

At Hailesland Early Years Centre there is a strong emphasis on developing children and families' health and wellbeing. The centre offers advice, support and individual guidance for children and their families to stimulate positive outcomes and to encourage them to make healthy and progressive life choices.



Recognition of the importance of the environment that they provide has recently been considered by staff, followed up by training which in particular relates to Froebel's theory. This was followed up by training which in particular related to the thinking of Friedrich Froebel: play being the dominant and direct model of learning. Staff believes that children learn best through self-

created learning and natural resources. By allowing children to access a child centred environment with a wide range of open ended resources, they have enabled children to enhance their individual interests, learning and skills. This journey began in the Seedling Room, the provision for the youngest children.

The aim when developing the Seedling Room was to provide children with a setting that would capture their interests, allow them the opportunity to develop their creativity and sense of self and to stimulate their natural curiosity of the world around them. The naming of the 'Seedling Room' was chosen to convey the idea that babies are small seeds and that with the correct care and provision they will thrive and grow to their full potential. The ethos of the centre is to promote children's health and wellbeing by offering heuristic environments that can provide children and their families with positive outcomes.

From reading research and the thinking of both Froebel and Montessori it was clear to the centre that they wanted to provide children with more than just a room full of interesting objects. They recognised that babies are predisposed to learn from the very beginning as they are naturally curious about the world around them and of the

people who engage with them. They wanted their children and families to feel welcome and included, and for them to take ownership of the Seedling Room.

They researched theorists, visited other early learning and childcare services and gathered staff views on the development of the room. The feedback was collated and suggestions from parents and children were included. The room was then stripped back to a blank canvas as they choose neutral interior paint and wooden flooring. Staff changed plastic play materials to natural ones, open-ended and specific to the interests and stage of development of the children. A calm, safe and secure ambiance was created in the re-design of the room which allowed children to relax and to explore the newly enriched learning and play environment.

The centre sought guidance from [‘Pre-Birth to Three’: Positive Outcomes for Scotland’s Children and Families, Learning and Teaching Scotland \(2010\)](#) and the learning resource [‘What Happens in the Baby Room?’, Community Playthings \(2012\)](#) to gain further knowledge and expertise on the importance of both the environment and the role of the adult. They sourced a bespoke centre piece which cleverly incorporated climbing apparatus into a cosy den. The idea for this came from staff observations of the children who would be using the room, as they had observed that babies can often climb before they can walk. This idea was central to the ethos they wanted to permeate the room. Froebel advocated that we need to allow children to be at the stage that they are at in their learning and to support them to build new skills from what they can already do.

Once the design of the room was finalised and the children and their families returned, staff observed how the room functioned as the families began to use it.

In Hailesland Early Years Centre, parents were central to the success of the project. They encourage all parents to be included and emphasise how much they value their input and commitment. This is a whole staff team approach and follows the principle that Froebel believed in, in recognising the child, their family and their community. This has been well-established practice for the centre, but staff now have a better understanding of where the principles came from. As a team they continue to develop and improve the learning and childcare that they provide.



The provision is now delivered to the youngest children in the centre is more focussed on respecting children's learning and ensures that the environment is stimulating with open ended opportunities. The staff are now responsively attuned to what children need in order to flourish. They focus their role on observing children more accurately and planning next steps in

learning led by children's skills and interests. As a result, children are more engaged in play, confidently express their interests and are actively involved in the planning of their next steps in learning. Professionals using the centre and parents have commented on the calm and purposeful ambience when walking into the room. It is evident that children's level of concentration is greater, their communication has become more vocal and they appear more relaxed and settled and ready to explore. Management and staff have recognised that this new approach would benefit children of all ages and the centre plans to introduce it in all playrooms.

Staff continually reflect on their role and how they can develop skills to support the children and families in our centre. They plan to continue to visit other settings to further develop their knowledge and skills as well as accessing further training. Staff within other rooms within the centre are now adopting similar principles in their provision.

Staff are striving to provide children with an enriched environment. This includes having a deeper understanding that their playrooms represent more than just a space or resource that children can use, but gives emphasis to the importance of the experiences that children and adults share.