A Parent's Guide to Learning Through Play

How children learn, grow and develop at Pavilion Preschool

At Pavilion Preschool (Aigburth) CIO, we believe that play is the most powerful way young children learn. What may look like simply playing is a vital part of your child's development. Through play, children develop new skills, explore ideas, solve problems, build relationships and make sense of the world around them.

Our approach is guided by the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), ensuring that every child has opportunities to learn, develop and thrive through meaningful, enjoyable experiences.

What does learning through play mean?

Children are naturally curious. They learn best when they can explore, experiment, investigate and discover things for themselves. When children play, they are constantly developing key concepts and skills through meaningful, hands-on experiences by

- Making decisions and solving problems
- Developing language and communication skills
- Exploring numbers, shapes, patterns and measurements
- Learning to share, take turns and work together
- Developing physical skills and coordination
- Using their imagination and expressing creativity
- Building confidence, independence and resilience

Our practitioners carefully plan activities, provide exciting resources and interact with children to extend their thinking and learning.

How play supports the seven areas of learning

The EYFS is divided into seven areas of learning. There are 3 Prime Areas and 7 Specific Areas with the EYFS. These are not taught in isolation: one play experience can support several areas of development at the same time.

Prime Areas

1. Communication and Language

Through conversations, storytelling, singing and role play, children develop listening skills, learn new vocabulary and become confident communicators.

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For example: *Talking about what they are building, asking questions or retelling a familiar story.*

2. Personal, Social and Emotional Development

Playing alongside others helps children develop friendships, confidence, independence and an understanding of feelings.

For example: *Taking turns, sharing resources, negotiating roles and learning to resolve disagreements.*

3. Physical Development

Active play strengthens children's bodies, coordination and control, while creative activities develop fine motor skills.

For example: *Climbing, balancing, running, threading beads, using scissors and exploring playdough.*

Specific Areas

4. Literacy

Books, rhymes, mark-making and storytelling help children develop a love of reading and writing.

For example: *Making shopping lists, creating their own stories or recognising familiar letters.*

5. Mathematics

Everyday play introduces children to counting, numbers, shapes, patterns, size and measurement.

For example: *Counting blocks, sharing toys equally, building towers or comparing which container holds the most water.*

6. Understanding the World

Exploring their surroundings helps children develop curiosity about nature, people, communities and the world around them.

For example: *Planting seeds, investigating minibeasts, exploring different cultures or experimenting with water and sand.*

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7. Expressive Arts and Design

Creative play allows children to explore their imagination, experiment with materials and express their ideas.

> For example: *Painting, building, dancing, making music, dressing up and creating imaginative worlds.*

What might learning through play look like?

Sometimes the simplest activities offer the richest learning opportunities.

What children are doing	What they are learning
Building with blocks	Problem-solving, balance, shape, size and teamwork
Playing in the mud kitchen	Measuring, experimenting, language and imagination
Playing shops	Counting, money, communication and social skills
Exploring playdough	Creativity, hand strength and fine motor control
Reading stories	Vocabulary, listening, comprehension and imagination
Playing outdoors	Physical skills, confidence and understanding the natural world

What is the role of our practitioners?

Although play may look spontaneous, there is a great deal of thought and planning behind the learning experiences we provide. Our practitioners:

- Observe children to understand their interests, strengths and next steps
- Plan exciting opportunities that support individual development
- Join in with and extend play to introduce new ideas, vocabulary and challenges
- Extend play and learning
- Ask open-ended questions to encourage children to think
- Provide encouragement and support without taking over
- Adapt activities to ensure every child can participate and achieve
- Celebrate progress, achievements and individual learning journeys

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We know that every child is unique and develops at their own pace. Our aim is to provide the right balance of child-led play, adult-guided experiences and purposeful teaching.

How can you support learning through play at home?

You don't need expensive toys or complicated activities to support your child's development. Everyday experiences provide wonderful opportunities to learn. For more ideas, head to our website at https://www.pavilionpreschool.org/homelearning

Share a story

Talk about the pictures, ask questions and encourage your child to predict what might happen next.

Bake together

Count ingredients, weigh flour, mix and talk about changes.

Explore outdoors

Look for insects, collect leaves, notice the weather and talk about what you discover.

Follow their interests

Join in with your child's favourite games and encourage them to explain what they are doing.

Questions to ask your child during play

Rather than always asking, "What have you done today?", try questions that encourage your child to think and talk about their experiences:

- What was your favourite thing to play today?
- What did you discover?
- How did you make that work?
- What happened when you tried something different?
- Who did you play with?
- What would you like to try next time?
- Can you show me how you did that?

There is no need to turn every activity into a lesson. Enjoying time together, talking, exploring and having fun is what matters most.

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At Pavilion Preschool

Play is not just play. It is learning, discovery and development.

"Holding hands on a journey of learning, adventure and play, stopping along the way to marvel at the beauty and wonder of the world."

Thank you for being part of your child's learning journey.