

Blocks and Loose Parts

Key Learning Opportunities (From Development Matters Birth to 5)

Communication and Language

- Understand how to listen carefully and why listening is important.
- Learn new vocabulary.
- Use new vocabulary through the day.
- Ask questions to find out more and to check they understand what has been said to them.
- Articulate their ideas and thoughts in well-formed sentences.
- Connect one idea or action to another using a range of connectives.
- Describe events in some detail.
- Use talk to help work out problems and organise thinking and activities, and to explain how things work and why they might happen.
- Use new vocabulary in different contexts.

Maths

- Count objects, actions and sounds.
- Count beyond ten.
- Understand the 'one more than/one less than' relationship between consecutive numbers.
- Select, rotate and manipulate shapes to develop spatial reasoning skills.
- Compose and decompose shapes so that children recognise a shape can have other shapes *within* it, just as numbers can.
- Continue, copy and create repeating patterns.

Compare length, weight and capacity.

Literacy

- Spell words by identifying the sounds and then writing the sound with letter/s.
- Write short sentences with words with known sound-letter correspondences using a capital letter and full stop.
- Re-read what they have written to check that it makes sense.

Expressive Art and Design

- Return to and build on their previous learning, refining ideas and developing their ability to represent them.
- Create collaboratively, sharing ideas, resources and skills.

Develop storylines in their pretend play.

Personal, Social and Emotional Development

- Build constructive and respectful relationships.
- Show resilience and perseverance in the face of challenge.
- Identify and moderate their own feelings socially and emotionally.
- Think about the perspectives of others.

Physical Development

Develop their small motor skills so that they can use a range of tools competently, safely and confidently. Suggested tools: pencils for drawing and writing, paintbrushes, scissors, knives, forks and spoons.

Understanding the World

- Draw information from a simple map.
- Explore the natural world around them.

Characteristics of Effective Learning

Playing and Exploring

- Show curiosity about the objects in the blocks/loose parts area.
- Show interest in their own creations and those of others.
- Engage in open-ended learning and be receptive to exploring resources by themselves and with others.
- Pretend that objects are things from their own experiences at home and elsewhere.
- Initiate building/creating activities with others including peers and adults.
- Challenge themselves to create bigger/better/faster items and take learning further.
- Take calculated risks and learn by trial and error.

Active Learning

- Maintain focus on their activity for a sustained period of time (around 10 minutes).
- Show high levels of energy and interest in building/creating and talking about what they are doing.
- Pay attention to details in the things they are creating.
- Persist in finding a different way when things don't quite work.
- Show belief that a different way will pay off and bounce back after difficulties.
- Set themselves goals and show pride at the process they take not just the end goal.
- Enjoy meeting their own challenges not just for rewards or praise.

Creative and Critical Thinking

- Think of their own ideas for building/creating.
- Find ways to problem solve or new ways to build/create.
- Make links and notice patterns in their experiences.
- Use vocabulary linked to building/creating (see below)
- Make predictions to what they think will happen (e.g. I think when it gets this big it will fall over.)
- Plan out their ideas and make decisions on how to create/build.
- Change strategies as they work when needed and review how their approach is going.

Blocks and Loose Parts

Resources	Organisation	Intended Experience	Key Vocabulary	Role of the Adult
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wooden blocks • Colourful wooden blocks • Soft building blocks • Wooden poles/sticks • Cotton reels • Corks • Cellotape/Masking tape centres • Glass gems • Wooden rings/hoops • Empty spools/Reels 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open shelf with boxes/bowls/baskets holding different objects. • Large cable reels in area for building on/around. • Large carpeted area to encourage big scale building and scenes to be set up. • Photos of children's creations using blocks/loose parts to inspire creativity. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children make decisions about the resources they need to fulfil their ideas. • Plan out and communicate their ideas with others. • Express thoughts as they build and make. • Cooperate with peers sharing resources and helping to problem solve. • Creating real and imaginary buildings based on their experiences. • Design and create settings for small world play. • Invent stories around the settings they create. • Narrate their play. • Re-tell stories using their creations. • Problem solve and use trial and error to bring their ideas to life. • Label designs using letters they know. • Use mathematical language and descriptions when creating. 	<p>Low Frequency Words create, construct, arrange, combine, explore, flexible, rigid, assemble</p> <p>Medium Frequency Words balance, stack, pattern, create, pinch</p> <p>High Frequency Words bricks, blocks, gems, sticks, reels, corks, move, large, medium, small, slow, fast, build, sort, roll,</p>	<p>Play alongside</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Observe children and take note of key interests. • Respond to requests and ideas • Suggest possibilities to extend play/thinking. • Consider additional stimulus and add to the area immediately or in the following days. • Play alongside children to push play forwards. <p>Role model/direct teach</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Model how to play imaginatively. • Model thinking aloud "You've really made me think about..." "I'd not thought of that before..." • Model correct language use and extend vocabulary. • Model and manage behaviours including self-regulation. <p>Raise questions to stimulate ideas and add challenge</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "What do you notice about...?" • "I wonder how...?" • "Can you tell me about...?" <p>Use appropriate language linked to key learning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mathematical language linked to shape, position, size and counting. • Geographical language linked to locations • Scientific language linked to gravity and stability. • Story language linked to scenes and characters.