

Group planning at Knutsford Childminding

I look after 8 children through the week – all part time – aged between 1.5 and 9 years old.

The children all like different things and learn in different ways, so my group planning has to be very flexible. Every week we talk with the children about what they might like to do next week – we check we have enough resources for them to use and we make a suggested activity list and a shopping list.

Having worked with children for nearly 20 years, I know that they might change their minds about what they want to do, so my group planning is not detailed because I do not want to waste my time.

It is simply an outline of the things we might cover with the children through the week if they are interested.

Any group planning that I write sits alongside my routine planning eg.

- Monday – outing to toddlers / lunch / free play / planned activities / school run / homework / planned activities and free play / tea / home time
- Tuesday – outing to the park / lunch / free play / planned activities / school run / homework, planned activities and free play / tea / home time etc...

As you can see, group planning slots into different parts of the day and is there to be accessed by the children when they are ready.

The main purpose of group planning is to teach children new things. It works alongside individual planning – which is always the most important and powerful type of planning you should write.

When putting together my group planning, as I have said, I talk to the children and find out what they want to do. I also consider each child's current abilities and learning styles and make sure I am meeting their needs. For example during December we will be focussing on Christmas activities –

- Child A is a very sensory learner so we will make a sensory Christmas themed treasure basket for him to explore and in week 2 we will explore Christmas smells;
- Child B loves to cut and stick at the moment so we will offer him opportunities to make collages using old Christmas cards and a present list which can be cut out of catalogues.

The other children will also be given the opportunity to join in with these activities – but when I am planning them I have specific children in mind. This is known as 'differentiating' planning and I note what children have actually done / enjoyed on their individual play plans, writing the odd observation as we go along and involving parents as fully as I can.

Here is some example planning and my evaluations for the first 2 weeks in December...

2.12 - Week 1 -

- **Why?** - the children are all getting excited about Christmas
- **Activity ideas** - write Christmas present lists - younger children to use catalogues to make collages; start Advent calendar (colouring Santa); treasure basket
- **Outside activities** - garden tidy up for winter; make Christmas decorations for fence
- **Book of the week** - Santa comes to Cheshire (Amazon)
- **Home learning idea** - we are making present lists and parents might enjoy doing the same activity with children. They need old toy catalogues and glue - the children who are not old enough to cut with scissors can tear.
- **Main EYFS links** - PSED / C & L / PD (fine motor)

Other group activity ideas - look at lights and Christmas trees - in town and compare with Trafalgar Square, Manchester lights etc.

Comments - the children were excited to start Christmas activities. Some of the little ones have already been to see Santa and told us stories about presents they have received. We went into town to look at the lights and used the internet to find other Christmas lights pictures - very much enjoyed.

9.12 - Week 2 - St Lucia's Day (Sweden)

- **Why?** - we want to teach the children about celebrations in different countries
- **Activity ideas** - see Child Care magazine planning - focus on sensory - light (candles in windows, candles that smell etc) and other Christmas smells
- **Outside activities** - continue winter tidy up; add glitter to the sand which can be used with glue to make 'light' pictures
- **Book of the week** - 'Spot's First Christmas' - use the Spot puppet and other props to bring the book alive and focus on language and Christmas words eg present, sleigh, Santa.
- **Home learning idea** - share children's Christmas word lists with parents so they can focus on the same language at home.
- **Main EYFS links** - C & L / A & D

Other group activity ideas - make Christmas calendars for parents

Comments - the children loved sensory experiences - we bought some smelly candles which they loved sniffing and the glittery sand made lovely pictures to brighten up the garden. Parents said they enjoyed seeing children's Christmas words and reading them at home - very good feedback.