**Pyramid of Learning**

**Developing Relationships**

At Ditton Church Pre-school we begin the process of supporting children to develop relationships before they even start. The sections below provide an overall view of the process of developing relationships.

**The role of the key person**

Every child is allocated a named key person. Before a child joins us, we ask the parents/carers to complete a detailed ‘All about me’ form, giving us as much information about them as possible to assist the key person in planning to support the child from their first day with us and throughout their time at Pre-School. It helps us to have an idea of whether the child has been cared for by people outside of their family home before, whether they are used to socialising with other children, any additional needs they may have and what they particularly enjoy playing with.

We then invite our new starters to a taster session, where their keyperson will meet with them and their parents/carers, to get to know each other and discuss any areas of concern before they start. This also provides an opportunity for the child to become familiar with the setting and with other staff as well. If their keyperson does not work every day that the child will attend, they will also be allocated a named ‘buddy’. The key person is often the first person the child will develop a secure relationship with at Pre-School.

Each child will be given a box to take home and personalise with pictures of their favourite characters or family photos and will bring this to Preschool to carry home their artwork etc. Making the box personal makes a great talking point for the child and key person.

The box will also contain a communication book so that key person and parents/carers can share information if not able to talk in person (for example if parents work and a childminder brings the child to Pre-school). We also ask permission to share a communication book with any childminder or other childcare setting that the child may attend.

**Introducing the routine, activities and other people**

When children arrive at Pre-school, we start the day with a short ‘circle time’, where we sing our ‘Good Morning’ song, introduce each other and welcome new children, gradually introduce some sign language and talk about the activities available that day.

We have a named representative for two-year-olds, who is responsible for ensuring that all activities and resources are accessible and suitable for our youngest children.

We use a lot of ‘open ended’ resources, allowing children to explore, using their own imagination and making their own choices. These include things like building blocks, dressing up, craft resources, water play, sand, playdough and digging. Children begin with ‘parallel play’ where they play alongside other children engaged in the same activity, but not necessarily interacting with each other. Pre-school staff assist with developing relationships by introducing the children to each other and making suggestions as to how they can develop their play and work together.

Staff ensure that children are given time to explore, with the security of being supported by an adult, who will get down to their level and support as necessary. We support children with coping with their emotions by helping them to name their emotions and suggesting ways to deal with them.

Staff also ensure we role model friendships by the way in which we treat each other as well as how we care for the children. We also welcome visitors to the setting to help them understand relationships within the wider community.

**Beginning to develop relationships with peers**

Staff further support children to develop relationships with their peers by helping them to infiltrate existing friendship groups. Staff will encourage older children to take pride in helping to welcome and look after their younger peers. As confidence grows, the staff member will then take a step back and allow the friendships to develop, whilst observing and stepping in if support is needed. They will also involve children in small group, adult led activities, which provide opportunities for introducing children to some they may not have played with before.

**Pre-school rules and routines**

At Ditton Church Pre-school we have our own set of ‘Preschool rules’ which demonstrate the behaviour we want to see and not the behaviour we don’t want to see. For example, ‘we have kind hands’, ‘we share toys’, ‘we use kind words’. Staff will role model how to carry these out and praise children for their good behaviour and for being kind to others. If children are unkind, we explain to them how they may have made the other child feel and give examples of what they could do differently next time. If children are upset or frustrated, we offer them vocabulary to help them understand the way they are feeling.

We have a visual timetable of the day, which helps children to understand our routine and feel secure as a member of our Preschool. Children are given small, developmentally appropriate tasks to carry out, such as telling a child when it is their turn for a particular activity, passing messages on to other staff members and helping to prepare and clear away after snack time.

**Providing activities and resources which encourage interaction**

Children learn to interact with each other by joining in with group activities such as ring games like ‘Farmer’s in his den’, or ‘Sandy girl’, where they are encouraged to use each other’s names. Similarly, we use ball games where the children are encouraged to call someone’s name before throwing the ball to them. They also begin to develop friendships through their shared interests, which is why we plan a lot of our curriculum around the current interests of the children.

For example, children may enjoy participating in a particular theme of role play, such as ‘mummys and daddys’ or ‘superheroes’. Staff help children extend their ideas by suggesting they involve other friends to take on extra characters and providing dressing up outfits or open-ended materials which can be adapted to make costumes, or by helping them to make props to support their play.

**Further opportunities to support children develop appropriate, friendly relationships include:**

Using sand timers and photos to help children develop turn taking skills, to avoid conflict.

Using ‘persona dolls’ to discuss scenarios and relationships, allowing the children to comment on how the ‘persona doll’ may feel and discuss their own feelings and relationships.

Children are taught how to respond appropriately to other children who may be behaving in a way they don’t like, for example, to hold their hand up and say “stop” or to come a tell a member of staff.

Children are supported in a range of social situations, such as at the snack or lunch table, where they will be encouraged to join in with conversation and at ‘news time’ where they are supported by the adult in gaining confidence to share their news with the rest of the group and encouraged to sit quietly and listen to each other. Group sizes increase as the children gain confidence.

Staff always give children time to talk and be listened to. We allow them quiet 1-1 time when needed, as well as opportunities to be supported in gaining confidence in larger groups, with the adult gradually withdrawing their support as confidence grows.

Our book corner includes a wide range of both fiction and non- fiction books, which provides plenty of opportunity for discussion between staff and children and children with each other. Puppets are provided to allow children opportunities to act out the stories, again providing opportunity for them to interact with each other.

**Our aim**

Our aim as Early Years Practitioners is to be the best practitioners we can, by being kind, friendly, open and time giving to children, parents and carers and each other. We treasure the journey of supporting our youngest children in developing their confidence and watching their relationships grow with children who share the same interests and by the time they leave us to start Infant school we see very clear friendship groups, which often cross over with each other, depending on the play they are engaged in and at this stage the key person continues to observe and support as necessary, but by taking a step back and watching the children make their own decisions and work together to extend their ideas in play.