

Planning for Learning through Winter

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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 also 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 Areas of Learning are presented separately within each framework, in reality children's activities and explorations cross over and combine with different subject areas. Thus the Areas of Learning are perhaps of most use

for planning, assessment and recording to ensure that key areas are not overlooked.

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.



Making plans

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 book

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

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 'Winter' 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 'Winter' activities can be brought together within a 'Winter fair'.

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.

Health, safeguarding and e-safety

Throughout this book there are references to the Internet. Please ensure that whenever ICT is used directly with children, risk assessments have taken place. Ensure your setting has all e-safety procedures in place and that your staff is well-acquainted with them. Ensure your equipment is safe at all times, with control software installed, and strict safe search for Internet. As appropriate to their age, you must ensure you explain to the children how to use the Internet safely, reminding them regularly how to stay safe online.

It should also be recognised that the content of websites may be changed and all sites should always be checked thoroughly before being used directly with children.

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 ‘Winter’ 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 use cornflour dough for the snow theme, they will develop their fine motor skills for Physical Development. Also, they will use their creative skills as part 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)

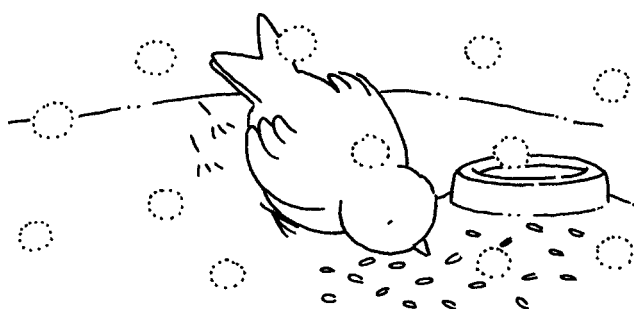
Understanding: children follow instructions involving several ideas or actions. They answer ‘how’ and ‘why’ questions about their experiences and in response to stories or events. (CL2)

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)

‘Winter’ provides many opportunities for children to enjoy listening, understanding and speaking. There are a wide range of books featuring Winter and these can be used to stimulate interest in the chosen themes, encouraging children to listen and to talk. When using the role-play Winter clothes stall and looking at pictures of Winter scenes, children will have the opportunity to listen, to speak and to ask questions. When playing the ‘put the nose on the snowman game’ and making bird feeders, children will follow instructions. Talking about signs of Winter, how to look after Winter clothes and desires for the Winter Fair, will encourage children to express themselves and to show awareness of listeners’ needs.

Physical Development

Moving and handling: children show good control and co-ordination in large and small movements. They move



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 Winter

Communication and Language

- Look at a large picture of a Winter scene (trees with no leaves, people dressed in warm clothes, people sledging). Discuss what children like to do in Winter. Talk about how they feel in the Winter. What are their favourite activities? What do they do when it is dark in the evenings and they cannot play outside? (CL1, 3)
- Enjoy sharing stories and picture books that feature Winter. What signs indicate that the season is Winter? (CL1,3)

Physical Development

- Pretend to be very cold. What can we do to get warm? Play an action game based on a traditional favourite: 'Simon says keep warm by... running on the spot, clapping, stamping, blowing on hands, rubbing hands, rubbing toes' and so on. Encourage children to listen carefully – remember that if the instruction does not begin with 'Simon says', it should be ignored! (PD1)

Personal, Social and Emotional Development

- Discuss ideas for a Winter themed role-play area such as a clothes shop for warm hats and gloves or a café with Winter menus. Involve children in finding resources and encourage them to enjoy cooperative play. Re-use these areas for Theme 2 (Winter foods) and Theme 5 (Winter clothes). (PSE3)

Literacy

- Make a collaborative big book about Winter (see activity opposite). (L2)
- Use the letters in 'Winter' to make words. Use the words to write phrases/sentences. Other words may need to be added. (L2)

Mathematics

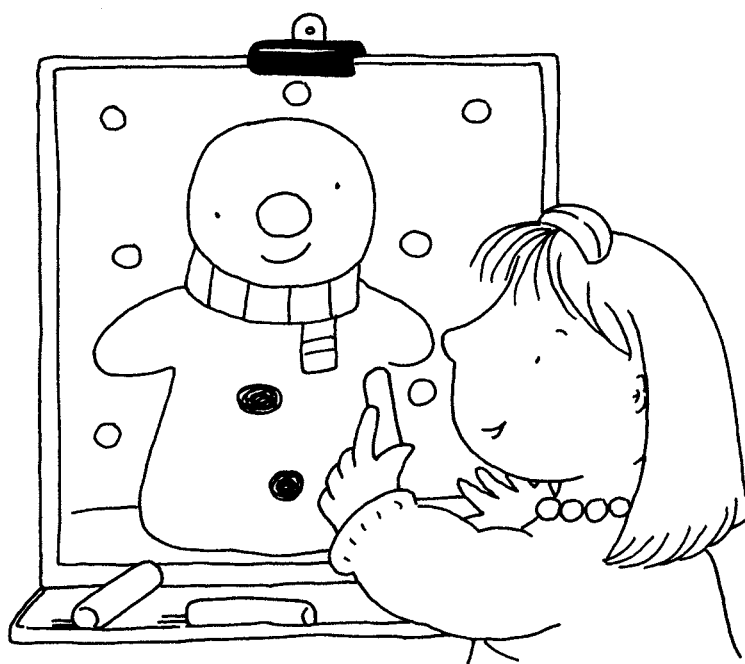
- Choose a Winter theme for a display to reinforce awareness of a chosen number. For example if the number chosen is five, make a display showing the numeral 5, and a variety of collections of five objects: snowflakes, snowmen, winter hats, robins and so on. Involve different groups of children in creating each collection to contribute to the display. (M1)
- Use a collection of Winter objects or pictures to reinforce positional language (see activity opposite). (M2)
- Use the words made from letters in 'Winter' for sorting activities. How many words begin with n? How many words contain three letters? (M1)

Understanding the World

- On a walk look for signs that Winter is coming/has come. Show the children that some trees no longer have leaves. Look under stones for any remaining minibeasts. Look for birds and talk about ones which have flown away until the Spring. (UW2)
- In small groups go outside and ask children to pick out wintry scenes. Help the children to take photographs with a digital camera. Back inside involve children in printing their favourite photo. (UW3)
- Discuss festivals and special days which children in the group celebrate during Winter. Invite parents to come and talk to children about the celebrations. (UW1)

Expressive Arts and Design

- Use runny paint to 'blow' winter trees. Show the children how to use a brush to place a large blob of runny paint at the bottom of a piece of paper. Provide each child with a straw and show them how to hold the straw at a low level, almost horizontal and blow the paint along. Changing the direction of the blowing will produce forks in knobby branches as the Winter tree grows. (EAD1)
- Prepare pictures for a group Winter book. (EAD2)
- Use blue, white and black paint to make as many shades and tones as possible on 30 x 30cm pieces of paper. When dry, display the squares as a giant winter patchwork. (EAD2)





Activity: The object line

Learning opportunity: Developing and reinforcing the use of positional language within the context of Winter.

Early Learning Goal: Mathematics. Shape, space and measures.

Resources: A collection of objects associated with Winter, such as a paper snowflake, a scarf, a plastic robin, a mitten and a toy snowman. A selection of Winter pictures mounted onto A4 cards (if possible one per child).

Organisation: Whole or part group, carpet-time activity.

Key vocabulary: Positional language such as ‘next to’, ‘between’, ‘behind’, ‘in front of’.

What to do: Show the collection of Winter objects to the children. Talk about each one and make sure that the children are familiar with them.

Place the objects in a row. Use positional language as you talk about the line: ‘The snowman is next to the robin. The scarf is between the snowflake and the mitten.’ Use questions to encourage children to use the same language: ‘What is next to the scarf?’. ‘What is between the snowflake and the snowman?’.

Give each child a prepared card to hold and ask the children to stand in a row. Ask them to describe their positions. ‘Who is next to the Snowman picture?’. ‘Who is between the reindeer and the bird table?’.

To extend the activity, see if children can move into the right places: ‘Can you make the snowman be between the cracker and the woolly hat?’.

Ask the children to stand in a line, one behind the other, so you can include the language of ‘in front of’ and ‘behind’. This can become quite demanding: ‘If the snowman and the scarf change places, who will be next to the reindeer?’.



Activity: A Winter book

Learning opportunity: Writing about own ideas for a collaborative Winter book.

Early Learning Goal: Literacy. Writing.

Resources: A big book; blue sugar paper; chalks; hair-spray or commercial fixative spray; larger paper; card; staples or a needle and wool.

Organisation: Whole group introduction followed by small group work over the following days.

Key vocabulary: Book, cover, page, words, pictures, title, author.

What to do: Look at some big books. Show the children where the author’s name is and talk about the cover. As you read the book draw attention to the illustrations.

Explain to the children that they are going to work together to make a big book of their own. Each child is going to draw a Winter picture which will become part of this special book.

Working in small groups, provide each child with a piece of A4 blue sugar paper and chalks with which to draw.

Encourage children to talk about their experiences of Winter and to develop their own ideas about what to draw. Help children to write a sentence at the bottom of each picture to record the ideas expressed.

To prevent the chalks from smudging, take the pictures to a separate, well ventilated area away from the children, and spray with hair-spray or fixative.

Mount the pictures onto larger pieces of paper and staple or sew them together to make a book. Encourage children to help in preparing a front cover with title and group authorship.

Safety note: If using a needle to sew the book, be extra cautious that children do not get hold of any needles.

Display

Display the Winter book, inviting children and group visitors to enjoy reading it.

Use the collection of Winter objects to form the basis of a wintry interactive display to which children can contribute.

Use labels to reinforce the positional language developed in the activity.