The Importance of Learning Through Play

How Everyday Exploration Builds Lifelong Skills

For young children, play is far more than a way to pass the time. Building a tower, exploring a basket of objects or pretending to cook all offer opportunities to think, communicate and discover. Through meaningful, hands-on experiences, children make sense of the world around them at their own pace.

What Children Learn Through Play

Play supports different areas of development at the same time, often in ways that are not immediately visible.

Communication and Language

Children listen, use gestures, try new words and share ideas as they play alongside others. An adult can build on these exchanges by naming actions and listening carefully.

Thinking and Problem-Solving

Stacking, sorting and experimenting encourage children to make predictions, try again and find solutions.

Social and Emotional Skills

Through play, children begin to take turns, express feelings and build positive relationships. These early experiences are the beginnings of cooperation and empathy.

Physical Development

Lifting, carrying, balancing and manipulating objects strengthen both large and small movements.

Five Ways to Encourage Play

1. Follow Their Interests

Notice what captures your child's attention and allow time to explore it fully. There is no need to hurry them towards the next activity.

2. Offer Open-Ended Materials

Blocks, fabric, containers and natural objects can be used in many imaginative ways. A simple object can have a new purpose each time it is used.

3. Welcome Repetition

Repeating an activity helps children practise skills and deepen their understanding. What seems familiar to adults may still be full of discoveries.

4. Join In Without Taking Over

Describe what you notice, listen and offer ideas without directing every step. A thoughtful question can be more useful than showing the "right" answer.

5. Celebrate the Process

Focus on curiosity and effort rather than expecting a perfect finished product. There is rarely just one way to build, paint or create.

Learning Through Play at Dovecote

At Dovecote Nursery, play-based learning is at the heart of our approach. We provide thoughtfully prepared, open-ended experiences that invite children to explore, investigate and make their own discoveries.

Our educators observe children's interests, introduce language and gently extend their thinking, while allowing their ideas to shape where play leads.

When children are given the freedom to play, everyday moments become meaningful learning opportunities.