

Play Projects in Reception

Play Projects began after some inspirational training from Gregg Bottrill, an Early Years expert, author and advocate for the magic of children's play. Over the past few years, our approach has grown and developed, and it is now a much-loved part of our curriculum.



Play Projects link closely to an enquiry-based learning model, supporting children's executive function as they learn to plan, organise ideas and follow their own thinking. Projects allow children to explore their interests deeply while also developing early skills in communication, collaboration, creativity and problem-solving.

How Play Projects Work

Each Play Project starts with an idea or theme.

This might be:

- chosen by the children,
- inspired by classroom interests, or
- linked to our class topic.

Play Projects are flexible.

A project might last:

- a single session, where children explore two or three areas, or
- several weeks, giving everyone the chance to visit all areas and build a more in-depth project.
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Children can work independently, in pairs, or as part of a small team, depending on their interests and the nature of their project.



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The 8 Elements of Play Projects

The elements can be completed in any order and revisited as often as needed. Play is fluid, not linear.

- Questions - Children begin by sharing the questions they have about their chosen theme. As a class, we group ideas together and talk about what we already know and what we want to find out.
- Finding Out - We look for answers using books, photographs, models, and child-friendly internet pages. Children explore freely and discover information that helps their project grow.
- Expert In - We invite 'experts' who can help deepen our knowledge. This might be someone from the class, another adult in school, a parent or family member, or sometimes a visitor from our community.
- Draw - Children create drawings linked to their idea or project. They often use real images, books or models as reference, building early observational drawing skills.
- Write - Children write something connected to their project. This could be a label, a caption, a sentence—or whatever fits their stage of development.
- Make - Using recycled materials, craft resources or our woodwork area, children design and create something linked to their project idea.
- Build - With construction resources such as Lego, blocks or K'Nex, children bring part of their project to life in 3D.
- Review Our Learning - At the end of a project (or partway through), children talk about what they have made, what they discovered and the skills they used. This reflection helps them understand their learning journey.



Sharing Our Projects

Whenever we complete a larger Play Project, we love to invite parents in to celebrate the children's hard work. Seeing the whole project displayed, from questions to creations, gives families a wonderful snapshot of the deep learning that happens through play.