



Toucan Learning Environment and Play Experiences

Our priority is to offer a safe, warm, attractive and motivating environment where children and families enjoy spending time.

Taking care of the environment is very important. This includes making sure equipment is clean and well maintained and presented in a way that entices children to play and explore.

Displays are visually stimulating, bold and with good contrast. They link with stories and activities the children have engaged with. Photos show children engaged with activities in Toucan and the specialist environments we use regularly.

Activities are offered at different levels e.g. on the floor, at low surfaces and higher tables giving opportunities to develop physical skills

Toys are available on frames and attached to textured surfaces encouraging children to reach, touch, grasp, explore and let go. When toys fall out of sight they are still able to be pulled back helping to encourage focus and problem solving as well as understanding that their toys are still there when they fall out of sight.

We follow children's interests and emerging skills e.g. offering a range of play with toys that roll, pull down, are activated with switches, can be posted or placed or are reflective. Sometimes activities offered are inspired by things families have told us motivate their children at home. Play resources reflecting children's home culture are important. Resources with photos of children and families are in the environment e.g. photo books and shakers with children's photos on them.

Toys and activities offering experiences through all the senses and play with a wide range of natural materials are priorities. Children are supported to play with all sorts of malleable materials. There are lots of mirrors and mirror toys allowing children to see themselves and develop awareness of themselves

Children are involved in developing their environment e.g. planting and growing fragrant plants in the garden.

Small, cosy areas are available and used flexibly e.g. wicker tents and b active boxes.

We promote movement and physical development for all children. This will look different for each child and the way we organise the environment and activities offered will always be carefully considered for each child.

When developing the play environment, we consider how it will be used by children, families and therapists who visit regularly

We offer a balance of familiar toys and activities helping children to develop their play over time along with new experiences

Children have the opportunity to free flow in their play between areas e.g. the class and outdoor area or activity hall.

The environment is set up to allow for the use of specialist equipment e.g. supportive seating, standers, walkers and bugzis.

Sensory input is tailored for each child. To develop awareness of themselves e.g. hand awareness children may need regular massage activities and access to a range of tactile experiences. Opportunities to explore their own bodies e.g. playing with hands and feet is important. Some children may need activities to help regulation, and this may include use of bouncing and spinning toys, resonance boards. Activities may be part of regular sessions e.g. movement with songs or offered very regularly through the day.

Children have lots of contact with key adults being held, rocked, bounced and soothed. There are a range of books including picture books, sensory books, flap books and stories with props which children can choose to look at by themselves or share with an adult or in a small group.

To promote communication a range of support is used. This includes touch cues, objects of reference, sign and gesture, photos and other visual supports and play boards incorporated into our routines and play spaces.

There is always lots of singing in the class. This includes familiar songs linked with transitions and particular activities. We also use lots of personal songs including children's names and linked with things they are involved with

Adults are responsive to the individual needs of children and offer support flexibly. Modelling and helping children to gradually extend their play and giving lots of time is important.

Children are supported to engage in social play with activities such as peek a boo, tickle games and songs with actions. Over time they develop awareness of other children and build relationships with their friends. The play environment offers opportunities to engage with small world play e.g. car and train play, little people, puppets, dolls, dinosaurs, cooking and tea sets.

Children's play and development are captured through observations, photos and videos. These are shared with families and visiting professionals.

We aim to create a family atmosphere within the class where children have time and space to make and build strong relationships with key adults and to make friends. We value our time with families and within the setting families get to know each other, support each other and share ideas and advice.