

## Loose Parts Play – Trash or Treasure?

Dear Parents and carers,

Let's talk about the stuff to play with.....When you and I were younger we played with 'stuff', the stuff that we could find to make what we wanted for our play. Today that stuff has been renamed "loose parts" or "open ended materials" (because 'stuff' doesn't look very good on curriculum planning maybe?)

In pre-school we provide your child with lots of opportunities to explore loose parts. Our Explorer's Corner is a play paradise, full of inviting loose parts. Our outdoor area is also a loose parts exploration area. More importantly, neither our inside nor outside areas cost lots of money to set up. We set up our play-spaces by making the conscious choice to "save the pocket, save the planet, and save the play" with open ended loose parts that cost very little money; instead, we invest our time and imagination into sourcing interesting 'stuff' for your child to investigate and play..

The loose parts we put in our environment say a lot about us and our awareness of:

- Sustainability – we choose recycled/recyclable, biodegradable materials, and avoid plastic wherever possible;
- Rampant consumerism – in pre-school, we hardly buy out of education catalogues wherever possible. That's because we know that children all over the world play, but they don't all have access to fancy toys or coloured counting bears. We believe that we only buy toys in our culture because toy manufacturers sell them to us. Advertising to children is very powerful; advertising to adults is even more powerful, after-all, we have the money to spend on toys! So, our motto is, 'think before you buy'. We ask ourselves, 'is this toy/resource really necessary? Does it support a child's learning or does it take away their creativity and imagination?'
- Instead, we check out charity shops, car boot sales, even our own kitchen cupboards. Well-loved treasures can yield beauty for our children's play. Children need to engage in 'symbolic play' (where one item stands for another). For example, a leaf can be a plate; fir cones can be cakes or corks can be sausages. 'Stuff' allows this to happen and promotes creativity in young children;
- We consider all the human genetic play patterns and ask "what do we have for that play pattern?" Eg. All children like to build huts, so we don't buy ready made play houses, forts etc. This robs children of all the process and problem solving they would have experienced by building their own place to play in. We build a new 'house' 'rocket' or 'ship' every day or week. You can do the same at home.
- Try to make available every-day items that your child would need to construct their own hut or cosy space according to their stage of development. Older children can maybe manage pallets, hammers and saws. Pre-school children can use a coffee table, a clothes airer and blankets; empty bread/milk crates and cardboard boxes make for easy building for young children. We try to offer completely open opportunities to allow your child's creativity to unfold.

### What is Heuristic/Loose Parts Play and why is it important?

Heuristic play (Goldsmeid 1986) (from the Greek, *heuriskein* meaning 'to discover') allows a child to explore open ended, everyday materials at their own pace under the close supervision of their play partner (key person).

Heuristic play provides children with opportunities to use all five senses to learn about mathematics, develop language for communication and thinking, as well as supporting creativity. They learn about different media and materials and how things work, while they develop personal and social skills. All areas of learning are supported by open ended, loose parts play, and children of all ages are able to benefit.

So what's the point? Well, heuristic/loose parts play provides:

- Satisfaction
- Open-ended activity
- No pre- determined outcome

- Guaranteed success
- Developing concentration- cognitive development
- Co-ordination
- Exploration
- Encourages social interactions
- Fully inclusive for all children
- Encourages imagination and creativity

What are they learning?

- Sorting and categorising
- Comparing objects
- Problem- solving (slotting, posting, balancing, weight, forces)
- Piling, building, stacking
- Rolling – force/trajectory
- Selecting independently
- Developing schema

Children develop their understanding of their world and extend their attention examining natural materials, such as wood, leather, metal and interesting fabrics that are furry or sparkly or smooth. They find new ways to use everyday items – go on! Give loose parts play a try at home and save money on toys. See how much more engaged your child becomes.

## DATES FOR YOUR DIARY:

- Learning Conversations & Reports, week commencing Monday 8<sup>th</sup> July. Please see pre-school entrance area to book an appointment to speak to your play-partner (evening appointments limited);
- Theatre trip – Tuesday 18<sup>th</sup> June pm
- Meet my teacher – transition to Guildhall Feoffment visit from teacher– Tuesday 18<sup>th</sup> June a.m
- Tapestry observations – minimal observations due to summative assessments and report writing from Monday 17<sup>th</sup> June
- End of Term Picnic in the Park – Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> July
- Summer Fayre Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> July 12.00 – 3.00
- Teddy Bears Picnic – with Reception classes Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup> July
- Last day of term, Friday 19<sup>th</sup> July
- Back to pre-school, Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> September

Please remember: sun hat and sun screen are essential in the hot weather. Please apply sun-screen BEFORE you leave your child with us. We will top up during the day as necessary but children are able to go indoors and out as they please so will need cream applied before they arrive in the morning.

Happy sunny days to the end of term.

Best wishes,

Caroline, Vanessa and the team!