

Approach to Play, Learning and Development Policy



This policy outlines our ethos at Little Dragon's Day Nursery in how we support children as individuals to learn and develop to their maximum potential by helping them to become confident, independent learners through rich, varied, first hand experiences that promote exploration and autonomy.

The Early Years Foundation Stage

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) is the national framework for the learning, development and care for young children. There are seven areas of learning, the prime areas are fundamental to supporting children to learn and develop in the specific areas.

Prime Areas	Specific Areas
Personal, Social and Emotional Development	Literacy
Physical Development	Mathematics
Communication and Language	Understanding the World
	Expressive Arts and Design

Our Vision – What we aspire to be:

To be an inspirational Early Years Setting where all children are happy, thrive and develop a zest for life-long learning.

Mission Statement - How we are going to achieve the vision:

At Little Dragon's Day Nursery, we want to fulfil every child's desire to explore and learn. Little Dragon's will provide a truly 'child-focused' environment that supports their learning and development. We employ highly-skilled, nurturing and passionate practitioners who invest time in getting to know each and every child 'inside out' and support them on their individual learning journey. Through our approach, every child will be supported to have a happy and fulfilled nursery experience as they venture on their own unique journey of discovery.

How we implement our approach

Little Dragon's Day Nursery is a safe and engaging space where the children in our care very quickly feel emotionally secure. We believe that caring and responsive adults are an essential ingredient in helping children achieve this emotional security and key to them developing and thriving at nursery. Little Dragon's fosters a thorough induction period whereby practitioner and parents work together to ensure the child feels safe, secure and content as quickly as possible. Once a child is settled and feels secure and trusts the adults, then his/her innate desire to learn can emerge. We pride ourselves in employing highly skilled individuals who have a genuine passion for work with children and invest the time in getting to know the children inside out as unique individuals. Our staff interact with the children as they play and tailor their response to the particular child, in the particular situation and that particular moment. They listen, watch and wait, observing what they see and hear, and assessing how/if to proceed. They are able to spot the unique 'teachable moments' and act on them immediately by:

"communicating and modelling language, showing, explaining, demonstrating, exploring ideas, encouraging, questioning, recalling, providing narrative for what they are doing, facilitating and setting challenges." (Ofsted definition of teaching in the early years).

This process of observing, assessing, planning, and teaching is repeated hundreds of times a day and in turn the progress of the children over time is outstanding.

How our approach impacts children

Through our approach, you will see happy, engaged children 'playing' (the most powerful vehicle for learning with young children) in a superb enabling environment, supported by skilful, enthusiastic staff – staff who are free to respond to learning opportunities as they happen. Our nursery is their learning 'workshop' and they are given the

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autonomy to play and explore within it. As a result of this, the children very quickly become engaged and purposeful in their play, demonstrating skills such as concentration, creativity, energy, resilience, independence and persistence – all the signals of Level 5 involvement which tell us a child's brain is 'lit up' and therefore they are learning and making progress. Our aim is to equip our children with the lifelong skills required for them to develop both physically and emotionally throughout their learning journey. At Little Dragon's Day Nursery, we allow children to be children and have a happy, fulfilled early years' experience.

Teaching

At Little Dragon's Day Nursery, you will see happy, engaged and curious children. The children have autonomy – they can free-flow and initiate their own play in a truly superb enabling environment, supported by skilful, enthusiastic staff – staff who are free to respond to events as they happen. This approach is invaluable in maximising development and progress in young children. When a practitioner spots a 'teachable moment' and helped a child take another step along my learning journey they will:

'Communicate and model language, show and explain, demonstrate, explore ideas, encourage, question (I wonder how/why/if?, recall, provide narrative for what children are doing, facilitate and set challenges'. (Ofsted definition of teaching in the early years).

Resources

Children are born with a natural desire to explore and are hard wired to learn. We know that when children are deeply engaged, their brain is developing, and new synapses are forming – i.e. they are making progress. The best levels of involvement are seen when children are allowed to initiate their own play. Little Dragon's Day Nursery is a superb 'enabling' environment where children have endless opportunities to become fully immersed, engaged and purposeful in their play i.e. their brain is 'lit up'. The layout of our nursery has been specifically designed to enable children to grow and journey through their own personal development stages, providing all children with opportunities that can be tailored to suit their developmental stage. The nursery is the children's 'workshop' in that they have unlimited access to opened ended resources that they can freely access that support all areas of their development.

Outdoor Play

Learning through play in the great outdoors is so important to us at Little Dragon's Day Nursery. Outdoor play is therefore an integral part of our daily routine from our baby room right through to our pre-schoolers. We don't believe in timetabled outdoor play – our team will ensure that the children are taken outside as and when! Our outdoor environment has been landscaped to create a safe, opening ended and engaging environment for the children to play and learn in. Little Dragon's also own the local field on Bell Lane that we are establishing as a Forest School area and is an extension of our nursery. We have a cloak room area where the children can access their wellies, waterproofs, hats, gloves, scarves (all the essentials required for a fun outdoor learning experience!)

Our moto:

'There is no such thing as bad weather, only unsuitable clothing!'

This policy was adopted on	Signed on behalf of the nursery	Date for review
August 2025	Kate McLeod	August 2026