



CARGILFIELD

What We Learn Through Play



Free play is what happens when children and young people follow their own ideas and interests in their own way, for their own reasons. They can do this on their own or with others both inside or outside. Children and young people should be given the choice of how and when they play and we find this creates more invested learners who love engaging in our environment.

RESPONSIVE PLAY



Responsive play is an approach to conversation, play and provision that promotes positive interactions between adults and children. In this type of play adults are driven by the child's interests and choices. Adults join in child led activities and follow the direction of play that the child chooses, while promoting turn-taking in conversation and play. In these interactions' adults are able to offer expanded language and promote questioning and extent play scenarios, all the while being led by the child's ideas.

At Cargilfield much of the learning that we do stems from the responses to the children's questions and interests. They may bring in objects from home or things they have found or ask questions and all these prompts guide and shape the learning that takes place. For example, a child brings in an egg that their chicken at home laid and asks if we can use it for cooking. We look through cook books to find egg-based receipts with them. Others who are interested join in the baking process. They later find the book 'The Little Red Hen' and talk about their chickens at home. We read the story and the children decide to put on a puppet show with puppets they have made. This process also extends to the trips we take. For example, a child asks where we can buy seeds for our gardening area, so we go on a trip to the garden centre to live and understand the process. This way the children are driving their learning while being engaged and invested in the outcome.

CONSTRUCTION



Construction play occurs when a child uses their imagination and skills to create a product or structure. They often build organically and see where the construction leads them or may be building for a purpose with an outcome in mind. Engaging in this type of activity allows them opportunities to test out their creation and adapt it where necessary. Construction play is used in many areas of learning such as in artwork, imaginative play, outdoor learning or Small World play. This type of play is important as it allows children the opportunity to develop investigative skills, observation skills, creative problem solving, imagination, fine motor skills, and ultimately develops self-esteem.

CREATIVE CONSTRUCTION



When building with a large variety of open-ended materials children discover the relationships between objects, how they are alike and different and how they go together. Exploring physical attributes, children gain an understanding of size, measurement and patterns. Children experiment with balance, force and weight. Concepts of more and less, part and whole, and simple addition and subtraction are discovered through construction play.

Children use both natural materials and man-made objects in their building and the use of simple technology, ramps, wheels and axels extends the depth of their construction project.

FINE MOTOR DEVELOPMENT



Fine motor skills are activities that require the use of the small muscles in our hands. These activities include grasping small objects like counters, holding a pencil correctly, cutting and using buttons or zips on clothes. We use a wide range of resources to build fine motor strength such as tongs, pegs, scissors, playdough, water syringes, threading and more. When children participate in these types of activities they are unknowingly developing greater muscle strength in their hands and as a result, are able to access and use a wider range of resources with greater control. Good fine motor control creates the foundation of skills needed for activities such as writing and self-care but also essentially enables children to access any and all areas of the curriculum as they go up through the school from art to sports.

CREATIVITY



Creativity is important for children, especially during their early development. Research shows that art activities that promote unrestricted exploration help children form connections in their brain. The freedom to manipulate different materials in an organic and unstructured way allows for exploration, experimentation, fine motor development, Math development (shapes, space and measure) and language development. Art engages children's senses and continues to develop social-emotional and multi-sensory awareness. We explore creativity in a range of different ways at Cargilfield through; music, dance, performance, model making, painting, collage and drawing. The outcome is confident creative thinkers who are able to tackle future endeavours in an open-minded and resourceful way.

SAND PLAY



There is no right way to use sand. It invites participation, permits children to make and test hypotheses, stretches the imagination, provides a potentially soothing sensory experience and is an excellent avenue for children to learn physical, cognitive and social skills.

Because sand play is open-ended, the child determines the direction and path of his or her own play. This freedom then clears the way for the child to build developmental concepts that benefit all other areas of learning.

GARDEN AREA



Gardening is a wonderful way for children to discover, explore and learn. The beauty of gardening in Nursery is that you can involve children in every step of the process. The whole process of gardening is easily woven into the fabric of a Nursery day. It is an extended sensory and learning process which starts with researching the right plants to grow, preparing the soil, digging and planting, watering, weeding and observing the plants growing and flowering. Then using the produce we grow in our cooking.

ROLE PLAY/ CREATIVE DRAMA



Pretend play helps children naturally develop and use their cognitive abilities and skills. Through using their imagination regularly, they develop creativity and learn to think for themselves. Many cognitive strategies are exhibited such as; joint planning, negotiation, problem solving and goal seeking.

Role play is key for fostering social and emotional development. Empathy is developed as children learn to sympathise and understand certain emotional situations. When children pretend to be someone else or use objects as something else, they are experimenting with different social situations as well as different emotions. They learn how to interact, cooperate and collaborate with each other in order to play. Through dramatic play children even explore social roles and expectations and concepts of community and culture develop as children take on characters in play. It creates a safe environment for them to express themselves and overcome anxieties or fears.

Pretence also has huge benefits to children's language and communication skills. It helps them to understand the power of language and how to use these words in various scenarios. It also encourages them to listen to what is being said and respond. The children create their own storylines and adapt their play continually. Children also build literacy skills as they 'write' shopping lists and 'read' bedtime stories to baby dolls. Symbolic competence is also of importance as it helps children make connections with objects and symbols to assist with reading and writing.



Finally, role play also supports physical development. Running, jumping, climbing, pretending to be Vikings on a quest to discover new lands or pirates fighting, pretend play is often physical and a great way to develop motor skills. Even the simple act of changing a doll's dress, braiding hair, using coins, and dishing up pretend food aides the development of fine motor skills.

MUSIC



Music through play develops multi-sensory, cognitive and social-emotional skills. Making and playing instruments, singing, and dancing allow children to learn language, make connections to familiar experiences and form communities. Research has shown that children who are regularly and actively involved with music have improved memory function, attention and concentration. They are also able to control their bodies, develop their rhythm and play better with others developing higher self-esteem.

WATER PLAY



Water play delights the senses and is far more than simple fun. It is good for children's physical, mental (cognitive) and social-emotional growth. It helps them to improve their physical dexterity and eye-hand coordination while also encouraging them to share their experiences, work as a team, developing their social skills. At the same time, they are engaging in scientific thought processes by questioning, investigating and observing. They look at and explore why certain objects sink in water and others float, the direction of flow, forces, as well as capacity. Children even learn mathematical concepts such as empty/full, before/after, shallow/deep and heavy/light in a hands-on way.