

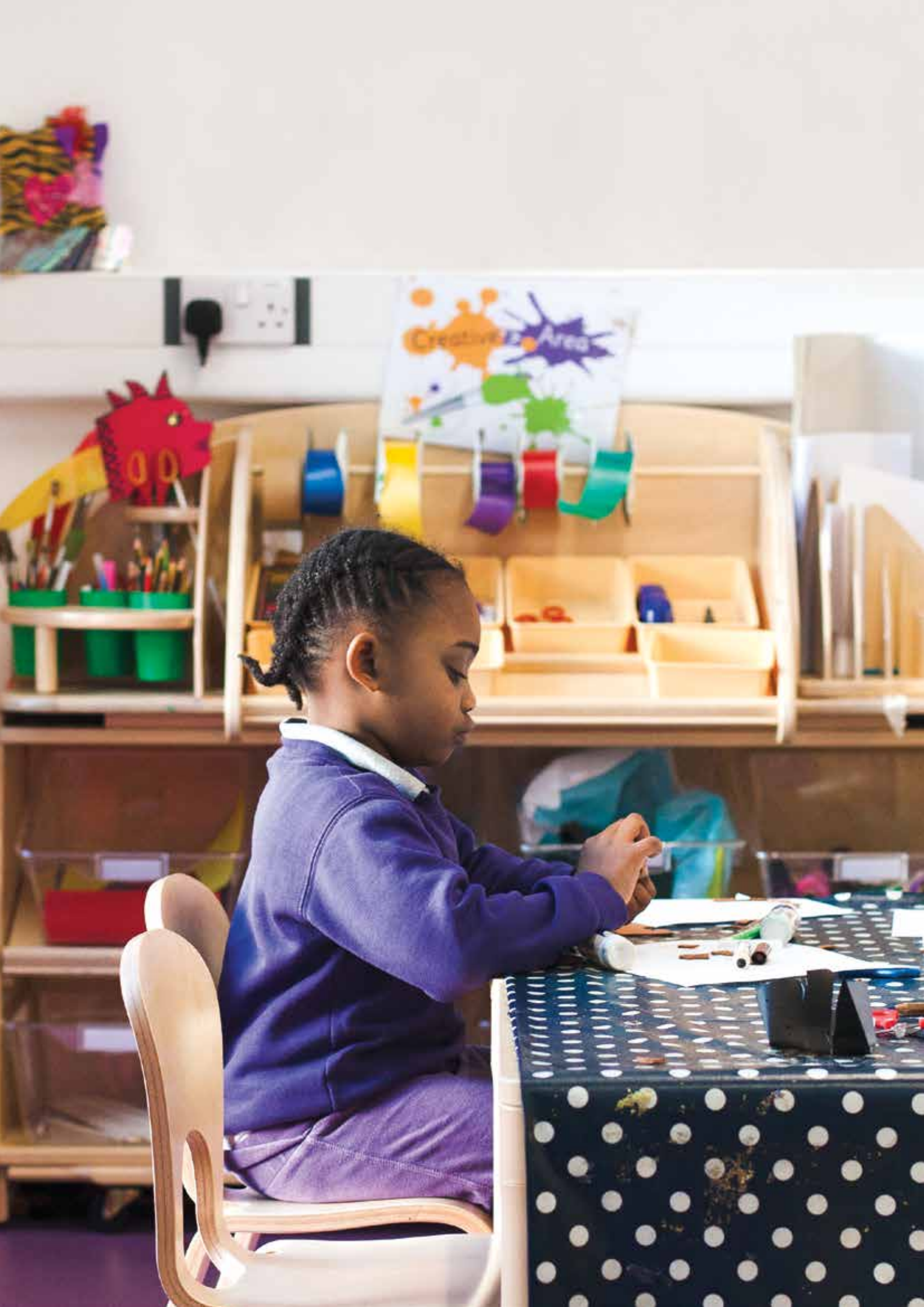
# Play

and the revised  
EYFS



Community Playthings  
with Anne O'Connor





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Children's play is infinitely complex; attempts to compartmentalise it can never do it justice. However, an enabling environment ensures that children's play quite naturally fulfils the EYFS learning and development requirements. Therefore this booklet looks at the activity areas seen in most early years settings. Each section describes:

- » A specific play activity
- » Where the activity takes place and how the environment can support it
- » Sample observation of this activity
- » How children may be observed realising the seven areas of learning and development



# Introduction

by Anne O'Connor

The very existence of youth is due in part to the necessity for play; the animal does not play because he is young, he has a period of youth because he must play.

**Karl Groos**, German biologist 1861–1946

One of the best things about the revised EYFS (2012) is its identification of three prime areas of development (physical; personal, social and emotional; communication and language), highlighting how crucial these are in the early years, as they underpin all learning and development. The specific areas (literacy; mathematics; understanding the world; expressive arts and design) are dependent on development in those prime areas and are not so time-specific (Moylett and Stewart, 2012).

Observation is still at the heart of the EYFS. Observing children's play is the only accurate way for practitioners to assess development across all areas of learning and to gauge the right levels of interaction and support that will enhance and extend the learning experience.

The revised EYFS also reminds us that 'play is essential for children's development'. When faced with ever-increasing demands for school readiness at an increasingly young age, perhaps we need to let Groos remind us that children **MUST** play in order to develop.

It is the very nature of play that is building and shaping their brains throughout the early years. Early years theorists have always told us – and neuroscience now confirms – that sensory stimulation builds the nerve networks that create the architecture of the brain. With the help of attuned adults, children playing are instinctively responding to the sensory stimulation of everything around them.





That's why the enabling environment is so important for development and learning. A truly enabling environment provides the stimulation and the positive relationships that support children to feel safe enough to explore. But it has to be the kind of environment that allows children to 'wallow' (Tina Bruce) and take as much time as they need:

- » To be absorbed by what they choose to do and to come back to it time after time.
- » To be stimulated by the feel and smell of materials, the sounds they make and the mess that can be made with them.
- » To make connections with what's happened before.
- » To follow a game through to a personal conclusion of their own choosing.
- » To sit and watch others until they feel ready to have a go themselves.
- » To take risks and make mistakes and get up and have another go.
- » To move freely indoors and out and to have the space to roll and jump and spin and dance whenever the mood takes them.
- » To experiment with the language of numbers and begin to make sense of what they can do with them.
- » To see comparisons all around them and to begin to understand why they matter.
- » To have the space to build castles and zoos and villages and cities, and to populate them with dinosaurs and sheep and cars and people – and make these do exactly as they want.
- » To be able to leave these creations there till the next day and carry on the game and then knock them all down and start again.
- » To curl up quietly in a corner and be transported into the other worlds of a beautiful picture book or to create their own other worlds in a role play corner – today it's a shop, and tomorrow it's a cave at the bottom of the sea.
- » To write signs and notices for keeping adults out – or for inviting them to come and join in...

Children at Play – Brain Building in Progress.





# Role play

## including music

Role play is how children make sense of their world, acting out experiences, ideas or stories. Imagination, which is at the heart of children's role play, is more important than knowledge according to Einstein: 'for knowledge is limited, whereas imagination embraces the entire world.'

### Where

Role play takes place throughout the setting, indoors and out. It can be encouraged in a specific area where props to further role play are provided.

- Arches, window panels and fabrics invite children into the role play area.
- Cosy nooks allow a child to withdraw for imaginary or solitary play.
- Natural and recycled materials extend children's play in open-ended ways.

### Sample observation

Harry and Denise, both four, were playing Daddy and Mummy outdoors. They made stick 'children', and then Denise said, 'Let's make a banquet for our children!' Harry replied, 'Banquet! What's a banquet?' Denise explained, and they laid leaves on a stump as plates. Then they dished out seeds and flowers to represent various foods. They were busy for about 45 minutes, talking all the time.

Many areas of learning were served in this one activity. The teacher witnessed shared sustained thinking. She saw how Denise and Harry learn from one another and use their imaginations in original creative ways. Their play showed initiative and advanced social skills of planning, co-operation and communication.



Learning and development observations:

## Communication and Language

### Listening and attention

- » Children show awareness of their listeners' needs, as they make plans, discuss ideas, and act out roles.

### Speaking

- » Children develop confidence and skill in expressing themselves as they talk together.
- » While playing, children discuss their roles using past, present, and future forms of speech. They connect ideas or events with what they are acting out.
- » Children who are normally quiet may 'talk' on the phone as part of their role play.
- » Children imitate tone of voice, body language, and expression in role play.

## Physical development

### Moving and Handling

- » Role play provides opportunity for children to be active.
- » While setting up their play area, children demonstrate large-motor control.
- » Everyday 'chores' included in role play support proprioceptive development in natural ways – sweeping, ironing, lifting, or pushing.
- » In role play, children demonstrate fine-motor control as they handle tools – scissors and pencil for shop labels, spoons and whisks while cooking, for example.

## Personal, social and emotional development

### Self-confidence and self-awareness

- » Children discuss their ideas of what to play, how to organise it, and their roles.
- » They work as a group, adjusting their behaviour accordingly.
- » Social skills and confidence are developed through role play.

### Managing feelings and behaviour

- » Children act out both positive and negative feelings and experiences.
- » They enact their own and other's behaviour in different circumstances.

### Making relationships

- » Children learn to take the lead, and to follow the lead of others.

- » They take account of one another's ideas while organising their play.
- » Role play fosters empathy, enabling children to see things from another's view point.

## Literacy

### Reading

- » Children may attempt to link sounds and letters on reading materials in the role play area (packets, books, leaflets) or may imitate reading.

### Writing

- » Older children imitating adults may write words – making a shopping list, taking a phone message, or pretending to be a teacher. These 'words' may just be imaginary writing.
- » Children make invitations, warning signs, or directions as part of their play. These may be largely comprised of decoration and patterns.





## Mathematics

### Numbers

- » Children may be seen counting, adding and subtracting. For example, when selling items from a shop, children work out exchanges of goods for 'money'. This may include doubling or halving.
- » Role play includes lots of 1-to-1 correspondence: for example children may set the table with one spoon and one bowl for each person.
- » Children explore comparisons such as: 'you've got more than me'. They begin to estimate and perform simple calculations: 'We'll need two more' or 'There are hundreds and hundreds'.

### Shape, space and measures

- » Role play includes size comparison: 'that bed is too small for you', 'I need a bigger bowl'.
- » Role play includes spatial talk: 'under the table', 'next to the chair', 'behind the door'.
- » Children discuss size or weight of objects, while playing 'shop' for example.
- » Money is a common theme – for example at the hair-dresser or optician: 'How much', 'I want more', 'I haven't got enough'.

## Understanding the world

### People and communities

- » Children act out past and present experiences – a new baby in the family or mummy's job.
- » Role-play reflects children's understanding of similarities and differences between themselves and others, among families, communities, and traditions.
- » Children imitate body language, facial expression, gesture, tone of voice, and accent, demonstrating knowledge of differences between people.

### The world

- » As children set up role-play scenarios, they demonstrate knowledge of various environments.
- » Children may be seen creating different kinds of homes, for example a yurt or igloo.

### Technology

- » Children show their understanding of how technology is used in various environments: Hoover, television, or cooker in the home; bar code scanner at the checkout counter; keyboard and phone in the office; or spanner in the garage.

- » Children experiment with timers and switches, making sounds and beeps.
- » Children create symbolic technology, for example building a hollow-block cooker.

## Expressive art and design

### Exploring and using media and materials

- » Children often incorporate song, music, and dance into their play, experimenting with changing words, rhythm, and movement.
- » Children may decorate their role play space with all sorts of materials. They may add curtains, flowers, or natural objects.

### Being imaginative

- » Imagination is intrinsic to role play, as children represent their ideas, thoughts, and feelings through their play.
- » Even a very young child might put a piece of cloth on their head to 'be' someone else.
- » Children may use symbolic tools: twisting a stick 'screwdriver' or using a block 'hammer'.







# Book corner

Books have a tremendous influence on many areas of learning. They can introduce themes of friendship, diversity, and overcoming challenge, thus helping to develop character. They can expand children's knowledge of the world, other people, cultures and traditions, or they can introduce imaginary themes. It is said that the best way to strengthen children's intelligence is to read them fairy tales.

## Where

The book corner should be in the quietest part of the room and include at least one small nook for children who want solitary space.

- The book area should be protected on three sides by walls, shelves or panels.
- Carpet or rug – and soft seating or cushions – add a cosy feel.
- An arch entry and fabric overhead will make the area inviting.
- A window panel and puppets can link the book area to role play.

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## Sample observation

Two-year-old Arthur's key person held him on her lap while she read Shirley Hughes' *Alfie Gets in First*. Arthur's eyes were big and serious throughout the crisis, and he held his body rigid. When the critical moment was resolved, Arthur's whole body relaxed and he laughed aloud. Then he wanted to hear the story again.

Sharing this book strengthened the positive relationship between Arthur and his key person, who realised that he is capable of mentally and emotionally putting himself in another's situation. She also learned that Arthur, normally a boisterous child, can be focussed and quiet when his interest is engaged.

Learning and development observations:

## **Communication and Language**

### **Listening and attention**

- » Babies respond to hearing nursery rhymes or singing.
- » When stories are told or read aloud, children learn to listen attentively, anticipate events, and respond to what they hear with comments, questions, or actions.
- » They learn non-verbal communication through body language and facial expression.

### **Understanding**

- » Children ask 'how' or 'why' in response to stories, providing learning opportunities.
- » Children learn to make connections with their own experiences.

### **Speaking**

- » Stories lead to conversations, empowering children to express their own ideas.
- » Repetition of stories and poems establishes the basics of language in children's minds and reinforces learning. Children may recite familiar phrases.
- » Children learn enjoyment of language, including humour and word play. They love to use big words and will often adopt vocabulary from books.

## **Physical development**

### **Health and self-care**

- » Children will discuss ways to keep healthy and safe if the topic is introduced in a story.
- » Children enjoying books may be experiencing quiet rest which is essential for healthy physical development.

## **Personal, social and emotional development**

### **Managing feelings and behaviour**

- » Through stories, children build empathy. They may shiver with suspense or delight according to the story-book characters' experience. They acknowledge how others feel.
- » Some stories deal with emotions explicitly; others (such as fairy tales) deal with feelings implicitly, allowing children to safely explore fear, anger, grief, or anxiety.

### **Making relationships**

- » Sharing books builds a positive relationship between key person and child.
- » Enjoying a good book with a group of children strengthens group solidarity.

## **Literacy**

### **Reading**

- » In books, children see plainly that writing tells a story. They become intrigued and eager to unlock the code themselves.
- » Children may begin to link sounds and letters if they look at the writing while a book is being read aloud.
- » Children can learn valuable literacy skills – context, sequencing, searching for meaning – from picture books (with or without text).

### **Writing**

- » Books inspire children to tell their own stories; an adult scribing these stories demonstrates the link between spoken and written language.
- » Children may be inspired to create books, including their own illustrations and simple words (or captions added by the teacher).
- » Early mark making is often story-telling by children.
- » Children will begin writing when they are developmentally ready.





## Understanding the world

### People and communities

- » Books and stories stimulate discussion on similarities and differences between children, their families, communities, and traditions.
- » Books in different scripts provide opportunity to recognise similarities and differences.

### The world

- » Books teach children about other lands, communities, and cultures. Discussion follows naturally.
- » A good variety of books will feed individual interests, enabling children to learn about animals and plants for instance, and extending their understanding of the world – and the universe.



## Expressive art and design

### Being imaginative

- » Books may inspire children to act out stories through role play, puppets, or dance.
- » Children's expressive art and design may be stimulated by picture book illustrations.
- » Stories are often reflected in children's art and block play.







# Art/creative

## including design and technology

'Art sharpens children's powers of observation, heightens their sense of appreciation, and awakens them to the possibilities of their own hands, hearts, and minds.'

**JC Arnold**

### Where

The art area should be near the sink and have a washable floor.

- Display art supplies so children can see all their choices and access materials themselves. This requires specialised shelving so items are orderly yet visible.
- Tables and chairs enable children to focus on their work. As children may prefer to stand, tables should have adjustable legs.
- Art easels must be big enough for large pieces of paper, or for two children to share.
- Pin-board panels support display of children's achievements.

### Sample observation

Four-year-old Sonia surveyed the Help-yourself trolley. She cut a short length of blue yarn and brought it to the table. She took the paper punch and made holes round a sheet of paper, then began to thread her yarn through the holes – but found it wasn't long enough. Sonia cut a piece of yellow yarn which she carefully tied to the first bit. In the end, Sonia had used five pieces of yarn, each a different colour, to thread in and out. Only when she reached the last hole and was puzzled how to finish, did she turn to her teacher for help. Next, Sonia found a glossy brochure, leafed through it, chose some pictures and carefully cut out and glued them to her yarn-bordered paper. She held the result at arm's length, studying it with satisfaction.

Sonia's teacher learned how imaginative, competent, and independent a child can be if resources and tools are accessible in the creative art area. Sonia showed skill in making and following her own plans – and pride in the result of her efforts.

Learning and development observations:

## **Communication and Language**

### **Understanding**

- » Children learn to follow instructions about how to set up or clean up creative projects.
- » They communicate thoughts and feelings through art.

### **Speaking**

- » Children discuss their projects and learn vocabulary to articulate experience.
- » They often think aloud while creating, providing opportunity for adults to observe their thought processes.
- » Babies might make happy sounds – early language – while engaged with finger paint.

## **Physical development**

### **Moving and Handling**

- » Young children get involved with their whole body – especially while painting.
- » Children demonstrate large motor control through sweeping movements, as in painting.
- » Fine-motor control is shown in small movements and manipulation of tools.
- » Children explore and manipulate a range of tools: large and small brushes, sponges, print stamps, hammer, saw, drill, scissors, crayons, glue bottle, etc.
- » Eye-hand co-ordination develops through painting and drawing.
- » Sensory development occurs through working in paint, clay, and other media.

## **Personal, social and emotional development**

### **Self-confidence and self-awareness**

- » Babies are pleased when they realise they can create marks, and they repeat the action over and over.
- » At the art station or work bench, constructive activity builds self-esteem.
- » Children become confident to make their own choices of activity or materials.
- » During creative activities, children can say when they do or do not need help.
- » Children can take risks, learn by trial and error, and persevere.

### **Managing feelings and behaviour**

- » Interacting at art table or easel, children learn to share resources and respect each other's work.
- » An anxious child may gain security through creative activity.

## **Literacy**

### **Writing**

- » Children may add letters or words to their artwork, or may request teachers to write a caption.
- » Mark making may signify a child's signature or ownership of work.

## **Mathematics**

### **Shape, space and measures**

- » Children create geometric patterns and talk about shape.
- » Mixing paints provides discussion on measure, quantity, and proportion: a little, lots, more, less, two scoops to one cup of water, etc.

- » Children often compare size of objects they have created. For example, they draw their family and discuss sizes of family members, or they compare sizes of their wood constructions.
- » Through art, children explore characteristics of everyday objects and shapes and use mathematical language to describe them.
- » Spatial awareness is evidenced in drawings – the inside of the house for example.

## **Understanding the world**

### **Technology**

- » Through using tools such as hammer, saw, and drill, children start to comprehend cause and effect, mechanical forces, and physical properties of matter.

## **Expressive art and design**

### **Exploring and using media and materials**

- » Children explore a variety of materials, tools, and techniques, experimenting with colour, design, texture, form, and function. For example, they are excited to discover what happens when they mix blue and yellow paint.

### **Being imaginative**

- » Children creating 3-D models out of clay, wood or recycled objects are developing abstract forms of representation.
- » Children represent their own divergent ideas, thoughts and feelings through imaginative creative innovation.









# Wet play

## including science and discovery

'To have discovered a quarter of the answer to his own question is of more value to the child than to hear the whole answer, half-understood, from another.'

**Friedrich Froebel**

### Where

This area should have a cleanable floor and be located near the sink.

- Separate sand and water tables allow for experimenting with both wet and dry materials.
- Spare sand tables that can be filled with different materials (wood chips, tea leaves, 'goop', or soil and moss) expand experimentation and discovery.
- A 'science function bar' attached above the table within children's reach, allows for pulleys and other implements on strings, for instance a bucket balance.
- Additional equipment – tubes, funnels, pouring devices, and Flow pans – can inspire scientific discovery.

### Sample observation

Three-and-a-half-year-old Rani, playing alone at the sand and water table, commented, 'Miss, water likes purple better than green.' Her teacher said, 'Really? Why do you think so?' Rani replied, 'Because it always goes into the purple bucket!' When the teacher quietly returned ten minutes later, Rani said, 'Miss, actually water just likes to go down!'

Rani's teacher was glad she'd allowed Rani to explore the characteristics of water and to arrive at her own theories, which will continue to evolve through trial and error. Her supportive interest – along with space, time and equipment – enables Rani to follow her curiosity, lead her own experiments, and express her findings.

Learning and development observations:

## Communication and Language

### Speaking

- » Vocabulary develops as children experiment with words to articulate experience. Children must experience water with all their senses before they can describe its wetness, coolness, reflections, drops, ripples, and splashing sounds.
- » Children's small world play at the sand and water table is accompanied by much communication, both verbal and non-verbal.

## Physical development

### Moving and Handling

- » Children broaden their sensory experience as they manipulate sand, water, dough, and other malleable materials.
- » Babies engage with all their senses, so they love to splash in water or squish in goop.
- » Sweeping sand and mopping up water support motor control and co-ordination.
- » Children learn fine-motor skills while handling equipment and tools such as funnels, pots, and spoons.

## Personal, social and emotional development

### Self-confidence and self-awareness

- » Sensory experience gives emotional contentment to young children.

- » Children show perseverance by finding hidden objects in the sand, or moving quantities of sand to different areas.

### Managing feelings and behaviour

- » Children can work out feelings of frustration – or happiness – through manipulating malleable materials.
- » Filled with damp sand, soil, woodchips, or moss, the sand and water table provides an environment for small world play, in which children act out ideas or stories with little figures, vehicles, etc. The miniature aspect of this play allows children to feel 'in control'.

### Making relationships

- » Children build friendship while playing with sand and water. They may even lie under the water table to observe their friends through water!





## Literacy

### Writing

- » Big movements in water and sand develop skills for writing.
- » Children may trace patterns or letter shapes in goop and sand.

## Mathematics

### Shape, space and measures

- » Children learn about space, volume, weight, and measure while dipping and pouring.
- » With a pulley and 'science function bar', a bucket of water can be balanced with another of sand, teaching principles of physics.

## Understanding the world

### The world

- » Children's exploration allows them to make sense of the physical world: they see what happens when they put dry sand through the funnel; they discover that they have to pull *down* on the pulley's rope to make a bucket go *up*.
- » Children explore differences between substances. Waves can be produced in water by hitting the side of the pan; some items will float and others will sink. Digging tunnels through sand is early engineering.

- » Children will learn about nature while creating displays. Also, a Flow pan can be purchased with Community Playthings sand and water table. This can be filled with frogspawn, tadpoles, or snails in pond water and observed over time; or it can be used to establish a worm farm or watch caterpillars' life cycle. If a second Flow pan is flipped on top, a miniature greenhouse is created in which children can learn about plants and view the roots through the sides of the pan.







# Block play

## including small world play

The open-ended nature of blocks means there is no prescribed method or expected outcome. Children feel free to have a go, and each experiment encourages the next. Imagination flourishes, ideas multiply, confidence grows, and creative play becomes self-perpetuating.

### Where

The construction area should be enclosed on three sides with walls or shelves to prevent through-traffic (and so protect children's activity). This area needs maximum floor space so that many children can play simultaneously.

- Include plenty of blocks.
- Have a range of blocks: Mini-hollow blocks, Unit blocks, and Mini-unit blocks.
- Add little people, animals, and vehicles to inspire small world play.
- Provide clipboards, paper, pencils, markers, measuring tape, etc. so literacy is a natural part of children's block play.

### Sample observation

On the first of May, Alfie's village celebrated with a traditional Maypole. The next day five-year-old Alfie and his friend Philip spent nearly an hour reconstructing the Maypole experience in the construction area. They built the maypole, adding lengths of cloth for ribbons, and encircling it with 'benches' with little wooden people seated on them. Alfie pointed to one bench: 'That's my family. It's only three people because my dad was gone yesterday.'

Alfie's teacher observed his fluency in the language of block play. She learned that he is capable of remarkable perseverance, concentration and care when he is self-motivated. And she learned that he has a basic understanding of maths: realising that his family consists of four people and that one missing makes three. She also witnessed amazing creativity, imagination, planning, co-operation – and joy in life.

Learning and development observations:

## Communication and Language

### Understanding

- » Children's block play often reflects stories they have heard, demonstrating their comprehension.
- » Children can be seen to communicate through block play, particularly where there is no shared language.

### Speaking

- » Children initially playing side by side on separate constructions often interact in conversation and begin to play together, developing confidence while speaking and listening to each other.
- » Children often think aloud during block play and small world play. Their words open a window into their thoughts – providing perfect observation opportunities.
- » Children frequently weave elaborate narratives while engaged in block play and small world play, developing skill in expressing themselves.

## Physical development

### Moving and Handling

- » Block play provides opportunities for children to be active and interactive.
- » Children demonstrate large-motor co-ordination when building with big blocks and navigating carefully through small spaces they create.
- » Fine-motor coordination is strengthened by use of small blocks.
- » The youngest children like the tactile experience of feeling, holding, and carrying blocks.

## Personal, social and emotional development

### Self-confidence and self-awareness

- » Children's confidence in block play heightens self-esteem and independent thought.
- » A child may want to create with blocks on their own, demonstrating self-confidence.
- » Children learn to take risks and persevere, building confidence to try new activities.

### Managing feelings and behaviour

- » In small world play, children are the 'big people'; they can re-enact fears and anxieties as well as happy events, because they feel in control.
- » Children adjust their behaviour in order to work with others to make joint block constructions.

### Making relationships

- » Block play and small world play foster social skills as children discuss ideas, share resources, and co-operate to develop plans.

## Literacy

### Reading

- » Children read (or pretend to read) their own or other children's labels for structures.
- » The teacher can use blocks for story telling: three sizes of blocks can represent the three bears, and children can up-end blocks for trees or build the bears' house with three chairs, three beds, etc.
- » Block play may be early story-telling, as children weave narratives while constructing.

### Writing

- » Children sometimes create letters with blocks.
- » Children may ask the teacher to write a label or caption for their construction, reinforcing the connection between spoken and written language, or may even create their own.
- » Children develop fine motor skills, shape recognition, and hand-eye coordination – which prepare them for the physical aspect of writing.
- » The confidence established as children concretely represent ideas with blocks builds a foundation for more abstract forms of representation, such as written language.





## Mathematics

### Numbers

- » Children may count as they place blocks into lines and towers or put them away.
- » They learn 1-to-1 correspondence: a cylinder on each square, a car in each bay.
- » Children may add or subtract while developing block structures.

### Shape, space and measures

- » Children absorb mathematical concepts while playing with blocks: a Community Playthings unit block's length is twice its width, which is twice its thickness. The four types of blocks are modular: Mini-units are half the length of Units, which are half the length of Mini-hollows, which are half the length of Hollow blocks.
- » Children internalise concepts of fractions and proportion: although they do not know these terms, they notice that one block is half (or quarter or eighth) the size of another.
- » Sorting blocks, children learn shape recognition: square, oblong, cylinder, triangle, etc.

- » Children learn spatial relationships when they visualise space taken by each block and need to plan their constructions to fit into the available space.
- » Bridging (placing one block across the tops of two others) signifies a stage in block play when spatial awareness and measurement become implicit.
- » Through creating patterns, children learn about shapes and space.

## Understanding the world

### People and communities

- » In the construction area children often re-enact family and community events. They create an environment with blocks and use small figures as the actors, demonstrating their observation of people, places, and the environment they live in.

### The world

- » Children's small world play often represents their understanding of the world. They may create structures they have seen in real life or in books.

- » Often children's favourite blocks are those with unique grain markings. This is evidence of scientific attention, and provides an opportunity to discuss wood and trees.

## Expressive art and design

### Being imaginative

- » Many children are fascinated with repeating patterns, and create intricate designs with blocks.
- » Because blocks are free of detail, they can represent whatever the child's imagination suggests: a car or doll, tree or phone. They can be used to construct houses, roads – or even a dragon.







# Large motor play

'To move, to run, to find things out by new movement, to feel one's life in every limb – that is the life of early childhood!'

**Margaret McMillan**

## Where

Large motor play for babies can take place in their safe-crawl area as well as outdoors. Older children will ideally have an outdoor area and covered play area. Allow maximum space so children can engage fully in physical challenges.

- Younger children should be provided with low objects to climb on.
- Items with stairs and ramps are ideal for babies to explore.
- Older children will enjoy structures they can climb up onto, over, and inside.
- Large Hollow blocks allow children to use their muscles.
- Wheeled toys provide opportunities for children to exert themselves.

## Sample observation

The Head teacher of an inner city primary school was aware that a number of the reception class boys were thought to have behavioural problems as they were so loud and disruptive. Children and teachers were unhappy and frustrated. After participating in a block-play training the Head purchased a large set of hollow blocks. Within a week the boys' behaviour had changed dramatically; they were involved with the hollow blocks during every break, becoming focussed and constructive.

The Head subsequently realised that what her pupils needed was a creative outlet for their energy. They needed the challenge of figuring out and solving problems on a gross-motor level, and they needed materials to engage with.



Learning and development observations:

## Communication and Language

### Understanding

- » Children ask 'how' as they try new physical skills, and discover 'why' through their experiences.
- » They learn to follow instructions, particularly when playing games.

### Speaking

- » Two children initially playing side by side often interact in conversation and begin to play together, learning to speak and listen to each other.
- » Children often think aloud during large construction. Their words open a window into their thoughts.

## Physical development

### Moving and Handling

- » Large motor activities provide opportunities for children to be active and to interact.
- » They develop co-ordination.
- » Children develop their vestibular sense (balance) through sliding, tipping, spinning, swinging, rocking, tilting, falling, jumping, bouncing, and running.
- » Children instinctively engage in actions where their muscles encounter resistance to develop their proprioceptive sense (the sense of one's body from within): pushing, pulling, stretching, hanging, lifting, carrying. They love to dig and sweep, to climb trees and push wheelbarrows.

## Health and self-care

- » Children enjoying physical exertion may comment on feeling their heart beat fast or being tired, showing awareness of the effects of physical exercise.

## Personal, social and emotional development

### Self-confidence and self-awareness

- » Whole-body action gives children a feeling of well-being and self-esteem.
- » Through active play, children gain confidence and independence that will serve them through life.
- » Children learn to plan and think for themselves.
- » They take risks and persevere, building confidence to try new activities.



### Managing feelings and behaviour

- » In large motor play, children feel 'in control'.
- » As children play and build together, they learn to talk things over, solve problems, share resources, and respect each other's ideas.
- » They learn about appropriate behaviour as they engage in large-motor play.

### Making relationships

- » Children often form friendships while chasing and playing active games.
- » Large construction fosters social skills as children discuss ideas, share resources, and co-operate to develop plans.
- » Children develop a positive sense of themselves and others: a child might build a private den one day, and the next day co-operate to erect a slide with steps, a big ship, motorway, or aeroplane.

## Literacy

### Writing

- » Children develop motor skills and hand-eye coordination which prepare them for the physical aspect of writing.
- » Children may make labels or ask for help to create captions for their constructions.

## Mathematics

### Shape, space and measures

- » Hollow blocks allow children to experience shape and spatial orientation on a large scale.
- » When children run or race their tricycles, they learn about distance and speed.
- » Children learn 1-to-1 correspondence during activities like parking trikes in bays (one in each slot) or waiting for a turn with a pram or vehicle (when there is not one each).
- » Children learn maths and physics while manipulating Hollow blocks: weight, size, length, width, shape, balance, proportion.
- » Through large motor play, children achieve spatial awareness and perceive their relation to their surroundings.

- » Children learn basic physics in large construction. Hollow blocks teach technical concepts as well: design, symmetry, spanning, and engineering.
- » Children learn about gravity as they build and as they run, jump, or fall.

## Understanding the world

### The world

- » Children may reconstruct their communities and act out real-life experiences or fantasies, developing an understanding of their physical world.

## Expressive art and design

### Being imaginative

- » Given the space, children dance and spin, developing their own creative ways to express their feelings.
- » With Hollow blocks, children's imagination guides their play. They will represent their own ideas through design of their creations: a house, bus, or puppet theatre.



# Compliance – a quick

When children are deeply engaged in play activities, the prime and specific areas of learning and development are fulfilled throughout the setting.


























































Areas of learning and development including EYFS description	
Prime Areas	<p><b>Communication and language</b> development involves giving children opportunities to experience a rich language environment; to develop their confidence and skills in expressing themselves; and to speak and listen in a range of situations.</p>
	<p><b>Physical Development</b> involves providing opportunities for young children to be active and interactive; and to develop their co-ordination, control, and movement. Children must also be helped to understand the importance of physical activity, and to make healthy choices in relation to food.</p>
	<p><b>Personal, social and emotional development:</b> involves helping children to develop a positive sense of themselves, and others; to form positive relationships and develop respect for others; to develop social skills and learn how to manage their feelings; to understand appropriate behaviour in groups; and to have confidence in their own abilities.</p>
Specific Areas	<p><b>Literacy</b> development involves encouraging children to link sounds and letters and to begin to read and write. Children must be given access to a wide range of reading materials (books, poems, and other written materials) to ignite their interest.</p>
	<p><b>Mathematics:</b> involves providing children with opportunities to develop and improve their skills in counting, understanding and using numbers, calculating simple addition and subtraction problems; and to describe shapes, spaces, and measures.</p>
	<p><b>Understanding the world</b> involves guiding children to make sense of their physical world and their community through opportunities to explore, observe and find out about people, places, technology and the environment.</p>
	<p><b>Expressive arts and design</b> involves enabling children to explore and play with a wide range of media and materials, as well as providing opportunities and encouragement for sharing their thoughts, ideas and feelings through a variety of activities in art, music, movement, dance, role-play, and design and technology.</p>

















































# ck guide

	Role Play	Book corner	Art/Creative	Wet Play	Block Play	Large Motor Play
Listening and attention	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>				
Understanding		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Speaking	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Moving and handling	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Health and self-care		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>				<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Self-confidence and self-awareness	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Managing feelings and behaviour	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Making relationships	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Reading	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Writing	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Numbers	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>				<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Shape, space and measures	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
People and communities	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
The world	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Technology	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			
Exploring and using media and materials	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			
Being imaginative	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

# Choosing equipment

	Role play		Book corner	Art/Creative		Wet
0-2 year olds	 We-do-it bench	 Low Woodcrest table	 Glider	 Mini floor easel	 Craft shelf 3	 Small Sand and Water
	 Me-do-it chairs	 Peg Tree	 Browser box	 Aprons		 Aprons
	 Wren nest	 Low sink and stove		 Peg tree		
2-3 year olds	 Child's sofa	 Rocking chair	 Bench glider	 Mini art island	 MultiTables	 Large Sand and Water
	 Compact drama centre	 Cradle	 Library rack	 Supply unit	 Woodcrest Chairs	 Aprons
	 Baskets	 Woodcrest table set	 Browser box	 Drying rack	 Peg tree	
	 Toddler collection	 Role Play under 3s	 Hedgehog cottage	 Aprons		
3-5 year olds	 Drama centre	 Playsize set of 4	 Cosy nook	 Jr Art Island	 Woodcrest chairs	 Large Sand and Water
	 Creative collection	 Woodcrest Table set	 Child's sofa	 HYS trolley	 MultiTables	 Display and Discovery
	 Child's sofa	 Book cart	 Library panel	 Arpons	 Peg tree	 Peg Tree
	 Canopy unit	 Versatile Play corner	 Library rack	 Drying rack	 Creative unit	

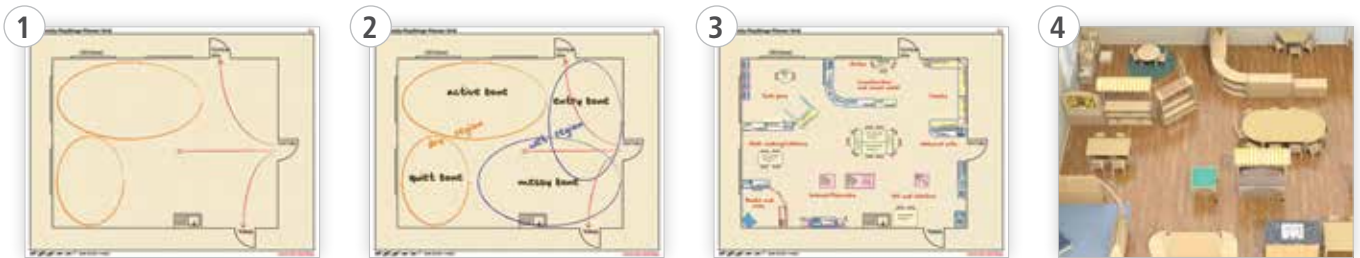
play	Block play		Large motor play	
 Peg tree	 Mini unit blocks		 ToddleBoxes	 Baby shelf
	 Village vehicles		 Nursery gym	 Push cart
	 Villagers		 Kiddie car	 Push me-Pull me
 Small Sand and Water	 Unit blocks	 Mini unit blocks	 Mini Hollow blocks	 Push cart
 Peg Tree	 Small trucks	 Village vehicles	 Kiddie car	 Push me-Pull me
	 Aircraft	 Villagers	 Small trikes	 ToddleBoxes
	 Fixed Shelves for blocks	 Mini Hollow blocks	 Nursery gym	 Large trucks
 Universal Sand and Water	 Unit blocks	 Mini unit blocks	 Hollow blocks	 Rocking boat
 Aprons	 Fixed Shelves for blocks	 Village vehicles	 Wheelbarrow	 Large trucks
	 Aircraft	 Villagers	 Kiddie car	 Large trikes
	 Small trucks	 Construction 3-5's	 Mini Hollow blocks	 PlayFrame



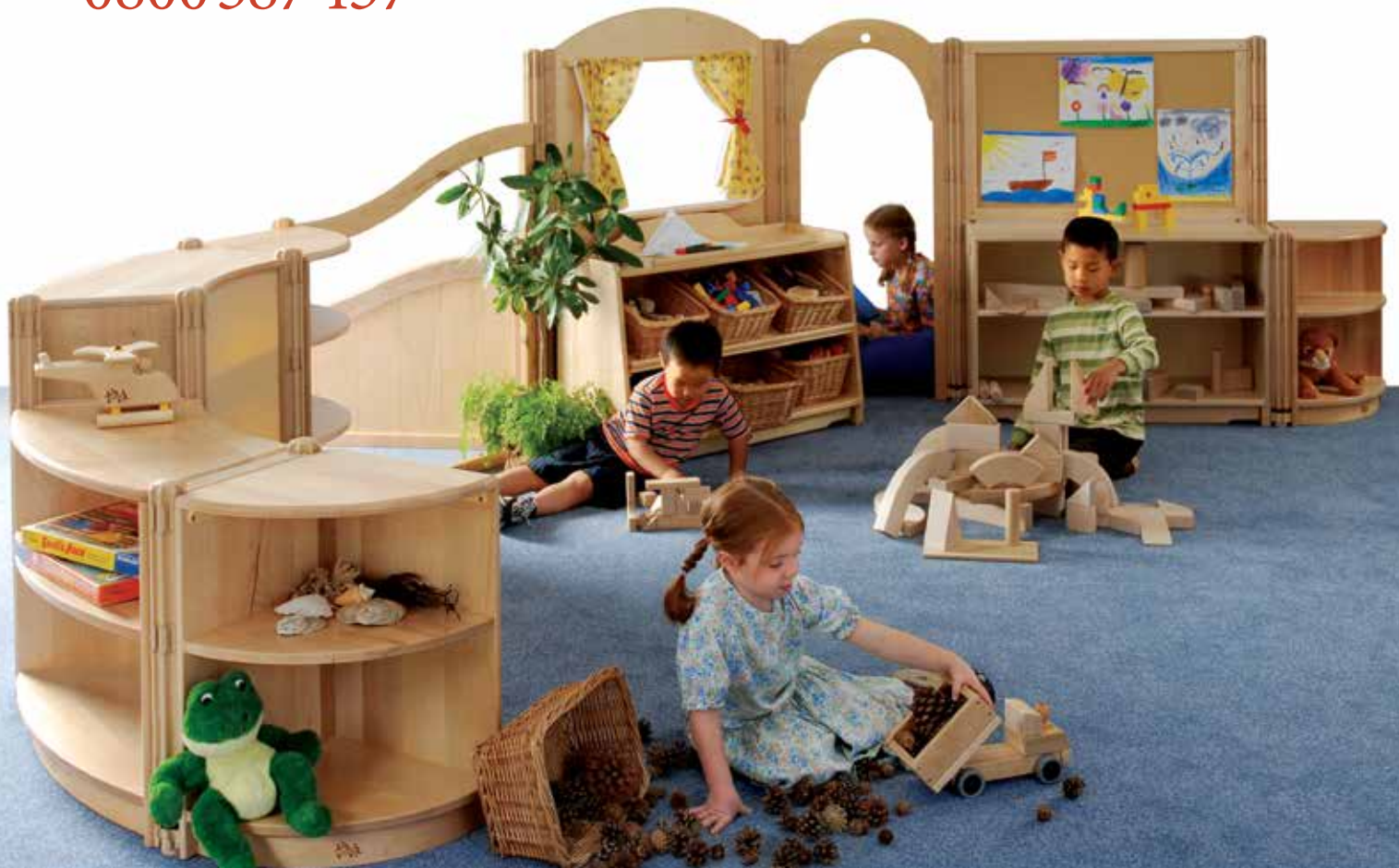
# Room layout for Early Years

Here's how our **free** layout service can help:

1. Analyse basic room flow.
2. Divide the space into wet and dry regions.
3. Create activity areas.
4. Provide 3-D view with detailed floor plan and quote.



[www.communityplaythings.co.uk/roomlayout](http://www.communityplaythings.co.uk/roomlayout)  
Call us to discuss your project  
0800 387 457



# Who are we?



Community Playthings produces solid wood furniture and equipment developed to support creativity and play. We design and manufacture at workshops in East Sussex and Kent.  
[www.communityplaythings.co.uk](http://www.communityplaythings.co.uk)

Settings that used our room layout service achieved Outstanding Ofsted ratings at more than double the national average.

Based on research involving 300 settings that used our room layout service in the last five years and subsequently purchased over £5,000 of equipment from us.





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