



## Toucan Learning Environment and Play Experiences

Activities are available indoors and outside taking children's particular health needs into account. We actively encourage free flow which is supported as needed for individual children. There are lots of opportunities for exploration using all the senses e.g. fragranced plants planted with the children and their families. It is a lovely area for free movement and use of big equipment including sit and ride toys and walkers.

The wigwams offer little areas which can be used in all sorts of ways including hiding and finding. We have developed this area using as many natural materials as we can.

Toucan is a move setting and children are always encouraged to develop their physical skills through play activities. Some children need activities which alert them and develop awareness of self. These include massage, deep pressure, joint compressions and movement activities. Positioning of toys is important e.g. offering activities at the right level. Positioning and equipment to support children are used as needed. For children with VI we are aware of needing familiarity with where things are placed in the room. We think carefully about how we cue activities and use these cues consistently.

For more information about individual children see play passports and observations.

Children are given lots of opportunities to explore within familiar areas e.g. our low circle area. Children can play alongside each other, find and explore a range of sensory toys from the open boxes and problem solve. Having this available all the time allows them to practice and refine their skills. Adding new toys e.g. focusing on a particular sensory channel such as auditory includes new experiences.

### **Range of sensory toys focusing on all sensory channels including natural play materials**

These may be inside or outside. They are offered in different ways with a focus on their accessibility for each child e.g. on frames at different heights or in small environments such as the be active box. They give play experiences through children's stronger sensory channels and also support development of those offering more challenge. Sensory channels will also include vestibular and proprioceptive through activities such as massage, body awareness e.g. using resonance boards and movement activities. Activities are offered sometimes within a regular routine e.g. a sensory circuit and sometimes for several sessions at a time as a focus activity e.g. supported play with soapy soap for consecutive sessions.

### **Social play/ early imaginative/ role play.**

Children are supported to engage with social play activities e.g. peek a boo and tickling games or row the boat. For some children this will need to be adult led and gradually children recognise and engage with these activities.

At each session there will be activities to develop early role play/ small world play e.g. tea party's, garage and cars, puppets, mirrors, hats shared music play etc. children are supported in their play and often play alongside each other and begin to take notice and interact more with their friends.

Our mirrored mat area with sensory tubes has been particularly good for developing awareness of each other and an area children return to frequently.

### **Books with props as appropriate**

We offer a range of books including very bold black and white books, cloth books, board books, story boxes with sensory props and books linked to areas of focus and displays when appropriate. We also include photo books showing things we do in Toucan and also photos from home

## **Activity/ cause and effect toys including switch toys, musical toys and frames of toys**

For children starting to use a touch screen we use a screen which can be lowered as far as the floor making it accessible for children using a range of equipment. We include switch toys where the switch is on the toy encouraging children to develop the idea that they can activate the toy. We spend lots of time looking at what children enjoy and at the kind of support they need to gradually develop their skills and understanding.

## **Physical play**

We use equipment to encourage independent movement to develop. This includes sloped surfaces, tunnels, rockers, physio balls and textured tiles and surfaces. We support movement and movement sequences using songs with actions which we support as needed.

## **Malleable play**

Activities in this area are often repeated for several sessions to develop both confidence and to extend play. We often add to the activity e.g. using different colours or adding new tools. These activities encourage exploration, awareness of hands, feet etc. they help children to gain skills with their hands.

## **Toys to build, knock down, stack and nest**

Children explore colour, shape and size. They learn about sequences of play. We play alongside to help children build up and knock down in ready steady go games. These activities develop physical skills e.g. reaching, grabbing, swiping, placing etc. some children start to count. These activities develop anticipation. Children may play alongside each other with or without adults. We use bold, textured or shiny toys with a contrasting background to support children with visual impairments.