

Planning for Learning through Weather

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Contents

Making plans 2-3

Using the 'Early Learning Goals' 4-6

EYFS Planning Chart 7

Theme 1: Sunny days 8-9

Theme 2: Rain and clouds 10-11

Theme 3: Stormy days 12-13

Theme 4: Ice, frost and snow 14-15

Theme 5: Measuring and forecasting the weather 16-17

Theme 6: Using the weather 18-19

Bringing it all together – Weather day 20

Resources 21

Collecting evidence of children's learning 22

Activity overview 23

Home links 24

Family page Inside back cover



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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.

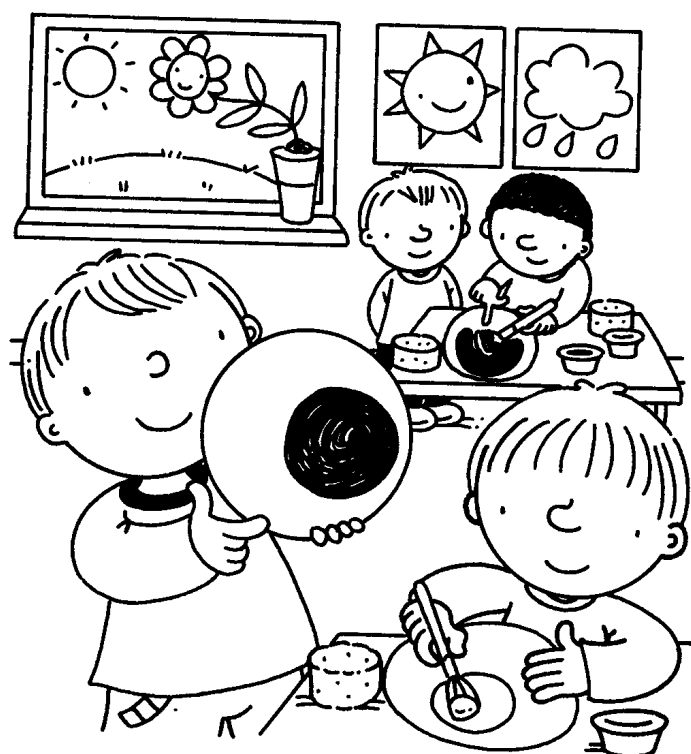
A final note

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 '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 (2012), 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 4, DfE 2012). 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 'Weather' 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 painting outside with large brushes and water the children will develop control and co-ordination which is part of PD1. In addition, they will consider the way water evaporates, aiding their understanding of the world. 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)

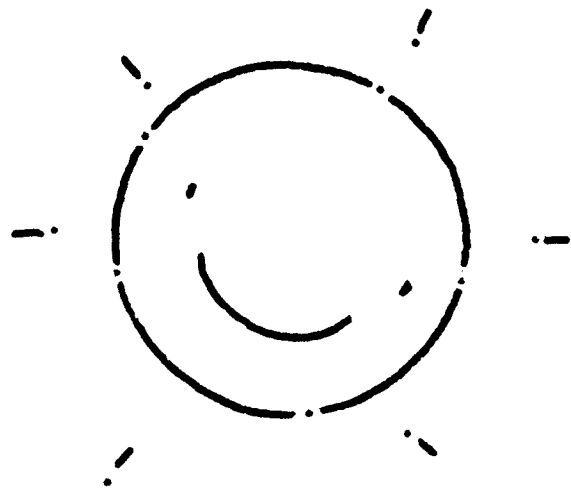
'Weather' provides many opportunities for children to enjoy listening, understanding and speaking. When parents talk to the children about skiing trips or ways they like to use the

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: Sunny days



Communication and Language

- Introduce the theme of weather by showing the group a collection of clothes. Talk about which clothes would be appropriate for different weather. Play the weather game (see activity opposite). (CL1, 3)
- Talk about the kinds of things that children enjoy doing on sunny days. Has anyone been to the seaside? (CL1, 3)
- Enjoy sharing *Winnie at the Seaside* by Korky Paul and Valerie Thomas or another tale about a trip to the seaside. Encourage children to realise why people prefer it to be sunny when they are at the seaside. (CL1, 3)

Physical Development

- Enjoy using outdoor equipment on a sunny day. Remind the children of the importance of sun protection, such as sun hats. Afterwards talk about the changes that happen to our bodies when we are active. (PD1)
- Enjoy using outdoor sand trays. Encourage children to build sandcastles and to imagine that they are at the seaside. (PD1)

Personal, Social and Emotional Development

- Look at pictures of sunny days in books, on postcards and in travel brochures. Talk about the precautions people should take when they go out in the sun (wear sun hats and sun cream, drink water). Make posters to remind people to wear sun hats. (PSE2)

Literacy

- Make a collection of words that rhyme with sun. Use the words to make a sunny poem. (It could be a nonsense rhyme!) (L2)
- Give each child a sun cut from orange paper. Ask them to draw what they enjoy doing most on a sunny day, and to write a sentence to explain the pictures. Stick the suns into a large, group book. (L2)

Mathematics

- Work with a small group. Give each child a circle of orange card surrounded by ten lolly sticks as rays. Ask children, in turn, to roll a die with digits one to three and to remove the corresponding number of rays. After each turn, count how many rays remain. The game finishes when a sun has lost all its rays. (M1)
- Repeat the sun game but this time begin with the sun and add the rays. After five turns, see who has the most rays. (M1)
- Look at pictures of sunsets that include circular suns.

Talk about the shape of the suns. Look through magazines for objects that are circular. Encourage children to use the word 'circle' and to notice their size. (M2)

Understanding the World

- On a sunny day encourage children to investigate how shadows are made. **Remind children never to look directly at the sun.** (UW2)
- Make sunlight catchers. Give each child a circle of white card about 15cm in diameter. Provide shiny paper, metallic ribbons, glitter glue and sheets of cellophane/acetate to stick on to the circles. When dry, hang the catchers in a sunny window. Encourage children to describe the colours reflected in the sun. (UW2)
- Place a flowering plant on a sunny windowsill so that you can see how plants grow towards the light. If appropriate, plant seeds or bulbs to show the importance of sun for growth. (UW2)

Expressive Arts and Design

- Use paper bowls to make sun bonnets (see activity opposite). (EAD1)
- Provide large paper circles and red and yellow paints. Show children how to mix a variety of oranges. Enjoy covering the circles in orange dots. (EAD1)
- Make shadow puppets by cutting animals and people from greetings cards and attaching them with tape to lolly sticks. Use them outside on a sunny day to make up stories and to retell familiar ones. (EAD2)

Activity: The weather game

Learning opportunity: Collaborating to decide which clothes to wear for different weather.

Early Learning Goal: Communication and Language. Listening and attention. Speaking.

Resources: Collection of clothes and accessories for different weathers for children to dress up in (for example sun glasses, Wellington boots, safe umbrella, large swimming trunks, woollen mittens, rain coat); cards with a picture and word

for each weather (sun, rain, snow, wind, fog); picture books showing people dressed for different weathers.

Organisation: Whole group sitting on the floor.

Key vocabulary: Sun, rain, snow, wind, fog, weather, cold, hot, dry, wet, names for the clothing and accessories.

What to do: Remind children about routines for taking turns and listening such as looking at the person who is speaking. Look through a selection of picture books that depict people dressed for different weathers. Focus on the clothes, and talk about why they are or are not appropriate for the weather. What do the children like to wear when it is sunny?

Show the group the weather cards. Ask children to say the weather each card shows. Invite a child to select a card and to put on two things that would be good to wear in that weather. As a group, decide whether the chosen clothes/accessories are sensible. Repeat this with the rest of the group so that everyone is dressed in clothes for different weather.

To the tune of 'Jingle bells' sing:

Jingle bells, jingle bells,
Jingle all the way,
Oh what fun it is to clap,
On a sunny, sunny day.

On 'sunny, sunny', any child dressed for the sun should stand up and clap. Repeat the verse for other weathers and with a range of actions such as smile and jump.

Activity: Sun bonnets

Learning opportunity: Decorating paper plates to make sun bonnets.

Early Learning Goal: Expressive Arts and Design. Exploring and using media and materials.

Resources: Paper bowls (to fit a child's head); felt pens, glue, tissue paper, ribbon or thick wool; hole punch.

Organisation: Small group.

Key vocabulary: Sunny, sunbonnet, names for colours and materials used; protection, protect.

What to do: Ask children why it is important to wear hats in the sun. Talk about the need to protect the back of the neck.

Give each child a paper bowl. Ask them to use the felt pens and scrunched up tissue paper to decorate

their sun bonnet. When complete, punch a hole at each side and attach ribbons or wool that can be tied securely under children's chins.

Display

Cover a board with sky blue wallpaper and add an orange border around the edge. Use this as the background for painted suns and your sunny poem. In a nearby window hang the sunlight catchers. On a table put out storybooks that show sunny days, the group's big book and some large dolls or teddies wearing a selection of the sun bonnets the children made, reminding people to wear hats in the sun.

