Learning is shared control, and we create an atmosphere of mutual trust, respect and two-way open communication.

Our relaxation times make a big difference to children behaviour. Having a time to reflect on their day in a calm and relaxing environment will help them to focus and promotes positive wellbeing and mindfulness. Teaching the children techniques to calm their thoughts and manage them will develop forward thinking and peacefulness.

The rules we teach are all positive, things we can do rather than what we can't. A gentle nudge in the right direction, or a question to help think about actions. This could be "using our walking feet" rather than "no running". Children will respond and well as feel in control of their decisions.

We aspire to ensure the children are actively involved in creating a positive environment where children feel they are in control of themselves, understand their decision and can explore and learn at their own pace, whilst asking for help when needed. Children who feel respected, listened to and involved in decision making can thrive and build upon these skills throughout their life now matter where the direction takes them.

## From our Foyer

The Characteristics of Effective Learning describe behaviours children use in order to learn. To learn well, children must approach opportunities with curiosity, energy and enthusiasm. Effective learning must be meaningful to a child, so that they are able to use what they have learned and apply it in new situations. These abilities and attitudes of strong learners will support them to learn well and make good progress in all the Areas of Learning and Development. It is really important we understand every child's unique style of learning and explore HOW children learn rather than WHAT they are learning.

### Characteristics of effective learning



The Unique Child reaches out to relate to people and things through the **Characteristics of Effective Learning**, which move through all areas of learning.

- Playing and exploring
- Active learning
- Creating and thinking critically

The ways in which the child engages with other people and their environment – playing and exploring, active learning, and creating and thinking critically – underpin learning development across all areas and support the child to remain an effective and motivated learner.

#### Characteristics of Effective Learning

##### Playing and exploring – engagement

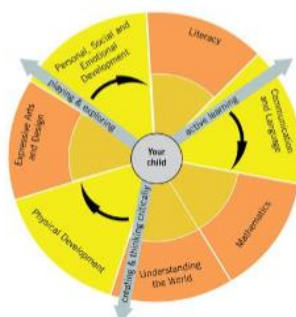
Finding out and exploring  
Playing with what they know  
Being willing to 'have a go'

##### Active learning – motivation

Being involved and concentrating  
Keeping trying  
Enjoying achieving what they set out to do

##### Creating and thinking critically – thinking

Having their own ideas  
Making links  
Choosing ways to do things



Children develop in the Context of relationships and the environment around them

This is unique to each family and reflects individual communities and cultures

## Breaking down the EYFS



### What is the Early Years Foundation Stage?

Welcome to the **Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)**, which is how the Government and early years professionals describe the time in your child's life between birth and age 5.

This is a very important stage as it helps your child get ready for school as well as preparing them for their future learning and successes. From when your child is born up until the age of 5, their early years experience should be happy, active, exciting, fun and secure; and support their development, care and learning needs.

Nurseries, pre-schools, reception classes and childminders registered to deliver the EYFS must follow a legal document called the Early Years Foundation Stage Framework.

### What is the EYFS Framework – why do we have one?

The EYFS Framework exists to support all professionals working in the EYFS to help your child, and was developed with a number of early years experts and parents.

In 2012 the framework was revised to make it clearer and easier to use, with more focus on the things that matter most. This new framework also has a greater emphasis on your role in helping your child develop.

It sets out:

- The legal welfare requirements that everyone registered to look after children must follow to keep your child safe and promote welfare.
- The 7 areas of learning and development which guide professionals' engagement with your child's play and activities as they learn new skills and knowledge.
- Assessments that will tell you about your child's progress through the EYFS.
- Expected levels that your child should reach at age 5, usually the end of the reception year, these expectations are called "Early Learning Goals (ELGs)".

There is also a guidance for the professionals supporting your child on planning the learning activities, and observing and assessing what and how your child is learning and developing.



### What does it mean for me as a parent?

Ensuring my child's safety

Much thought has been given to making sure that your child is as safe as possible. Within the EYFS there is a set of welfare standards that everyone must follow. These include the numbers of staff required in a nursery, how many children a childminder can look after, and things like administering medicines and carrying out risk assessments.

Quality

You can find out about the quality of your child's nursery and other early years providers in relation to the EYFS Framework by checking what the Government's official inspection body for early years, Ofsted, has to say about it. You can find this information at [www.ofsted.gov.uk/inspection-reports/find-inspection-report](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/inspection-reports/find-inspection-report)



## How will my child be learning?



The EYFS Framework explains how and what your child will be learning to support their healthy development.

Your child will be learning skills, acquiring new knowledge and demonstrating their understanding through **7 areas of learning and development**.

Children should mostly develop the 3 prime areas first. These are:

- Communication and language
- Physical development
- Personal, social and emotional development



These prime areas are those most essential for your child's healthy development and future learning.

As children grow, the prime areas will help them to develop skills in **4 specific areas**. These are:

- Literacy
- Mathematics
- Understanding the world
- Expressive arts and design.



These 7 areas are used to plan your child's learning and activities. The professionals teaching and supporting your child will make sure that the activities are suited to your child's unique needs. This is a little bit like a curriculum in primary and secondary schools, but it's suitable for very young children, and it's designed to be really flexible so that staff can follow your child's unique needs and interests.

Children in the EYFS learn by playing and exploring, being active, and through creative and critical thinking which takes place both indoors and outside.



At Greenacres we are always engaging with children and families to ensure we are providing individualised care and education throughout the day, looking at how our environment is created, the equipment and opportunities offered.



## Safety reminders

### **No drinks with sweeteners for younger children, say UK advisers**

Michelle Roberts

Digital health editor, BBC News

Published 3 April 2025

### **Younger children should not be given any drinks containing artificial sweeteners**

The Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition (SACN) recommendations apply to beverages such as sugar-free 'tooth kind' squash that has ingredients such as aspartame, stevia, saccharin and sucralose.

It says preschool children should become accustomed to drinking water instead.

Sweeteners may help older children cut down on sugar though.

### **What are artificial sweeteners?**

Eating too much sugar increases the risk of tooth decay and some long-term health conditions such as type 2 diabetes, obesity and cardiovascular disease.

Artificial sweeteners were developed as a substitute, providing a sweet taste with few or no calories.

All of the ones used in the UK are approved and have undergone rigorous safety tests.

But some are concerned that they enhance preferences for sweet tastes in children which can be hard to overcome.

After reviewing the available evidence, SACN says proof that sweeteners are cutting tooth decay is "poor", although a reduction in free sugars, alongside "other positive changes to diet", is likely to be beneficial to health overall.

It says there may be some value in using sweeteners to help reduce weight gain in the short to medium term, but "it is not essential and is not the only option."

And the SACN committee experts are concerned about "the gap in data" on UK population exposure to sweeteners.

They say there is currently "insufficient evidence" to carry out a full risk assessment and are asking government to gather more.

A Department of Health and Social Care spokesperson said government was committed to turning the tide on obesity, taking bold action to crack down on child-targeted junk food advertising on TV and online.

Prof Robin May, Chief Scientific Adviser at the Food Standards Agency, said: "We strongly support SACN's call for industry to make data on the quantity of these sweeteners in their ingredients publicly available to provide better information on how much people are consuming and to help inform our assessments of these ingredients."

Prof Graham Finlayson, Chair in Psychobiology, University of Leeds, said it was reasonable to be cautious, especially in children, but the evidence wasn't strong enough to dismiss non-sugar sweeteners as a tool for reducing sugar intake.

"With obesity and diabetes rates rising, knee-jerk policy changes could do more harm than good," he warned.

The International Sweeteners Association (ISA) said: "As part of an overall healthy diet and lifestyle, low/no calorie sweeteners can be used to further public health objectives on sugar intake reduction."

# Toy safety

*"I would hate for any other child to go through what Becca suffered because of buying dangerous toys via online marketplaces."*

Mum of two-year-old Becca who swallowed magnets from a toy

Toys from reputable brands are made to be safe. But if they've come from an unknown seller on an online marketplace, a market or small discount store, they could be dangerous.

## Buying safely

- Buy toys from brand names you know. If you've never heard of the seller or the brand and price is really tempting, it could be dangerous
- Watch out for cheap copies of popular toys. They may not be made to UK safety standards.
- Check if the toy has been removed from sale because it's unsafe. Visit gov.uk and search 'product recalls'
- If you buy something that looks unsafe, trust your instincts and send it back.



## Under 3s most at risk

Babies and toddlers are curious and naturally put everything in their mouths. So dangerous toys can pose the biggest risk to small children. Be especially careful when buying for under 3s.

Watch out for missing or contradictory age warnings. If a toy is pictured with a toddler but marketed as unsuitable for young children, pick something else.

## Which toys are most dangerous?

- Toys with:
  - accessible button batteries that can burn through your child's food pipe
  - super strong magnets that can rip through your child's belly
  - long cords that can strangle your child
  - small parts that can choke your small child
- Water beads that can block your child's bowel if swallowed
- Electrical toys with exposed wires or chargers that can catch fire.

## Checking toys

If you're unsure about the safety of a toy, here are some checks you can do:

- Check battery compartments for accessible button batteries or loose spares in the box
- Check for any loose small magnets
- Give the parts on the toy a quick tug and check for small parts that come off
- Look for long cords or access to stuffing
- Check if there are any age restrictions or safety warnings on the product.

## Report dangerous toys

If you spot or buy a toy you're concerned about:

- Citizens Advice consumer helpline: 0808 223 1133
- Citizens Advice consumer helpline (Welsh-speaking adviser): 0808 223 1144
- Advice Direct Scotland helpline: 0808 164 6000
- Northern Ireland Consumerline: 0300 123 6262

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# Safe from choking

*"I always thought choking would have been more obvious. But the silence and the panic in his eyes will stay with me forever."*

A child who's choking can't breathe, so there's no sound to alert you.

As scary as this sounds, you can stop this happening. It takes some simple steps.

## Why do children choke?

- Children can choke at any age. Young children are at greater risk.
- Their narrow airways are more easily blocked.
- Anything smaller than a 2p can choke them.

## Small objects

Babies and toddlers put things in their mouths. It's how they explore. So they can choke on small objects in their reach:

- Cheap toys can have small parts that come off. Check them over first.
- Use older children's toys in a specific area and check the floor afterwards. Use a tray underneath to catch small parts, like Lego.
- Don't let young children blow up balloons and clear away broken pieces.

## Baby bottles

Never use a self-feeding baby pillow or prop your baby's bottle up to feed. They need an adult to help them feed.

## First aid

- Give up to five back blows between the shoulder blades – it can force the object out.
- For babies, give up to five chest thrusts. For children over 1 year of age, give up to five abdominal thrusts squeezing above the belly button from behind – it forces air out of the lungs to clear the object.
- If 1 & 2 don't work call 999 and keep trying until help arrives.

## Food

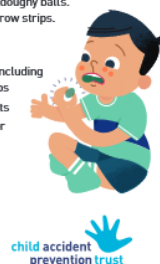
- Choking on food isn't just about young children not chewing properly. It takes time to learn to breathe, chew and swallow in harmony.
- Until then, they need you to cut up or avoid anything that could block their airway. And to teach them to sit still to eat.

## Size and shape matter

- Cut lengthways and quarters – grapes, blueberries, strawberries, cherries and small tomatoes.
- Remove skin, pits or stones from fruits or vegetables.
- Cut thin strips – sausages, cheese, vegetables and large fruit like melon, apple, carrot, cucumber and mango.
- Steam, mash or grate foods to soften them – carrots, chickpeas, butter beans.
- Cut strips and remove bones, skin or fat – meat and fish.
- Toast bread – to stop doughy balls. Cut all bread into narrow strips.

## Save for later

- Round hard sweets, including mini eggs and lollipops
- Whole grapes and nuts
- Globs of peanut butter
- Popcorn
- Marshmallows
- Jelly cubes



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## A Note from Miss Susan – Exciting Times Ahead at Greenacres and Problem Solving

Please enjoy reading our next newsletter and don't forget we love you to come and work alongside us for half a day doing 'Nursery Officer for a day'

As we look ahead to the coming months, I'm thrilled to share with you the many adventures and learning opportunities that await us here at Greenacres. Our dedicated team is busy planning engaging activities and experiences that will spark curiosity, creativity, and joy in our young explorers.

From outdoor explorations to arts and crafts, we'll be embracing the changing seasons and all the wonders they bring. Our nurseries will be buzzing with excitement as we discover new things, make new friends, and create lasting memories.

I'm proud of the nurturing environment we've created at Greenacres, where every child feels valued, supported, and encouraged to grow. I'm looking forward to seeing the incredible progress your children will make and celebrating. I still remain honoured to be part of their journey and can't wait to share the fun with you!

## Problem-Solving with our Children at Greenacres.

At Greenacres, we believe that fostering problem-solving skills in our young learners is essential for their cognitive development and future success. Our experienced practitioners are dedicated to providing a safe and nurturing environment where children can explore, experiment, and learn through play.

### \*What is Problem-Solving?\*

Problem-solving is the process of identifying a challenge or obstacle and finding a solution. For under 5s, this might mean figuring out how to stack blocks, navigating a puzzle, or finding a way to share toys with friends.

### \*How We Encourage Problem-Solving:\*

- \*Open-Ended Play\*: We provide opportunities for children to engage in open-ended play, where they can explore and experiment without fear of failure.
- \*Challenging Activities\*: Our practitioners design activities that challenge children to think critically and come up with creative solutions.
- \*Supportive Guidance\*: We offer gentle guidance and support to help children develop their problem-solving skills, without providing the answers.
- \*Reflection and Discussion\*: We encourage children to reflect on their experiences and discuss their thoughts and

ideas with their peers.

### \*Benefits of Problem-Solving:\*

- \*Develops Critical Thinking\*: Problem-solving helps children develop critical thinking skills, which are essential for future academic success.
- \*Builds Confidence\*: By overcoming challenges, children build confidence in their ability to solve problems and tackle new situations.
- \*Enhances Creativity\*: Problem-solving encourages children to think creatively and come up with innovative solutions.

### \*How You Can Support Problem-Solving at Home:\*

- \*Provide Opportunities for Play\*: Encourage your child to engage in open-ended play at home, using materials like blocks, puzzles, and playdough.
- \*Ask Open-Ended Questions\*: Ask your child questions that encourage them to think critically and come up with their own solutions.
- \*Praise Effort, Not Just Success\*: Praise your child for their effort and persistence, not just their success. This helps to develop a growth mindset and encourages them to take risks.

By working together, we can help our children develop the problem-solving skills they need to succeed in life. If you have any questions or would like to learn more about our approach to problem-solving, please don't hesitate to ask.



## A Note from Miss Michelle – Funding

### Funding in our settings.

There are various types of funding, that we claim the most common is known as entitlement (Early education entitlement) this is universal and extended.

Universal (15hrs) entitlement is for all three- and four-year-olds and extended (30) entitlement is for working families with 2,3- and 4-year-olds that meet the criteria.

The criteria for working entitlements are; each parent must be working for at least 16hours per week, earning between the national minimum and not exceeding £100.000. Parents should apply for a childcare code on the childcare choice's website [www.childcarechoices.gov.uk](http://www.childcarechoices.gov.uk).

From September this entitlement will also be for eligible 9 month- 2-year-olds.

There is another type of entitlement known as 'FRAS' (families in receipt of additional government support) parents, that are entitled to this funding will be given a code, which will need to be given to the nursery.

All entitlements are from the term after the child's eligible age.

The way in which Greenacres delivers the entitlement is, the 38 weeks claimed, is stretched over 52 weeks per year, which gives 11hrs or 22hrs funded hours per week and not 15hrs or 30hrs term time only. Any fees are then calculated for additional hours. Parents often ask, when will I get my full 15 hours, in a day nursery

which they already are, as it covers 12 months instead of just the school dates (term time)

Parents are required to complete a parent authorisation form, prove their child's age and sign a contract, this will have an invoice attached, which will show your free hours and any additional hours. A new form only needs to be completed if there is a change to the entitlement or a new academic year. Entitlements can be used with other providers and must be shown on the form.

When applying for working entitlement code, please be aware that eligibility codes must be applied for, before the cut off dates to be able to be used for the following term. The cut off dates are 31<sup>st</sup> March, 31<sup>st</sup> August and 31<sup>st</sup> December. Codes must be revalidated regularly to be able to be used. If a parent falls out of eligibility, they can use their grace period to help them to become eligible.

### Other types of funding are;

**DAF**- disability access fund, this is given to the setting for any child that receives disability living allowance.

**EYPP** -Early years pupil premium, is for the setting for children from families that are receiving additional support from the government.

**EYSIF**- for children with additional needs for the setting.

All of these types of funding are to be used in the setting to benefit the individual child, such as new resources, staff training courses and outings.

If you have any questions, please email Tanya or myself on [info.greenacres@gmail.com](mailto:info.greenacres@gmail.com) or ask a member of staff.

**Song time**– We are always enjoying new songs and rhymes, here are a few of our favourites at the moment.

Counting songs are a great way to encourage maths skills, numbers and counting forwards and backwards – why not try these ones.

### **Hokey Cokey**

When you put your left arm in, your left arm out

In, out, in, out, you shake it all about

You do the hokey cokey and you turn around

That's what it's all about

Woah-oh, the hokey cokey

Woah-oh, the hokey cokey

Woah-oh, the hokey cokey

Knees bent, arms stretched, ra, ra, ra

You put your right arm in....

You put your left leg in...

You put your right leg in...

You put your whole self in...



### **Hickory Dickory**

Hickory Dickory Dock

The mouse ran up the clock

The clock struck one

The mouse ran down

Hickory Dickory Dock

The clock struck two

The mouse went "boo!"

The clock struck three

The mouse went "weeee!"

The clock struck four

The mouse said, "no more!"

### **One Finger, One Thumb**

One finger, one thumb keep moving

One finger, one thumb keep moving

One finger, one thumb keep moving

We'll all be happy and bright

Add one arm

Add one leg

Add one nod of the head

Add Stand up, sit down

Add turn round



## Gallery Fun

