

What is 'In the Moment Planning'?

We believe that young children learn best when they are motivated by, and interested in, their learning environment and when they are able to make choices about what they want to explore. At Little Angels, we recognise young children as powerful learners with the inherent ability to direct their own play. Play is very important work, allowing children an opportunity to practice what they see in real life, to become resilient by having plenty of opportunities to try, fail, and try again, and to begin to understand the implications of social interactions and compromise.

Obviously, as teachers, it is our responsibility to introduce new ideas to the classroom as well as to challenge, motivate, and scaffold children to try something new or to persevere at a task they find difficult. It is in this moment, when a child is feeling discouraged, that the adult, or a more capable peer, can provide the necessary support to encourage the child to try a different technique or to just try again.

Children should have ample opportunities to practice what they are learning and to return to their work as many times as they need to consolidate their growing skills. For instance, a child who is mastering fine motor control by learning how to balance bricks on top of each other will need repetitive, uninterrupted time to ensure success. Children also need opportunities to be creative, to apply problem solving and reasoning techniques, and to practice contextual mark-making. In addition, they are learning the boundaries of the class, how to regulate their emotions, and growing their vocabularies in a language-rich environment. It is a very busy time!

Of course, we introduce key, age-appropriate concepts such as maths, phonics, literacy, technology, and understanding of the world. But we do this in a gentle, play-based way and the children are encouraged to access and explore all areas according to their own interests and needs.

To achieve this, our classrooms are organised by areas of learning, with plenty of tactile, open-ended activities and resources on offer. The children know that that they can ask for an activity that is on a shelf but that they first have to tidy away what they are finished doing. This also promotes pride in and ownership of their classroom. We do not forward plan for children, based on what we THINK they might be interested in. Instead, we observe and understand what motivates individual children to learn and we know, by observing, HOW each child learns best, using the characteristics of effective learning. This gives us more time to spend working side by side with the children, and be there to catch those 'teachable moments' when a child is thoroughly engrossed in an activity and receptive to new information. 'In the Moment Planning' does not mean that we do not plan at all because we put a lot of careful thought into our environments and what we want children to learn. It simply means that we are so secure in how well we know and understand our key children, and the experiences that they bring to class with them, that we can relax and focus on co-constructing knowledge with them rather than on filling in endless paperwork.

Characteristics of Effective Learning

Playing and exploring – engagement

- Finding out and exploring
- Playing with what they know
- Being willing to 'have a go'

Active learning – motivation

- Being involved and concentrating
- Keep trying
- Enjoyment in achieving what they set out to do

Creating and thinking critically – thinking

- Having their own ideas
- Making links
- Choosing ways to do things