

Planning for Learning through Spring

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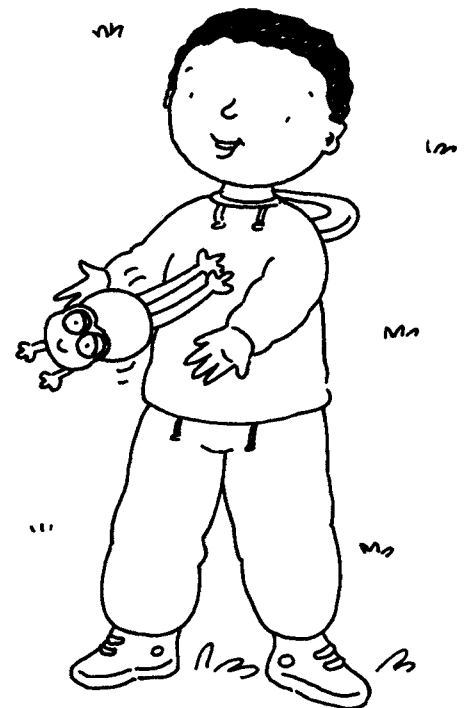
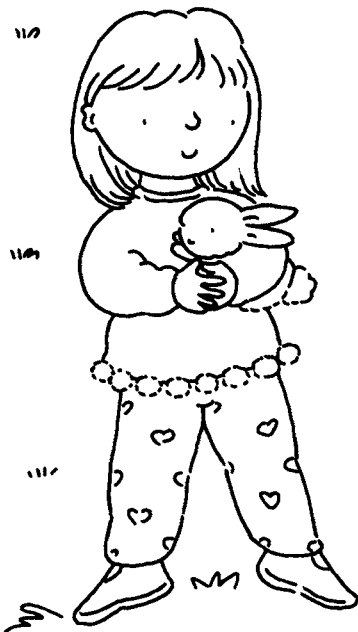
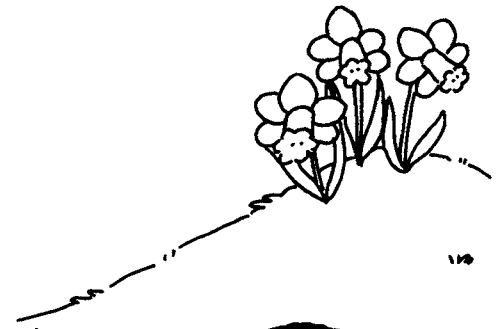
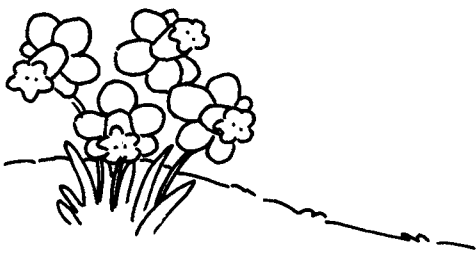
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Making plans

Child-friendly planning

The purpose of planning is to make sure that all children enjoy a broad and balanced experience of learning. Planning should be flexible, useful and child-friendly. It should reflect opportunities available both indoors and outside. Plans form part of a planning cycle in which practitioners make observations, assess and plan.

Children benefit from reflective planning that takes into account the children's current interests and abilities and also allows them to take the next steps in their learning. Plans should make provision for activity that promotes learning and a desire to imagine, observe, communicate, experiment, investigate and create.

Plans should include a variety of types of activity. Some will be adult-initiated or adult-led, that focus on key skills or concepts. These should be balanced with opportunities for child-initiated activity where the children take a key role in the planning. In addition there is a need to plan for the on-going continuous provision areas such as construction, sand and water, malleable materials, small world, listening area, role-play and mark-making. Thought also needs to be given to the enhanced provision whereby an extra resource or change may enable further exploration, development and learning.

The outdoor environment provides valuable opportunities for children's learning. It is vital that plans value the use of outdoor space.

The UK Frameworks

Within the UK a number of frameworks exist to outline the provision that children should be entitled to receive. Whilst a variety of terms and labels are used to describe the Areas of Learning there are key principles which are common to each document. For example they advocate that practitioners' planning should be personal based on observations and knowledge of the specific children within a setting. They acknowledge that young children learn best when there is scope for child-initiated activity. In addition it is accepted that young children's learning is holistic. Although within the documents Areas of Learning are presented separately to ensure that key areas are not over-looked, within settings, children's

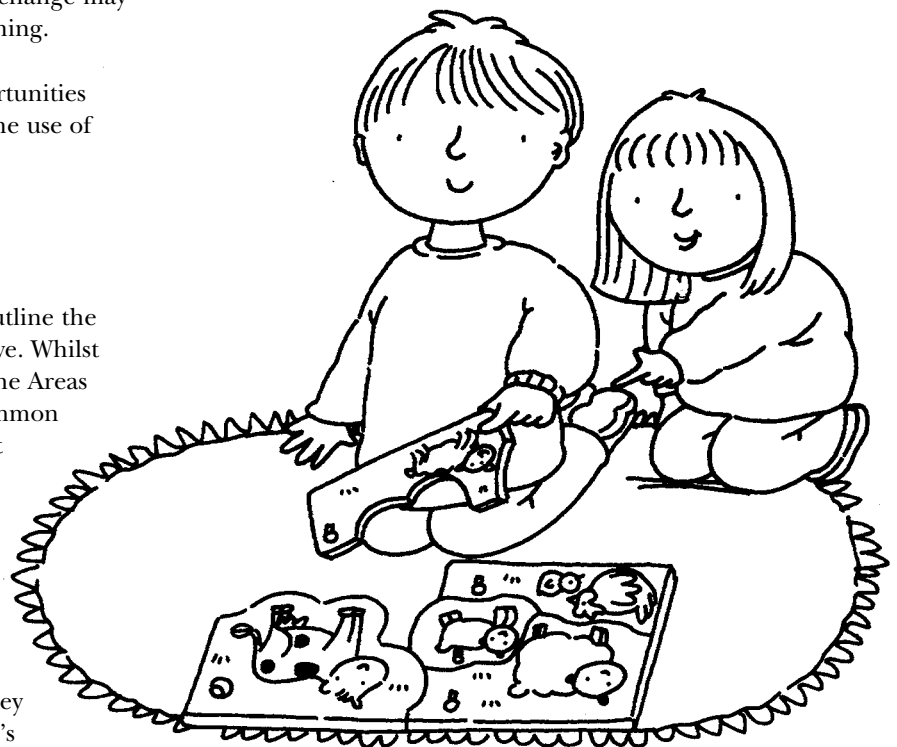
learning will combine areas. Thus the Areas of Learning are perhaps of most use for planning, assessment and recording.

Focused area plans

The plans you make for each day will outline areas of continuous provision and focused, adult-led activities. Plans for focused-area activities need to include aspects such as:

- Resources needed
- The way in which you might introduce activities
- Individual needs
- The organisation of adult help
- Size of the group
- Timing
- Safety
- Key vocabulary.

Identify the learning and the Early Learning Goals that each activity is intended to promote. Make a note of any assessments or observations that you are likely to carry out. After carrying out the activities, make notes on your plans to say what was particularly successful, or any changes you would make another time.



Making plans

A final note

Planning should be seen as flexible. Not all groups meet every day, and not all children attend every day. Any part of the plan can be used independently, stretched over a longer period or condensed to meet the needs of any group. You will almost certainly adapt the activities as children respond to them in different ways and bring their own ideas, interests and enthusiasms. The important thing is to ensure that the children are provided with a varied and enjoyable curriculum that meets their individual developing needs.

Using the book

Read the section which outlines links to the Early Learning Goals (pages 4-6) and explains the rationale for focusing on 'Spring'.

The chart on page 7 gives an example format for weekly planning. It provides opportunity to plan for the on-going continuous provision, as well as more focused activities.

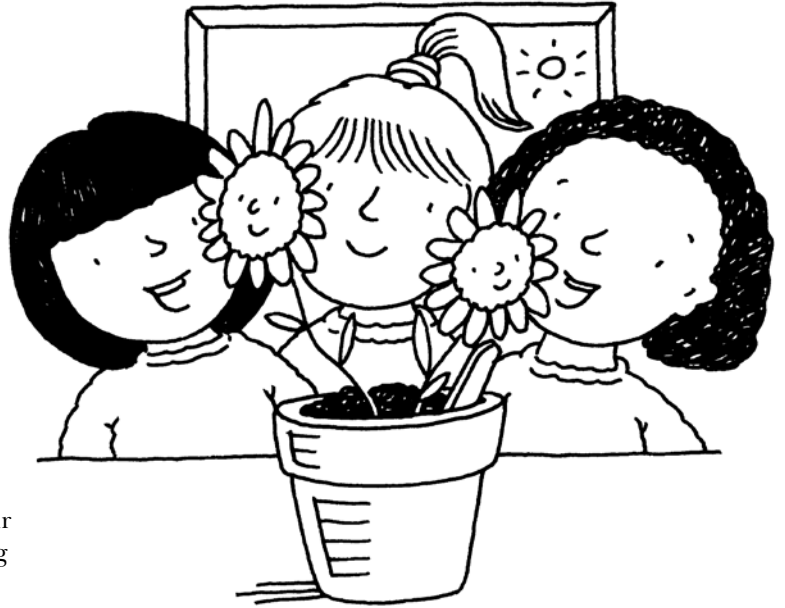
Use pages 8 to 19 to select from a wide range of themed, focused activities that recognise the importance of involving children in practical activities and giving them opportunities to follow their own interests. For each 'Spring' theme, two activities are described in detail as examples to help you in your planning and preparation. Key vocabulary, questions and learning opportunities are identified. Use the activities as a basis to:

- Extend current and emerging interests and capabilities
- Engage in sustained conversations
- Stimulate new interests and skills.

Find out on page 20 how the Spring activities can be brought together within a Spring Parade.

Use page 21 for ideas of resources to collect or prepare. Remember that the books listed are only suggestions. It is likely that you will already have within your setting a variety of other books that will be equally useful.

The activity overview chart on page 23 can be used either at the planning stage or after each theme has been completed. It will help you to see at a glance which aspects of children's development are being addressed and alert you to the areas which may need greater input in the future.



As children take part in the activities, their learning will progress. 'Collecting evidence' on page 22 explains how you might monitor each child's achievements.

There is additional material to support the working partnership of families and children in the form of a reproducible Family Page found inside the back cover.

It is important to appreciate that the ideas presented in this book will only be a part of your planning. Many activities that will be taking place as routine in your group may not be mentioned. For example, it is assumed that sand, dough, water, puzzles, role-play, floor toys, technology and large scale apparatus are part of the ongoing early years experience. Role-play areas, stories, rhymes, singing, and group discussion times are similarly assumed to be happening in each week although they may not be a focus for described activities.

Using the 'Early Learning Goals'



The principles that are common to each of the United Kingdom curriculum frameworks for the early years are described on page 2. It is vital that, when planning for children within a setting, practitioners are familiar with the relevant framework's content and organisation for areas of learning. Regardless however, of whether a child attends a setting in England, Northern Ireland, Scotland or Wales they have a right to provision for all areas of learning. The children should experience activities which encourage them to develop their communication and language; personal, social, emotional, physical, mathematical and creative skills. They should have opportunities within literacy and be encouraged to understand and explore their world.

Within the Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (2014), Communication and Language; Physical Development and Personal, Social and Emotional Development are described as Prime Areas of Learning that are 'particularly crucial for igniting children's curiosity and enthusiasm for learning, and for building their capacity to learn, form relationships and thrive' (page 7, DfE 2014). The Specific Areas of Learning are Literacy, Mathematics, Understanding the World and Expressive Arts and Design.

For each Area of Learning the Early Learning Goals (ELGs) describe what children are expected to be able to do by the

time they enter Year 1. These goals, detailed on pages 4 to 6, have been used throughout this book to show how activities relating to 'Spring' could link to these expectations. For example, for Personal, Social and Emotional Development one aim relates to the development of children's 'self-confidence and self-awareness'. Activities suggested which provide the opportunity for children to do this have the reference PSE1. This will enable you to see which parts of the Early Learning Goals are covered for a given theme and to plan for areas to be revisited and developed.

In addition, an activity may be carried out to develop a range of different Early Learning Goals. For example, when the children make invitations for the Spring Parade the children will write words and develop both their literacy and fine motor skills. In addition, when decorating the invitations, they will use their imaginations aiding the development of Expressive Arts and Design. Thus, whilst adult-focused activities may have clearly defined goals at the planning stage, it must be remembered that as children take on ideas and initiate their own learning and activities, goals may change.

The Prime Areas of Learning

Communication and Language

Listening and attention: children listen attentively in a range of situations. They listen to stories, accurately anticipating key events and respond to what they hear with relevant comments, questions or actions. They give their attention to what others say and respond appropriately, while engaged in another activity. (CL1)

Understanding: children follow instructions involving several ideas or actions. They answer 'how' and 'why' questions about their experiences and in response to stories or events. (CL2)

Speaking: children express themselves effectively, showing awareness of listeners' needs. They use past, present and future forms accurately when talking about events that have happened or are to happen in the future. They develop their own narratives and explanations by connecting ideas or events. (CL3)

'Spring' provides many opportunities for children to enjoy listening, understanding and speaking. When the children look at a picture of a Spring-time scene or listen to a story about a seed developing into a plant they will talk about events in the past, the present and the future. When

Example chart to aid planning in the EYFS

Week beginning:	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
FOCUSED ACTIVITIES					
Focus Activity 1:					
Focus Activity 2:					
Stories and rhymes					
CONTINUOUS PROVISION (Indoor)					
Collage					
Construction (large)					
Construction (small)					
ICT					
Imaginative play					
Listening					
Malleable materials					
Mark making					
Painting					
Role play					
Sand (damp)					
Sand (dry)					
Water					
CONTINUOUS PROVISION (Outdoor)					
Construction					
Creative play					
Exploratory play					
Gross motor					
ENHANCED PROVISION (Indoor)					
ENHANCED PROVISION (Outdoor)					



Theme 1: Detecting Spring

Communication and Language

- Look at a large picture of a Spring-time scene (trees in blossom, Spring flowers, children playing outside). Discuss what children can do in Spring that they cannot do in Winter. Talk about how children feel in the Spring. What are their favourite activities? Why? (CL3)
- Read a tale about a plant growing such as *The Tiny Seed* by Eric Carle. Talk about the changes that take place. Discuss the differences between Spring and Winter and Spring and Summer. (CL1)

Physical Development

- Choose a nice day to use outdoor toys that were put away for the winter. Afterwards, encourage children to talk about the experience. (PD1)
- Encourage children to be hungry caterpillars searching for food as they crawl and slither through hoops and larger apparatus with holes. (PD1)

Personal, Social and Emotional Development

- Make a spring picnic role play area. Securely fix a tight string at ceiling height across a corner of the room. Cut across an unopened roll of green crepe paper every 1-2 cm. Without unrolling these sections encourage the children to help you to twist them. Then shake them open to make long twisty fronds. Dangle these from the string, packing them fairly closely, and introducing paler greens, pinks and whites. The end result is a weeping blossom tree which encloses an area. Place a picnic rug and tea set on the floor. Children love the feel of moving through the tree curtain to reach this special place. (PSE3)

Literacy

- Begin a collection of words that end in 'ing'. Encourage the children to add their own words and to enjoy reading them. (L1, 2)
- As a group read *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* by Eric Carle. Make a group version based on children's favourite Spring foods. (L1, 2)

Mathematics

- Use the group's version of *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* to practise counting. Ask questions such as 'How many apples did the caterpillar eat?' (M1)
- With the help of children make a number frieze with a Spring theme: one blossom tree, two lambs, three baby rabbits, four eggs in a nest, five ducklings on a pond etc. On each picture display clearly the corresponding numeral. (M1)



Understanding the World

- Choose a fine day to go for a Spring walk. Look for signs of Spring such as nests, leaves emerging from the earth, buds on twigs and minibeasts. Take photos. Once back inside encourage children to describe what they saw and to record their observations in drawings and paintings. (UW 2, 3)
- Use bulbs planted the previous term to show children how bulbs form shoots and grow into plants. Explain that you are going to look at the plants each day. Make a timeline for the bulbs. Begin with a large display showing a plant pot and green shoots cut from sugar paper. Each week add other pots which show how the shoots have grown and the leaves and flowers starting to appear. (UW2)
- Make nests (see activity opposite). (UW2)
- Discuss festivals which children in the group celebrate during Spring. These might include Easter (Christian), Baisakhi (Sikh), Holi (Hindu), Passover (Jewish). Invite parents to come and talk to children about the celebrations. (UW1)

Expressive Arts and Design

- Mime being a bulb changing during Spring. Encourage slow, controlled movement. (EAD2)

- Use buds found in pot-pourri to make collages of trees in blossom. Encourage children to look at real trees in blossom (or use pictures) and to describe the colours and scent. (EAD1)
- Observe real daffodils. Encourage children to look closely at them, to count petals and leaves and explain that they will be making accurate models of the daffodils. Use egg cartons or bun cases for the trumpet, yellow card petals, green card leaves and green straws. Write children's names on the leaves before arranging them in a large vase. (EAD1)

Activity: Being bulbs

Learning opportunity: Moving with control and imagination. Listening to instructions.

Early Learning Goal: Expressive Arts and Design. Being imaginative.

Resources: Large space.

Organisation: Whole group in a large space.

Key vocabulary: Bulb, shoots, bud, flower.

What to do: Talk to children about Spring being a time of new life. Remind them of the signs of Spring they saw on their walk. Explain that the children are going to be bulbs, turning into shoots, growing buds and finally bursting into flower. Talk about the kinds of shapes children will need to make themselves into.

Ask children to be a bulb (tightly curled up), a shoot (long and thin), roots growing under ground (wiggle toes), in bud (clenched fist), in flower (open hands, tall and stretched). As children try each stage praise those who make controlled, clear shapes.

Talk to the children about how plants grow over time and that things happen gradually. Repeat the mime but this time tell the story of the bulb, encouraging children to listen to the details and to change gradually and smoothly.

Activity: Making nests

Learning opportunity: Recognising features of nests, selecting materials and building nests.

Early Learning Goal: Understanding the World. The world.

Resources: Pictures of common birds and birds' nests; old nests; a range of materials for making nests including made and natural materials.

Organisation: Small group.

Key vocabulary: Twigs, grass, moss, nest, soft, safe, warm.

What to do: Show children either pictures of birds' nests or examples of old nests. Remind them that they should never touch or disturb a nest which is in use. Explain that the old ones are no longer used by the birds.

Talk about the types of birds that might have lived in the nests. Look closely at the nests, the materials they are made from and how they are made. If nests were seen on the Spring detecting walk, talk about them.

Show children a range of materials they might like to use to try making a nest. Encourage them to think about a particular bird. How big is it? Where might it build its nest? What materials would it use? Show children how twigs can be bent into a nest shape.

Ask the children to make a nest. If old nests or natural materials such as twigs and leaves are used remind children to wash their hands thoroughly after finishing the activity.

Display

Display the tree collages on a notice board. Place the nests on a table in front of the board. On another board begin the bulb timeline display described above. Place the vase of model daffodils and growing plants nearby.

Begin a display of the books read during the week and the group's version of *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*. Over the coming weeks encourage children to find other books for each new theme.