

Welcome to the Explorer's room

Our aim is for you to feel at home and welcomed into our environment. We want you and your little one to feel like you are entering your second home. We aim for everyone to feel just as comfortable here as you would in your own home. You will be greeted by warm, friendly faces upon arrival to the Explorers room. We will build your child's independence and confidence by allowing them to be given a choice and provide flexibility for each child as an individual. In this room your child will be exploring the resources on offer and be given the opportunity to use the resources to express themselves.

It is important to us that your little one feels confident to explore their surroundings and use skills they develop to their full advantage. We will support your little one with developing the understanding to use kindness and good manners, they will learn this by observing positive role modelling from the whole team. This is important to us within the Explorers room as it shows respect.

What is the settling in process for the Explorers room?

Before your little one starts in the Explorers room (if they are new to the setting) we will invite you in for some settling in sessions. Where both you and your child will be able to explore the environment and get to know the new surroundings. This time will be used to get to know both your little one and you as a family to build a positive relationship so we can support your little one together. When getting to know your child we will find out about family members/ pets, dislikes your child has, if they have any favourite toys/books/ rhymes, any allergies or food preferences. All of this will help us get to know all about your child and will allow the transition to be smooth and perfect for them as an individual.

Moving from the Adventurers room (babies)

We are so lucky we are a small setting as your little one will already be familiar with all the team. We will spend time with your child's previous key person from the baby room, in this time we will use it to get to know all about your children such as their likes, dislikes, routine and any favourite activities/ toys they have. We will arrange settling in sessions for your child into our room but ensuring we go at your child's pace. When arranging these we will always ensure that we keep you informed of these sessions and communicate any ideas we think will work well for your child through this transition.

Key person system

Once your little one has settled into our room, we will allocate them a key person. This is decided by observing who your little one builds a close relationship with and ensuring this person will be in on your little one's days so you are able to build a relationship too. We want your child's key person to spend good quality time with them to build positive relationships and have meaningful interactions. When we have decided who your child's key person is we will inform you of this and we will work closely with you to support your child through their stages of development and with their emotions when in the Explorers room. We will ensure that communication between your child's key person and you as the family is always of a high standard. We do this by keeping you updated on your child's development, their day at nursery and we will share any ideas or tips which could support you at home. We will try our best to ensure that your child's key person greets them and hands over at the end of the day. We have an open-door policy and we will always be on hand for a chat if there is anything you wish to talk about this could be regarding your child and their development or behaviour, concerns which you may have or even just a chat about anything which is going on in your own life that you need someone to unload on. We aim to be there not only to support your child but you as their family too.



Parent Partnerships

It is important to us that not just your child but you, feel a sense of belonging and a feel of being at home. Here we aim to build strong positive relationships with you to support your little one and their development. You know your child best and we want to work closely with you to give them the best care and support. We will always greet you with a happy friendly face and a calming nature. We want you to feel confident to share anything with us. We will always be here to listen to you and offer any support to benefit both you and your little one. If you wish to talk to us but you do not feel it is the right environment, we will find a way to speak to you in private so you feel more comfortable. We hold termly parent's evenings with you where we can have time to sit together over a hot drink and discuss your child and the term they have had. This time is quality time we get with you on a 1:1/2 basis, without any distractions, to sit and discuss anything related to your little one and we can speak about any support we can give your child to support their development.

Our environment

When you look at our environment you probably look and think it is not your usual toddler room that you would find within an early years setting. In our room we follow the 'Hygge' approach, we believe in both living and teaching in the moment. Our environment is full of wooden, natural resources and loose parts. We have fairy lights around the room to soften the brightness of the room so we do not have to have the main light on as it is too overpowering for our children. It also gives the children a sense of warmth and cosiness. This links with the Hygge approach which is something we in the Explorers room want to follow. This theory links to the Danish way of life. It focuses on a feeling of togetherness. This is our aim in the Explorers room to give you, your child and our team a feeling of togetherness and a feeling of home from home. We want our room to be an extension of your own home and we want children to develop the same level of respect for their nursery environment as they would have in their own home. We encourage the children within the room to take off their shoes when they enter. In our own home we wouldn't allow anyone to walk in with muddy shoes or wellies and nursery is an extension of our home. It allows children to develop a level of respect for the environment around them this supports boundaries too. The resources in our room are down at your child's level, this allows free access to whichever resources your little one wishes to play with all this can be done independently. We have set areas in our room for your child to

Home corner

In our home corner you will find lots of real resources which the children would find in their home. We have real pots and pans for the children to explore, we also have a real tea set which they are able to use and set up their own tea parties. We have real foods in our home corner on a daily basis, these foods will change from day to day to make it more inviting for the children.

Interactive board

We have an interactive board in our room filled with different things which your little one will often show a lot of curiosity about. Such as, light switches, door handles and different types of gate locks. All of these things appear to be interesting and at home we often find ourselves telling them not to touch them as it breaks the safety boundary. Therefore, having it in a safe way where they are able to freely explore and investigate it enables them to explore and assess how it keeps them safe.

Dressing up

In the Explorers room we have no set dressing up costumes, all our dressing up is real clothes. Real shirts, dresses, skirts, shoes and scarves. This allows the children to use their imagination when dressing up and means that they have no limits.

Craft Corner

We have a designated wall in our room where the children are able to freely participate in crafts. We have paint out daily for the children to visit and explore, the children are able to help themselves to paint, paper and pencils and get creative. This freedom allows the children to feel they have a sense of responsibility and independence to their play. We have taken inspiration from Reggio Emilia once saying "Every Child is an Artist". By giving children the freedom to express themselves through art work it gives them the chance to feel they belong. Some children might not feel confident enough to express themselves through scenarios in play, therefore by allowing the chance to freely explore craft resources it will help build their confidence to express themselves in a different way.

Cosy corner/ Family board

In our room we have a designated area filled with soft furnishing, blankets and cushions. This is an area where children can retreat to when they want some time to relax or get cosy. This area allows them to unwind and take a break to look at a book. We have a board here too where your little one's family photos are displayed. This allows them to feel together with their family even though their families are not with them physically in that moment. This is important because it is a good talking point for children and it allows them to express their memories and talk to their peers and the team about what they have been up too and who is important to them.

Loose parts station

Loose parts enable the explorers to use their imagination and play/ create something from anything. A loose part can be anything from a pine cone or shell to a cardboard box. Loose parts really have no limitations to a child's play and truly put the child at the centre of their learning.



Invitations to play

In the Explorers room we believe it is important for children to have a curious mind to enhance their learning. We set up a variety of invitations to play on a daily basis to spark the children's interests.

These invitations to play are a starting point for the children to explore, they have no set end result and the children are able to use their imagination and explore their ideas putting them at the centre of their learning. We were inspired by this method by theorist Te Whariki, he said that children need to learn and play both with and alongside others but still have that strong sense of themselves and play with their own imagination. It is important to us that the invitations of play have no limitations as it makes it unique to all of the children in on that day and it gives a variety of end results. This all helps to build your little one's confidence to explore their ideas which will support them in later life.



Schemas

Schemas are an important part in all children's play. These are patterns which occur in the children's play which shows how they learn. In the Explorers room it is important to us that all schemas are supported. We see a wide variety of different schemas within this room and we offer a wide range of resources to support these schemas. Some parents might look at the schemas their children display and see it as a concern or something behavioural, **BUT THIS IS NOT THE CASE!** Piaget said schemas are '**repeated patterns of behaviour in play where children explore their ideas and thoughts**'. In the Explorers room, we will work closely with you to improve awareness on your child's schemas and ways in which you can support their schemas when at home. All schemas are different and it is important that we support children through their schemas and not put a stop to their learning as this can have a negative impact on your child. We want to work closely with you to ensure your child has the best support through this learning. Throwing is a common example; this is your little one displaying a trajectory schema they are learning the concept of up and down and gravity.

Lunchtime/ Sleep

We have our lunch in our room, this is a familiar calm environment where relaxing music is playing whilst the children are able to freely help themselves to dinner. This allows your little one to have a sense of independence and belonging as they feel that they have a say in what they want to eat. It removes the pressure on children to eat a bigger portion if they are more of a snacker and not eat much. We encourage the Explorers to try a little bit of each part of the meal. Explorers are encouraged to scrape their own plates when they finish their dinner before sitting back down for pudding. The children enjoy the responsibility of this task. When they have finished their dinner and pudding, we encourage them to wipe their own faces using a warm flannel, this teaches the children self-care. Once the Explorers have finished, we have some calm, quiet time with some stories. Again, some invitations to play will be set up for the children who want to explore them. Some children have a nap after dinner, with the warm lighting within the room it sets a calm relaxing environment for the children to get cosy. For the children who go to sleep, sleep music will be played and they will be made to feel warm and comfortable. There will be a member of the team sat with the children who sleep to allow them to feel safe and they will be there to give the children cuddles and get them off to sleep in a comforting and soothing way.



Outdoor Play

In the Explorers room, it is important that the children get to be in the outdoor environment. Your little one will be outside regardless of the weather there is **'no such thing as bad weather just inappropriate clothing.'** said by British explorer Ranulph Fiennes. It is vital to us that the children are suitably dressed for the weather conditions outside and as a team we model the appropriate clothing too. The weather changes to suit the different seasons we will remind you what to bring in for your child to keep them suitably dressed for the weather. We know that the British weather is not very reliable therefore it is important to pack for any weather to ensure you are prepared. We do have a small range of nursery spare clothes which we can give to the children. Children get a lot of learning opportunities in the outdoor environment as it is just an extension to the classroom. In the Explorers room we encourage the children to have a go at putting on their own waterproofs. We sit with them and go through the process stage by stage to gradually introduce them and develop their independence for their move through to the Inventors room. We begin the process by visually laying out the waterproofs and gradually introduce new steps at a time until the children have developed the independence to tell us 'I do it'. It is critical that children get the opportunity to explore the outdoor environment as it allows them to develop respect for the living things within the environment around them. At Little Squirrels we are blessed with some lovely surroundings and it is important to us in the Explorers Room that the children get to explore these surroundings and really feel the benefit of our setting. It is important to us that our children develop an awareness of risks. As Froebel once said **'Being in the outdoor environment allows children to be risk takers and self-assess their own play then use this as a learning curve'** We know our children and we know that they show a lot of curiosity to new things and things as parents you might see as dangerous, unsafe and hazardous. In the Explorers room we know the boundaries the children can go to and we aim to support them in this process of developing an awareness of risky play. All children learn in different ways and as the adults supporting the sometimes, we need to take a step back and ask the children 'do you think this is safe?', 'What could happen here?', 'Do you think if you did ... then it would be safer?' This allows children to assess their own play and spot any possible risks or hazards which could occur in their play and use their initiative to change their plan and make it safer for themselves. We are not always there for children and we may not always be on hand for them as a safety blanket so it is important to us to use these learning opportunities to support children to develop vital skills they will need in their later lives. Froebel also said that **'the only place where children are able to safely test their limits is in an Early Years setting'** In the Explorers room we will make this happen.



Nappy time

When changing your little one's nappy in the Explorers room, where possible we try to ensure it is your little one's key person who changes them.

This 1:1 time is valuable bonding and a learning opportunity. We communicate with them what is in their nappy as this is important to allow them to develop the understanding of the different feelings they get. Furthermore, we explain the reasons why we are changing their nappy; this gives them dignity and respect. It is vital that children develop an awareness of why we change their nappy and the impact it will have if we don't. As a team we also want your little one to develop an awareness that only familiar people can change their nappy, this builds the knowledge of 'privates are private'. We are passionate about building strong positive relationships with your little one, so they feel safe in our care and feel comfortable allowing us to change their nappy. Some children are less confident than others and will thrive off this 1:1 time with their key worker, we use this time to sing songs and simulate conversations.

Toileting

The transition from nappies to pants tends to occur within this room. It is a big transition; children can see their nappy as their comfort. It is vital that this process is done at the pace of your little one and in a way which best suits them. The first sign to look for is knowing the difference between wet and dry. Children need to understand the feeling of a wet sensation when they have an accident. Another sign is being able to communicate when they have done a wee or a poo. Many feel that before they begin toilet training that their little one should be in pull ups. This is NOT the case! Pull ups act exactly the same as nappies and give the same sensation/ feeling. The only benefit a pull up brings is the independence of pulling it up and down. If you feel your little one is ready to go through this transition it is more beneficial to just go for it and go straight from nappies to pants. We want to help support both you and your little one through this process, if you are interested in starting, please speak to your child's key person or a member of our Explorers team. One huge factor in this process is **CONSISTENCY**. We offer a toilet training leaflet, which explains a bit more about the process.

Emotions and Self-Regulation

In the Explorers room your little one is always allowed to express their emotions. We will always be there to support your little one though their emotions and talk to them about how they're feeling. Some children when they are feeling sad like to be left alone to regulate themselves, in the Explorers room we never leave them to face their emotions alone. Our approach is to talk to your little one and make them aware we are there when they are ready. We will always sit in sight of your little one so they are able to see us. In our room we do not tell children they are ok. If your little one is displaying or expressing emotions it is important to allow them to express it and talk them through the feeling, we will NEVER mask this emotion. Froebel had a theory linked to self-regulation and he said, **'it is important we do not tell a child they are ok if they are upset or displaying sad emotions. This is because it does not allow children to understand their emotions as they are displaying sadness but being told they are ok; this causes a lot of confusion.'** We will communicate any positive emotions with your little one too and talk to them about happiness and excitement they display when playing.

Moving into the Inventors room (Preschool)

When your little one turns 3 or the term after their third birthday, they will transition into the Inventors room. The process will be done at the pace of your little one. The Explorers and Inventors spend a lot of time together throughout the day. Your little one will be familiar with both staff and children within the room, by supporting your little one with their awareness of emotions it will help with this transition. Your little one's key person in the Explorers room will work closely with their new key worker to ensure all the relevant information is passed over and the transition is as smooth as possible.

Explorers staff working days and hours

Kim (Deputy Manager) Tuesday 8-6, Wednesday 8-6, Thursday 8-6 and Friday (in the office) 8-6.

Katrina Monday 8-4, Tuesday 8-4 and Wednesday 8-4.

Maria Monday 8-6, Thursday 8-6 and Friday 8-6

If you have any questions or queries, please do not hesitate to ask us, if you don't have time at drop off feel free to write it down and pass it onto us and we will get an answer to you ASAP.