

The importance of play

*“...fantasy play is the glue that binds together all other pursuits..”**

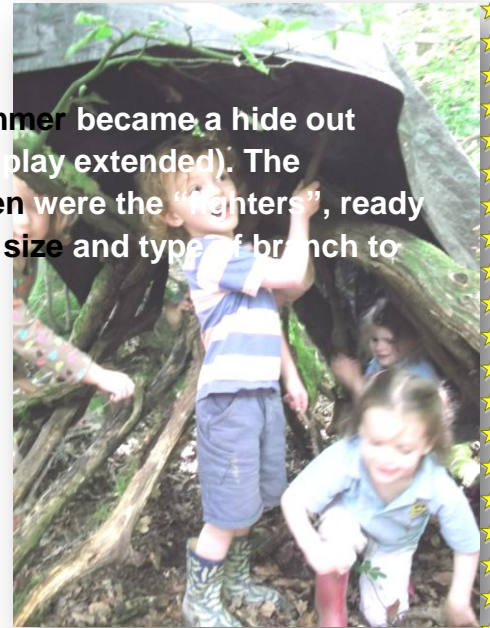
I often use the opportunity of a newsletter to explain why we do certain activities at nursery, such as messy play or cooking and how they link to the EYFS and your children’s learning and development, and this month I want to look at what is arguably the most important thing of all:

play. It’s also rather appropriate, given the next theme for our Bristol Standards is Dimension 3: ‘[Supporting play, learning and development](#)’

“If readiness for school has meaning, it is to be found first in the children’s flow of ideas...”.

A magic mirror found in the exploratory station became a magic mirror that took these girls off on their own adventure. They created their own imaginary world, narrative and story line, making connections between their own and fantasy experiences.

A den that was built as part of nature school back in the summer became a hide out from the tigers outside (or the monsters, or the lions, as the play extended). The children had to add the tarpaulin as protection, some children were the “fighters”, ready to protect the others, some the “builders” sourcing the best size and type of branch to make the most secure den



The boys here created their own game using a piece of hosing that became the petrol pump hose to refill the tractor. Careful driving was needed to get it to the pump correctly. Conversations were going on as to where they were going, what they were doing and how many miles were they driving?



We can see in their imaginary play, that **children are natural born storytellers**, who create their own literature. The most valuable learning experiences come from the children, from letting them take the lead, as has been seen recently when we all became pirates for the week!

I almost want to refrain from pigeon holing the above examples into specific areas of learning as what is most important in this type of children's play is that it's **FUN**, and who doesn't work best when we are doing something we enjoy and can have fun with? But, if I must here are (just some) of the Early Learning goal boxes that imaginary play ticks in the EYFS:

PSED: relationships: *"Form good relationships with adults and peers"*

CLLD: Communication. *"Interact with others, negotiating plans and activities, taking turns in conversation"* **Thinking:** *"Use language to recreate roles and experiences"* **Reading:** *"retell narrative in the correct sequence, drawing on language patterns of stories"*

PSRN: *"Use developing mathematical ideas and methods to solve practical problems"*

KUW: Place : *"Find out about their environment"*

PD: Movement and space: *"Show awareness of space, of themselves and of others"*

CD... every area of **'Imaginative play'** and **'Being creative'**!

...can you identify which boxes all of the above scenarios tick?

Actually it's not important, what is is that they were masters of their own learning, and they were having FUN!!!! (yes, that word again!)

So, next time your child comes home empty handed with the response to your questions "well, what have you done toady?", "Oh, just played" you can be sure that they have had the most valuable learning experience of all!!

Let me leave you with another lovely quote from Vivian Gussin Paley who warns both us as practitioners and you as parents, about getting too caught up in the tensions of what it means to be "ready for school":

"The potential for surprise is largely gone. We no longer wonder "who are you?" but instead decide quickly "What can we do to fix you?"

Quotes from: Paley, V,G, *A Child's Work: the importance of fantasy play*