

BABY MOVES & MUSIC (THE TREASURE BASKET)

The Treasure Basket is designed to offer an opportunity for play and learning to infants from when they are able to sit up comfortably but before they can crawl. At this stage babies are awake for longer and the ability to grasp and manipulate objects that hold their interest is developing.

In choosing, mouthing, sucking, waving, handling and banging these objects, infants will concentrate their attention for considerable amounts of time: often up to an hour. They will initiate their own explorations by and for themselves, without the need for encouragement or intervention on the part of the adult. That is not to say that the role of the adult is an insignificant one.

Interplay between the Infants

For many years it was believed that babies show little interest in each other. However, recent research has shown just how often babies do interrelate and how mutual interest in shared objects encourages this activity.

From birth baby experiences warm interplay with the adults who care for him/her. There is loving contact through touch, eyes, voice and objects such as the breast, faces, lips, hair and fingers. In our Treasure Basket group we can see how babies utilise these experiences in making contact with their peers – through glances and intent looking, pre-verbal noises, touching and mutual interest in the objects being played with. It is all too easy for adults to miss these social overtures which represent a move towards independences from adults – a significant part of an infant's growth.

The Role of the Adult

The adult provides passive support for the child during the treasure basket session. As the child explores the objects they may experience a certain element of anxiety that is present in all new experiences: unknown things can hold a threat. The attentive adult provides an all-important 'emotional anchorage', containing the baby's anxiety and freeing their curiosity, enabling them to play and learn.

Structure of the Session

When you bring your baby to the Treasure Basket group we ask you to remove any footwear. There will be cushions for you to sit on. Several baskets will have been placed around the room, each one filled to the brim with objects for your child to discover and explore. Sit your baby within comfortable reach of one of the baskets. Make sure he/she can reach inside the basket without having to stretch. You can then sit back and observe passively. Obviously if you feel your baby needs your help you should go to him/her, otherwise do try not to intervene.

We will usually allow the babies to play with the objects for 25-30 minutes. At home you may well find that your baby is content to play with his/her treasure basket for much longer than this.

After half an hour we begin to clear away the treasure baskets and move on to the music part of the session. Here we introduce nursery rhymes, action songs and lullabies for you to sing with your child. We also use bells, shakers, and scarves, as well as other props and instruments to add further visual and auditory stimulus.

At the end of the session we will always make time for questions and discussion.

List of Suggested Items for the Treasure Basket

Producing a Treasure Basket collection is a very personal matter and calls for the adult finding pleasure and interest in its creation and maintenance. If you would like any help or advice in creating your own Treasure Basket please speak to a member of staff.

BABY ON THE MOVE & MUSIC (HEURISTIC PLAY)

The heuristic play classes build on the children's experiences during the treasure basket sessions. In heuristic play the children have the opportunity to move on from asking 'what is it?' to 'what does it do?' and 'what can I do with it?'.

In doing so they are beginning to understand the properties of objects (and other children!); explore cause and effect; classify and categorise objects and experiences; and combine movements into creative action sequences. Each activity and subsequent discovery motivates the child to further exploration.

Each session will introduce new materials and new experiences taking the children on a journey from the known to the unknown. We will begin with activities similar to those in the treasure basket classes to provide a sense of continuity and familiarity for the children. These will then be replaced gradually by activities and materials that encourage the children to experiment with their own creative ideas – sometimes on their own; sometimes with other children, providing an opportunity to develop social skills such as sharing, taking turns and considering the needs of others.

The activities reflect the increasing mobility of the children, providing them with motivations for exploring and experimenting with gross motor, as well as fine motor skills. At the same time they are developing cognitive skills such as reasoning, planning, imagination and memory. Repetition is a key element to children's learning at this stage, so don't be surprised if your child stays with the same activity for much of the session. You may notice actions being repeated with different objects – rolling, dropping, carrying, passing to another child or adult, covering up, or putting objects inside a container. All of these are classic actions which form the basis of later concepts and understanding of the world.

All of this happens within a safe, supportive environment that relies on natural and everyday objects rather than commercial toys, which tend to stifle the imagination. We will also be introducing parachutes, balloons, balls, ribbons and other equipment to encourage the children to explore their physical creativity.

We aim to give the children the space, time and opportunity to become fully engaged in their play, without unnecessary distractions and interruptions. You may be surprised at just how deeply young children are able to concentrate. We would ask you to help us maintain this atmosphere by keeping conversations to a minimum and turning your mobile phones off. I am sure we will all benefit from the peace and quiet! During the free play part of the class, please sit close to the walls to give the children the maximum amount of space for their explorations. With your passive support your child is empowered to explore the materials, and the other children, with increasing confidence and independence. We hope you enjoy watching them.

Each class includes some group time as well as discovery play and songs/or rhymes. Please join in with these activities, as your involvement will act as a valuable model for your child, confirming the value of the activity.

If you would like to know anymore about the aims of this class or have any other questions please do not hesitate to ask.