

How to support children/students during child/student-led play

There are three types of play typically seen at Ravenswood:

- **Child/student led**, the child chooses the activity they wish to engage with and engages with it how they choose.
- **Adult guided**, the child chooses an activity from a selection provided by the adult, the adult guides the child to engage in an activity or tries to direct the play slightly e.g. suggesting to a child “Do it like this” or “Can you tap the drum softly?”
- **Adult directed**, the adult chooses an activity for the child to engage with and directs how they should engage with it e.g. if playing with water, “Sam, fill the bottle to the top.”

The ways to support child/student led play

Intensive interaction approach:

The child plays with the toy or activity of their choice. The adult copies the actions, movements and sounds of the child during their play.

- Dependent on the child be aware of your proximity to them to ensure you are not heightening anxieties.
- Always try and position yourself to their side and not in front of them.
- If you sense the child is increasingly anxious stop copying, and try again at a later time.
- If a child does a dangerous activity or behaviour ignore it and don't copy the interaction.

Outcomes:

This helps the pupils to understand that others respond to them through their play and their interactions are valued, it increases shared attention, turn taking and understanding the conventions of non-verbal communication.

Commenting approach

The child chooses an activity or toy of choice and plays how they wish. The adult comments on what the child is doing e.g. “pig in bath”, “plane flying”, “doll eating”.

- The level of language used should be 1 key word more than their usual receptive language.
- For example if a child usually uses one word/symbol to speak e.g. “doll”, when commenting you would say “doll dancing” to describe the play they are doing.
- If a child usually uses 3 words to speak e.g. “man in car” the adult would model “man in red car” to further their speech.

- You can use this approach for specific language objectives such as early concepts, basic adjectives e.g. big and little.

Outcomes:

This helps to provide pupils with the words needed to describe their actions and play to help them to categorise and label objects. It also provides a language rich environment for the pupil.

Modelling approach:

The child chooses the activity or toy they would like to play with/ do. The adult selects a similar toy or activity to do e.g. if the child is playing with a train, adult also selects a toy to play with.

- Adult plays alongside the child engaging with the train and modelling a more appropriate activity to play with the train.
- For example if the child is just spinning the wheels of the train demonstrate pushing the train forward really fast so that you can see the wheels continuing to spin when it leaves the carpet;
- If the child is only moving the train around in a circle, adult to demonstrate a range of paths the train could take or going forwards and then backwards in a circle. Adult can make some comments on the actions they are doing to further support modelling play.

Outcomes

This provides children with a model of how they can move their own play forward, and gives them ideas of what to do next in their play, but still working towards their own interests.

Ways to develop structured play and communication

Table Top Identiplay:

This is directed play with the adult as the play teacher and is a way of supporting the development of non directed play sequences.

- The table is divided into two using coloured tape, to give clearly denoted areas for the child's toys and the adult's toys.
- Two chairs are placed face to face on either side of the table.
- Each person has a pack of identical toys (about 2-3 that are of interest and can be linked in story form), and a typed script (see appendix 1) giving the layout of toys on the table and what the adult will say and do, plus a start and finish tray.
- Adult sets up the two sets of toys, one set in each of the areas on the table.

- Model the play script watching and waiting for child's engagement
- Repeat and accentuate as necessary, showing pleasure and fun
- Place toys in the finished tray.
- As the child starts to relax and model, then develop their own play sequences then the adult can move to the role of play prompter.
- Generalise by beginning to imitate actions and sounds and adding to the play but revert to mirroring/ repeating if the child finds the additions unwelcome.

Outcomes

This is used to increase the repertoire of toys with which the child will play, teach the usual use of a toy or object, teaching a play sequence that can be generalised and to help the child develop their own play sequences.

This teaches children to improve shared focus, imitation, parallel play, play dialogue, narrative structure and flexibility.

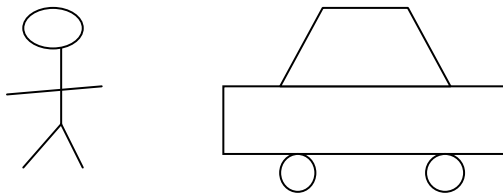
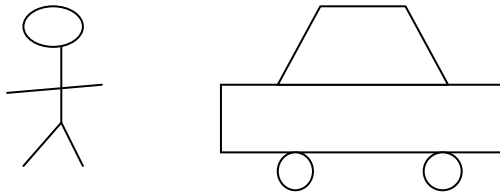
Appendix 1: Table-top identiplay exemplar script

Play bag- car washing

Kit: 2 cars

2 play people

Lay out:



Script:

- “Car, washing car.”
(moving play person round car as if he was cleaning car)
- Repeat the above but add phrase while doing the action.
“Car, washing car, splish splash, splish splash.”
- Stand play person in front of car saying
“Washing finished, bye bye car.”
- Drive car to finish box with “Brrrrm brrrrm.”