

55 Treasure Basket & Heuristic Play Policy

Objective:

To provide new and interesting sensory, problem solving, sorting and investigation experiences which are suitable for all age groups.

Heuristic play is the term used to describe play for babies, infants and toddlers that actively encourages exploration by using and developing their senses. Heuristic play helps children to learn for themselves and make choices.

Treasure baskets are collections of objects should appeal to all the senses and are usually made of natural materials. Children will enjoy exploring the objects to see how they taste, how they feel, how they smell, how they sound and what they look like.

Adults should set up the activity so that it is ready when the children arrive / move rooms. During the activity the children should explore by themselves where they are confident enough to do so, without interference. However, the adult's role is to be close to the children as a support to those who need it. As well as to collect the items, to set out the activity and to observe the children whilst playing. The children can develop their manipulative skills, imagination, solve problems, sequence, anticipate and rearrange objects. There is no right or wrong way for the children to explore the materials. The activity also promotes the development of concentration skills, through the exploration of interesting objects.

It is important to ensure that all materials are safe and age appropriate.

Remember:

- Do not include small objects for babies that may cause a choking hazard
- There may be some items, which you would need to remove for older children (e.g. chains that can swing and hit others).
- All objects must be checked for any obvious hazards.
- An adult should remain sitting close enough to observe when there is an imminent threat (and can move the child's hand or take an object from them).
- Only choose items you are comfortable with the children exploring.
- A risk assessment should be carried out every time the activity is put out so that there are no broken or damaged items.
- Where appropriate the children should help to tidy up.

Children should be observed during the activity, by observing adults will be able to remove the materials as soon as the children begin to lose interest and notice popular items, which can trigger ideas for additions. Watching the children can also show skills, which can be incorporated into their other play. As with all toys it is important that children do not have unlimited access to these materials as they then become bored of the items and will not discover anything new.

- Treasure baskets should be available three times per week.
- Heuristic play should be available once per fortnight.
- These sessions should change so that all children have the opportunity to participate.