

Madeley Nursery School

2016-2017

Long-term projects

These are the long-term projects by groups of children and educators within Madeley Nursery School in the year 2016-17. Through these short examples you can see how children's ideas and theories are at the heart of our curriculum, enabling them to develop deep and lifelong skills in group work and hopefully a passion for enquiry which will stay with them forever.

Rachel's morning key group

Enquiry into pipes, tunnels and communication



This group engaged in a deep and sustained exploration of pipes and tunnels as means of communication, stemming from a shared interest in trains. Their early ideas included theories about symbols for meaning making ☒ "that means dead end." - Otto and a deep

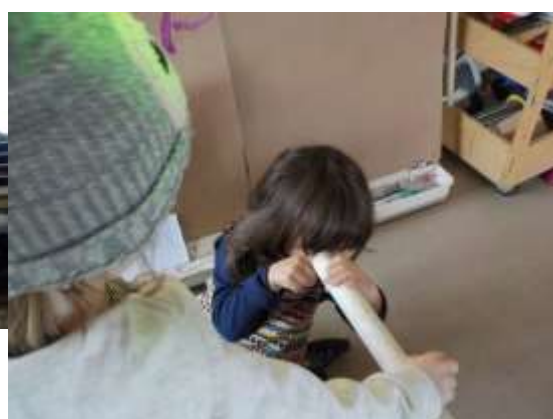
interest in measuring. "It's 38 long" - Xander. "It's so long! All the way from here to here." - Charlie. 'It's a long journey, 100 weeks.' Charlie. The language of measurement was in the context of trains, pipes and tunnels and led to the invention of a 'measure platform' where trains pulled up and were measured. "Can you measure my train?" - Finlay. "It's 48 wide" - Xander. Explorations in clay led to a fascination of how tunnels are made. "That's not a proper tunnel, we



need to put clay on it." - Henry. This strong group of learners continuously re-inforced their sustained thinking through advanced pro-social skills. "Let's get building, we can do it" - Xander "I've got an idea, don't worry, I can sort it out." Charlie "Do you like my work, Finlay?" - Poppy. 'WOAH! Rachel, look at Poppy's work.' - Finlay. The group's ideas and



theories coalesced around the concept of a “message machine” which they built together. The machine incorporated many elements of their previous ideas (“can I make a marble station?” - Xander) but developed further their problem solving skills ; “Oh no! The marbles are dropping on the floor!” - Xander. “We need a catcher” - Olivia. The group evolved the work to include multiple pipes and catchers which included a signalling system whereby a stick popped up to show that a marble “message” had arrived. There was visible delight and joy at the invention of this simple, yet effective signal. “Message for you! Can you feel it coming down?” - Mila. Children were interested in the messages as code. “Red is bad, blue is good” - Grace “It says m-m-m-mummy” - Olivia. Watching the group working collaboratively around their message machine, sharing ideas, solving problems and taking satisfaction in inventing something which “works” was a privilege. This project had a strong logical, systematic and mathematical bias, all arising from the children’s own curiosities, but was also strongly about relationships and working together; “This is the telephone that connects everyone in the world” - Xander.



Helen's morning key group

Music in the wild garden



We observe children so as to notice what they see, to become engaged with their enquiries and to find out their questions.

Early in the autumn term the group began to share a common interest in the

natural environment, in particular the concept of sounds in the wild area.

The tree had played a significant role in the previous year's project and provided a provocation for this year's group enquiry as we remembered our 'song for the tree'. Using a digital tablet an idea was shared as to how we could give sounds back to our tree.



"I'm making music for the tree, he says it's really beautiful".

"I was looking at the bird singing to me, the bird felt happy, it made a nest in my hair, a bird house".



“Catch the sound Kornel, I can catch it ”

The children’s shared interest in the sounds they could hear from the area led to a dynamic interaction that prompted a physical response from within the group.

Through our work we continued to notice the children developing their theories by taking another perspective,

“The tree needs ears to hear the sounds”

“I’m drawing a path for the music to follow”.

Engaged in their shared passion, the group has evolved their social learning through processes of collaboration in the



Kay's morning key group

Sharing ideas as a group

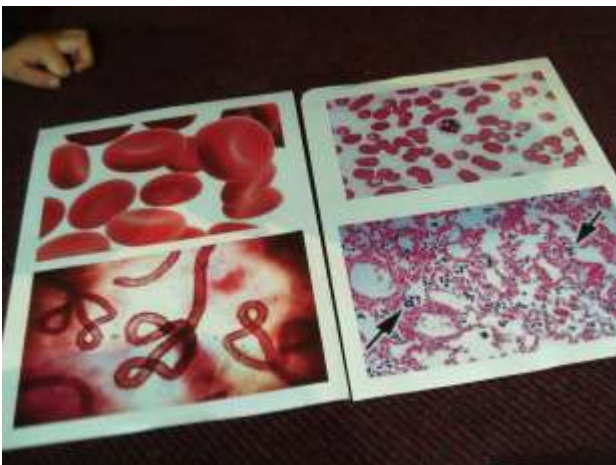


Our summer assignment focused around children finding holes in their environment and the places they visited. As part of group discussion they wanted to go on a hole hunt in the garden. A leaf was found in a hole and many of the group thought that there was blood on it, originating

from a bat.

“A bat left the blood.”

The group then looked for blood in other locations that they thought came from a bat. The children explored the jungle area finding holes in the tunnel, shapes in equipment, such as tyres, pieces of piping, and the climbing frame. In the wild area they found a tree with what they thought had more of the bat blood on. Children imagined that this was the blood to feed the



toads and the mice that they thought lived there. As part of the enquiry we then looked at blood patterns of animals and humans.

Some of the children considered what the blood looked like, some of them compared their own cuts and bruises to



the patterning of the blood samples. The group then drew both blood patterns and explored the graphic form of a bat.

"It's got no blood on it."

"The bat went in my wardrobe and I saw it was going to bite me and I said no."

"It's a meat ball blood coming down there."

"My blood is like an orange."

Children are beginning to develop ideas about what blood looks like, what it does and how it can be used. The act of drawing has made visible their thinking giving a context for sharing ideas where new ideas can emerge.



Trina's morning key group

An enquiry about keeping healthy and germs



The summer assignment focussing on holes inspired a curiosity for children noticing holes in fruits and vegetables in the café area. A child brought in and shared her images and ideas about holes in her face. Consequently this generated a rich enquiry for the group about holes

in their bodies and logical, imaginative and playful theories and encounters relating to their own biology.

A broad exploration about 'keeping well' through exercise, eating a variety of healthy foods, digestion and hand washing led to a powerful interest in germs!

'My step granddad has got like a big tummy, he



eats lots of chocolate'

You get all fit at dancing classes'

'It went in my mouth and then it got tested by my stomach and later it comes out as a poo or a wee'

'My mummy says coins make your hands all dirty'



Trina gathered children's knowledge of germs through the sharing of their ideas and representations of germs through theory drawings.

'You can't see germs, they are so tiny'

The arrival of a germ disclosing kit in nursery provoked a deeper fascination about the invisible notion of germs. Applying the disclosing potion on their hands and revealing germ areas under the ultra violet light offered an exciting and realness to the group's theories about germs.

'I can see blue and white germs'

'When you have bugs on your hands they have eyes,

'Germs hate hot water!'

Some complex ideas and metaphors arose through the group's representations of germs such as good and bad germs. They began to make sense of germs in a scientific way.



Susie's morning key group

Sounds of the Garden



Last year's summer assignment sparked children's curiosity about holes in the environment. Outside in our nursery garden children noticed holes as hiding places, homes for creatures, gaps and spaces, shapes and patterns and places to catch and send sounds. We have also been using digital resources outside (iPads, cameras) as part of our research into digital media outside to support children's

learning.

This reflective account will focus on one particular curiosity of the children which is related to sound making.

"A sound can be loud or it can be really quiet, medium quiet"

Children's Research

Children have been interested in the power of making sounds with their voices into holes,



particularly hollow vessels and piping. Some sounds were about communication and connecting with friends sending messages which mirror and echo. We used straws as smaller sound pipes to send messages to plants and hear what they were telling us.

"He's sad, he don't have a home. I love you, I miss you, you were out of a supermarket (message to the marigolds).

"He says he wants some water so he can grow, and food to be strong" (message from the marigolds)





We thought about sounds we could send to help the plants. The group made new compositions with their recorded sounds and have begun to think about mark making and theory drawing to represent sound and offer an additional context for meaning making.

Children used an app on the tablet to record their sound

"Plants grow when the sing starts to go."

"They like dinosaur sounds."

"Drinking sounds."

"Princess sounds."

Children's ideas are complex in form, rich in expression and creativity if we choose to work in ways that are supportive and conducive to children's thinking and enquiry.



Lou's afternoon key group

Stories of friendliness, exchange and energy



This group of friendly learners have developed a strong spirit of collaboration and identity as a team; which has supported their confidence as learners and explorers. They have approached every encounter with energy and vitality that reflects their strategies to express

ideas and make-meaning of the world around them.

Each child has their unique interests and passions that they bring into nursery; volcanoes, buses, sticks, Spiderman, music and more and more and more. The children have shared these curiosities together and now weave them into a group identity.



That group enquiry has been activated most effectively with questions about the natural world, trees, seeds, flowers and creatures.

The children develop ideas through their understanding of relationships; *"it's a*



mommy one", "a papa one", "they are the poorly babies". The subjects of their research have feelings and desires, "it's happy, it wants to dance", "it frightened".

This group have developed a love of counting, comparing and measuring, using their new skills in their explorations and play. When describing something as big, the children jump up and stretch their bodies, *"that's like me, I'm big, no bigger". "That 2 and 4 and 7 and 8", "no it's 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8".*

This group are full of confidence to explore as active learners and to be adventurous, curious and confident to take risks when experiencing new things. Exploring the world they have developed sensitivity and respect for nature and a love for the outdoors.



Helen's afternoon key group

Family and friends



We observe children so as to notice what they see, to become engaged with their enquiries and to find out their questions.

Early in the autumn term the group began to share a common interest of working alongside each other within their

key group.

The idea of relationships has played a significant role in the how the children have grown as a group and provided a unique opportunity for the group to develop a special identity.

The group have also been part of an unique experience as we have 2 sets of Sisters! The sense of what it means to be in a group as well as being in a family has raised some interesting ideas and



suggestions.

"We're the same so we have to be next to each other"

"You're not the same 'coz your hair is different"

"You're not wearing the same clothes"

"Yes but we have to be here like this"





These ideas and questions are important to the group as they try and work out what being in a group means and how we need to 'be' within a group.

Engaged in their shared passion, the group has evolved their social learning through processes of collaboration in the outdoor environment. The use of digital media has offered the children a creative and expressive language inspiring new enquiries to evolve from original ideas.

This does not occur through happenchance but through a pedagogical approach which embraces the sociality of learning where children learn within a context with adults who listen to children, value their ideas and act upon their theories in future situations of learning.



Kay's afternoon key group

Story making story telling



In the beginning as part of our nursery tradition children were engaging in stories they knew about; traditional, fairy stories, new and old stories. They constructed environments in the block area of stories they knew and ones they had developed for themselves. Children retold familiar

tales and stories, speaking the stories and acting them out in small world contexts and dramatically.

The children began to think about how stories were structured and how they have beginnings middles and ends. For example:

"Once upon a time in the nursery garden..."

"The cat will say hello to the princess."



"My cat is going to jump on the moon to sleep and live happily ever after."

Children explored stories that were happy and sad, and also stories that created debate about fairness and justice.

"Rumplestiltskin was happy and sad he



helped but he wanted to take the baby"

"They said yes they would help eat the bread, that's not fair they would not help with the work"

It is possible that children as young as three and four can become story makers and tellers. They express and understand the emotional affordances and the joy that stories can bring. They can create stories that are joyful, sad, and humorous as well as create opportunities to explore situations of right and wrong. At the same time children evolve the technical skills of storying, their purposes and functions for example story settings, characters and structures.



Sue's afternoon key group

Exploration of self and friends



The vibrancy and energy within the group has provided infinite opportunities to explore their many curiosities and theories, often through interactions and physical engagements. Following a thread of their own growth and development, research ideas have

Small, careful and considered gestures and exchanges within the group were juxtaposed with more flamboyant and exaggerated movements. Height and making one's self taller, higher and bigger became increasingly important and has empowered the group to consider and develop their personal-social interactions and competencies. Jumping spaces were created to support their enquiries;



The evolutionary journey of ideas was deepened through the graphical representation of experiences. Enquiries surrounding the feelings and actions of their bodies whilst moving was explored through this language;

"...that is my body – my hands and feet... I've done my round carefully" (a description of how he connected the



different parts of his body).

By engaging physically with an enquiry, research rich with empathy and kindness was created and ideas and theories explored. Comparisons between personal experiences of growth and that of seeds to grow and develop were formulated;

"it says...put the seed on the ground, then it grows"

"Arthur says it doesn't want to grow – why did you say it Arthur? – it will grow eventually" , "I have growed"

"guess what, I'm 4", "you're not 4 enough".

By recognising and valuing the sense of empathy that children possess, as educators we are enabling the building of self-esteem and self-belief, therefore enabling the collaboration and integration of ideas.



Susie's afternoon key group

Sounds of the Garden



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been using digital resources outside (iPads, cameras) as part of our research into digital media outside to support children's learning.

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quiet, medium quiet."



Children's Research

The group had a particular fascination with pipes as communication tubes to send and receive sounds to. The yellow pipe in the jungle was a curious place to talk to friends,

"I found a hole, there's another one at



the bottom, it talks to each other".

Pipes became connected, friends working together to make networks and tunnels.

Smaller pipes continued to be places to send and receive sound to seeds and plants.

Children drew their ideas about what sound looks like.

" We need different sizes."

" You get this one, it will take ages till when the grown up's come."

"We need to take all these pipes out round the world."

"The seeds are talking it's saying hello."



Thank you for supporting the school's ongoing school improvements; through developing and embedding the school values, principles and aims.

Our aim is to create and celebrate a community of learning where there are endless possibilities to discover together through curiosity, creativity and play.

The school is a place of citizenship - being part of a strong community

Our school is an integral part of the community. It is a place where every child, family and educator has both a right and responsibility to contribute to and support their community. *We define community as being both immediately located around the school and stretching out to include the wider global community. We believe that citizenship encompasses people and cultures as well as environments and ecologies. That as citizens, children should be creators of culture not passive consumers.*

The school is a place of research

Working together to question and improve, our school is a place where children, families and educators work together to improve the quality of learning and teaching experiences, therefore promoting high aspirations, levels of well-being, good dispositions and achievement for all. *We believe that a researching school relies on developing a 'listening pedagogy, where all protagonists collaborate and co-operate in reflective dialogue, respecting and encouraging different opinions and ideas, being open to change and innovation.*

The school is a place of partnership with children and families

We consider that a genuine, respectful and active partnership between children, their families and the school are central to successful learning. *This principle is interrelated and underpins the other school principles and reflects our relational and community ethos. Partnership involves parents, families and staff working together to benefit children in relationships where each recognises, respects and values what the other does and says. Partnership involves responsibility on both sides.*

The school is a place where every child is viewed as competent and full of potential

All children have an innate ability to learn from birth. We believe that every child has an incredible capacity to learn and develop through engagement with others and with the world. *This principle has inclusion and diversity at its heart and is made visible through the pedagogical approaches of the school. Where learning is seen as crossing the borders that separately define disciplines, curriculum and concepts.*

Promoting these values

- ◇ Pro-social behaviours
- ◇ Self-regulation
- ◇ Collaboration
- ◇ Equality
- ◇ Compassion
- ◇ Creativity and innovation
- ◇ Confidence
- ◇ Exploring the world
- ◇ Effective communication
- ◇ Resilience and perseverance

