

Waltham Forest Early Years Guidance

This guidance will help you to consider how to develop water provision that capitalises on children's natural affinity for water to develop active, self-led learners, raise confidence and support higher levels of involvement and well-being.

Water play can be a catalyst for building confidence, language, social and physical skills. With time and ample opportunities for water exploration, 2-year-olds can develop new concepts, problem solving and thinking skills, as well as develop mathematical and scientific concepts.



Why?

It's not just about splashing and getting wet. There is no wrong or right way to play with water. Water play supports 2-year-olds to investigate, explore and think, follow their own lines of enquiry, and make choices independently and always get it right. In water play they can be the experts.

When water provision both inside and outside is thoughtfully prepared, giving children free access to a range of carefully chosen, open ended resources linked to children's interests and development, where water is offered routinely in different ways, through water trays, water walls, buckets, tuff trays, and there is plenty of water available, (even better if there is free access to a tap) then children's levels of involvement can soar, along with their language development.

Curriculum

Water play can support all areas of the curriculum!

- **Communication and Language.** Water play presents opportunities to introduce a wide range of vocabulary e.g. sieve, bucket, funnel, tube, etc. Describe actions 'pouring, splashing, emptying' and descriptive words 'cold, frothy..'
- **Physical development** by developing fine and gross motor, hand eye co-ordination through squeezing, squashing, pouring, transferring, stirring and scooping. Children will develop increasing accuracy as they scoop and pour from large containers and scoops to smaller bottles and tubes using pipettes and smaller equipment.
- **Personal, Social and Emotional Development.** Water play is relaxing and fun. 2-year-olds can develop their own ideas, grow in confidence, play independently or collaborate with their peers. They make choices, self select resources and learn how to cooperate, share equipment and take turns.
- **Understanding of the world** where 2 year olds manipulate materials, explore how water runs, pours, drips, flows, splashes. They investigate how water moves, how different objects behave in water e.g. floating, sinking, water wheels moving.
- **Maths.** Water introduces 2-year-olds to concepts such as capacity - full / empty, more / less and supports them to make comparisons with quantity. 'I have more water in my bucket than you.'

- **Expressive Arts and Design.** Water engages with the imagination and should be used in role play – fire stations, car wash, washing babies, being plumbers.

How?

Organisation

- Provide open shelving / storage boxes for 2-year-olds to select their own resources when they want.
- Think less is more. Do not over fill shelves / resource boxes. How many sieves do the children really need?
- Water should be available both inside and outside. Outside provision should provide opportunities for larger, messier, wetter movements where children can make puddles, create muddy areas and water plants freely.
- Sand and water can be positioned together and resources shared.
- Provide as much space as possible for water play.
- Mops, cloths, dustpan, and brush so children can help clear up spills.

Resources

- Items to fill, pour, empty and squirt, including bottles of different sizes, funnels, pipettes, pipes, watering cans, tubes, wooden spoons, spades, scoops, whisks, bubble wands, water wheels
- Large buckets, containers, pulley systems and guttering to transport water and explore shape, capacity and weight
- Tyres and crates to balance guttering
- Natural materials – wood, logs, pine cones, sticks, pebbles, rocks, shells, acorns and corks
- Add bubbles, food colouring, ice cubes...



- Small world figures and vehicles – sea creatures, dinosaurs, mini beasts, cars with ramps and tunnels.
- Large paint brushes, rollers, sponges and cloths
- Tea sets

Experiences

- Present water in different ways e.g. alongside the outdoor water tray, develop a water wall with guttering, tubes and funnels, a water pump, several large buckets of water and a builders tray with pebbles, shells and water placed on the ground close by.
- Make water exploration real and meaningful by adding a real baby bath or small tub, towels, soap, sponges, washing lines, pegs and scrubbing brushes to bath babies, wash baby clothes and hang them up to dry.
- Paint fences with large paint brushes, rollers and buckets of water.
- Paint patterns on chalk boards, walls or ground with fine paint brushes.
- Water the garden with child sized watering cans or spray bottles.
- Wash toys or develop a car wash role play.
- Sweep puddles with brooms.

Adult role

- Be playful. Play alongside 2-year-olds modeling language, ideas and skills.
- Listen. Tune into a child/ren's thinking, comments, observations and build on them.
- Ask questions, make suggestions and extend thinking 'Tell me about... I wonder what will happen if... How could we do that?'
- Know when to intervene in a child's play and when to step back.
- Provide interesting, challenging, puzzling materials that promote curiosity and active learning.
- Observe what children do.

Involving parents/carers?

- Share the benefits of water play on child development and well-being. Explain what children are learning when they play with water.
- Suggest water based activities that children can play at home.

- Ask parents to provide spare sets of clothes and explain that it is ok for children to get wet when exploring water.
- Ask if parents / carers can donate resources e.g. wooden spoons, unwanted pots and pans, whisks, buckets.

Reflection: How effective is your water provision?

Regularly monitor the water provision both inside and outdoors to ensure all children can be independent, challenged, imaginative, experiment, collaborate in their play and develop language skills through moving and doing.

Reflective Practice Through a Lens

You may find it useful to film children's play in the water area, then as a team, consider the following questions:

- What did you notice about how the children are using the water area?
- What worked well? How and why did it work?
- Do 2-year-olds move quickly from the water area or do they stay and immerse themselves for lengths of time?
- What is the behaviour like?
- What didn't work and why? How could it have been improved?

Can 2-year-olds freely access a variety of water resources without asking an adult for help?	
Are resources open ended, stimulating and supportive of active play and exploration?	
Is water play offered daily throughout the year? If not, then why is this?	

Is the water provision inside different from the outside water provision?	
Do adults play alongside 2-year-olds, feeding language, modelling new skills and different ways to use resources?	
What is working well?	
What needs developing?	
What resources do I need?	
What resources can be donated by parents or found in nature?	
Are there any training needs?	