**10: Care, Learning and Play**

Willows programme of activities and the atmosphere of our settings aim to promote and encourage confidence, independence and enjoyment. Our primary goal is enabling children to develop their emotional, social, cognitive, interpersonal and physical skills, and their desire to explore, discover and be creative.

Willows will provide a well-planned and organised play environment that offers children rich and stimulating experiences, alongside opportunities to explore, experiment, plan and make decisions for themselves.

Children will be encouraged to be confident and independent, and every effort will be made to develop their self-esteem and learning through play.

Willows recognises and takes into account the differing ages, interest, backgrounds and abilities of the children. At all times, our settings will recognise a child’s individuality, effort and achievement.

Wherever appropriate, children will be involved in the process of planning activities so that the programme reflects their opinions and so that children feel some ownership over their setting. Such procedures will be governed by the procedures set out in the Involving and Consulting Children Policy.

**Outdoor Play**

All children will be given the opportunity to play.

When children are playing outside, Willows will ensure that staff to children ratios are being met at all times, in all areas of play.

**EYFS Children**

**Observation**

Each child’s development is closely observed to ensure they are making progress and any difficulties in any areas of learning are identified and addressed. Based on EYFS principles, staff will be able to recognise where each child is in their learning and put in place the most effective activity to support each child in extending their development and learning based on their interests and needs.

Staff at Willows will help children to bring together what they know in a connected and whole way by:

* Observing children at play.
* Using their observations to support and extend play by planning and resourcing a challenging environment.
* Creating appropriate stepping stones with particular children in mind, to help children to learn through their play and develop towards the early learning goals.
* Engaging in play and encouraging the development of communication, both verbal and non-verbal, through play.
* Knowing when to take a ‘step back’ and to let children develop their play without adult intervention.

Systematic written records of children’s progress, which are informed by observations are compiled for a variety of reasons:

* To evaluate progress towards early learning goals
* To share knowledge with parents/carers
* To help plan appropriate projects
* To identify any special educational needs and share knowledge with outside agencies when appropriate
* To monitor equal opportunities in terms of access to the early years foundation stage offer
* To share knowledge among the staff team and provide continuity in case of staff absences or changes
* To pass on information to school

Staff at Willows will record regular observations of EYFS children. Observations will always include the date, time and initials of the observer. Staff are aware of the importance of observing children in different contexts: in groups, as individuals, at play, in conversation, with adults etc.

**Assessments**

Key persons will complete regular assessments, using their judgement about length of time spent and methods used etc. The general principle is that this should be an enjoyable experience for the child. The assessment will be used as a diagnostic toll – if it highlights a specific area of concern, for example difficulty using scissors, action will be planned to help.

Observations will be recorded at least once a week. These observations will include next steps for learning that feed into daily planning for each individual child.

Staff are trained and experienced in assessing children, these observations are valuable and link directly to future planning.

The manager will ensure that time is managed properly, allowing time for activity sessions to be evaluated.