



Alsager Highfields Primary School

Mighty oaks from small acorns grow

EYFS Policy

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Chair of the Governing Body:

Signature:

AUSP

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Alsager Highfields Early Years Foundation Stage Policy

This document provides an overview of the policy, philosophy and practice in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) and how we provide the best possible start for our young learners at Alsager Highfields Primary School. It outlines our intentions in the EYFS, how we implement this in our provision and how we meet the statutory requirements (2024). At Alsager Highfields, all EYFS staff deliver the EYFS curriculum through immersion in high-quality teaching alongside an enriched environment. Our philosophy is to nurture every child's curiosity and enthusiasm for learning, developing both skills and confidence as they take their first steps on their own unique journey of lifelong learning.

Intent

The intent for our children is to provide them with the best possible start to their school life, support their full potential, and ensure they have the opportunity to develop lifelong skills in a safe environment where they can thrive. Children should leave reception well prepared for their next steps in education, ready to tackle new challenges with confidence and a positive mindset. We aim to engage our pupils in a stimulating environment, with learning led by the children yet carefully organised and managed by adults. Our curriculum has been thoughtfully devised to support the EYFS (2024) framework and is responsive to individual starting points and needs. We innovate our children to take the lead in their own learning, encouraging confidence to explore new ideas, think about problems, take risks, make links, and seek challenges. At Alsager Highfields we develop high levels of engagement, curiosity, collaboration, and cooperation. Children become highly adept at managing their own behaviour in the classroom and in social situations. We encourage children to express themselves with confidence in a meaningful way, respecting the opinions and values of themselves and others.

Implementation

Our approach is influenced by practitioner knowledge and experience of child development, the work of educationalists, researchers, psychologists, who have

guided our knowledge of how young children learn and how adults can support their learning.

"Knowledgeable practitioners appreciate that adult-led learning offers a child something different from, but complementary to, child-led learning and it is one without the other that leads to an impoverished educational experience." Fisher, 2016.

At Alsager Highfields, provision is underpinned by a complementary relationship between adult-led, adult-initiated, and child-led learning. We are ambitious in our approach using a continuous cycle of observation and assessment, planning/teaching, alongside structured and systematic lessons and guided work. Observations are not onerous and do not take time away from being in the provision with the children. Adjustments to resources, activities, and approaches are highly personalised, rooted in strong relationships between children and practitioners.

Linked Provision

Each day begins with a self-registration process, independent lunch selection and a morning song. Routine is important for children in the Early Years and is embedded into our provision, along with opportunities for children to develop their characteristics of effective learning as outlined in the EYFS handbook 2024.

1. Playing and exploring - Children investigate and experience things, and "have a go."
2. Active learning - Children concentrate and keep on trying if they encounter difficulties, and enjoy achievements.
3. Creating and thinking critically - Children have and develop their own ideas, make links between ideas, and develop strategies for doing things.

"Continuous provision transcends all areas of learning and provides children with the opportunity to demonstrate the three characteristics of effective learning. Children are given the freedom to make independent choices and are encouraged to be active learners and take control of their own learning" Alistair Bryce-Clegg (2013)

Alsager Highfields typical reception daily timetable

Morning	Organisation
8.45am	Welcome at the door
8.50am	Self-registration/lunches/news/morning song
9.00am	RWI phonics
9.35am	Literacy shared input
9.45am	Continuous provision (balance of focused, child initiated, and independent time within the indoor and outdoor environment)
10.40am	Environment reset/snack
11.00am	Maths shared input/continuous provision
12pm	Lunch
Afternoon	Organisation
1.05pm	Story/Topic shared input
1.30pm	Continuous provision
2.30pm	Environment reset
2.50pm	Story/celebration of learning/poems
3.10pm	Home time

Whole Class Teaching

At Alsager Highfields, we strongly believe that children in the Early Years thrive through a combination of structured, direct teaching and a mix of both structured and unstructured play. Whole class teaching happens as a minimum four times a day as a whole class covering the specific areas of phonics, literacy, maths, and topic work. Phonics is delivered through our systematic phonics programme Read, Write Inc. We base our literacy teaching around Ruth Miskin's Talk Through Stories which aims to grow children's vocabulary drawing on the best of children's literature. Maths teaching is supported through the delivery of Maths No Problem which links EYFS to the rest of the school. Topics are taught through a blend of structured schemes like Kapow for Understanding the World and PSHE, hands-on experiences, and using literature to connect knowledge with real-life experiences.

Adult-led focused groups

Short focused groups are planned for writing, reading, and maths and immediately follow a shared input. These sessions are planned with care, meeting the needs of all children, using prior knowledge of the child's learning experiences, and the non-statutory guidance from the EYFS document 'Development Matters', 2023.

Continuous Provision

"To continue the provision for learning in the absence of an adult." Alistair Bryce-Clegg, 2013.

In the EYFS we aim to create a neutral and natural environment which offers advantages for children's development such as supporting emotional well-being and encouraging problem-solving. Indoors and outdoors resources are organised to develop children's skills in personal interaction and exploration and children are provided with opportunities to engage in uninterrupted, self-directed play. Resources are carefully selected to meet the requirements of our curriculum and development needs of the children in order to enhance the potential for new learning and consolidate prior learning. Continuous provision includes well stocked, high quality resources to support learning which is always available and can be enhanced to reflect children's interests - enabling discovery, investigation, and exploration. Continuous provision transcends all areas of learning and provides children with the opportunity to demonstrate the characteristics of effective learning. Children are given the freedom to make independent choices, encouraged to be active learners and look after the resources and environment.

Assessment

Within continuous provision our assessment strategy is 3-fold:

1. Observation

Throughout continuous provision observation forms a fundamental aspect of the pedagogy of EYFS at Alsager Highfields.

"Young children demonstrate language, mathematics, science, creativity, physicality - sometimes all within one activity - and the task of the practitioner is to make sense of what is seen, to recognise any significant steps in learning that may have taken place and to identify where help and support are needed to make further progress" Jan Dubiel, 2014.

Observation and responding to children's thinking inform our planning of enhanced experiences and opportunities, how we create our environment for thinking, the strategies the adults use to extend learning (modelling, scaffolding, questioning, discussion, shared sustained thinking), and how we capitalise knowledge of children's interests to ensure high levels of engagement. Adults take note when a child does or says something that demonstrates progress or skill in a particular area.

2. The Leuven scales

Alongside the use of observation as an assessment tool, we also use the pioneering work of Professor Ferre Laevers (1980s) to understand how focused and comfortable the children are in our setting. The scales of well-being and involvement act as a measure of deep learning. Using the scales has an empowering impact on ensuring our learning environment is highly effective.

The 5-point scale measures:

Well Being - refers to feeling at ease, being spontaneous and free of emotional tensions and is crucial to good mental health. It is linked to self-confidence, a good degree of self-esteem, and resilience.

Involvement - refers to being intensely engaged in activities and is a necessary condition for deep-level learning and development.

These scales can be found in the appendix. A continuous cycle of observation, assessment, and planning is embedded throughout our EYFS provision.

Summative Assessments

In addition to the continuous cycle of observation and formative assessment which informs each child's next steps, summative assessments are carried out for language and communication using the Welcomm screening, phonic development, the stable order principle in number, and an assessment of each child's stage of development for each of the 7 areas of learning. These take place termly and inform planning of subsequent teaching and learning.

The role of the adult

Research shows that progress will be significantly enhanced by the effective support and role models of adults within a high-quality learning environment.

At Alsager Highfields we understand the importance of the role of the adult to support shared, sustained thinking. Within our setting, interactions between children and adults will look like this:

- Tuning in to what is happening or a child's thinking.
- Showing genuine interest.
- Respecting children's own decisions and choices.
- Inviting children to elaborate.
- Recapping on what has happened so far.
- Offering personal experience.
- Clarifying ideas.
- Reminding.
- Using specific praise e.g., that is a good idea because...
- Offering an alternative viewpoint.
- Speculating/using 'I wonder if...'

Knowledge and experience of staff is valued at Highfields and of particular importance in the EYFS, as research supports the idea that the qualifications of teachers in early years are correlated with better outcomes for children:

"Research consistently shows that the qualifications of early childhood educators are positively related to children's learning and development outcomes. In particular, teachers with higher levels of education and specialised training in early childhood education are better equipped to create rich learning environments, facilitate positive interactions, and implement effective instructional strategies that promote children's cognitive, social, and emotional development (Bowman et al., 2000; Pianta et al., 2005; Whitebook et al., 2016). Therefore, investing in the professional development and qualifications of EYFS teachers is crucial for improving the quality of early childhood education and enhancing outcomes for children.

The definition of teaching in the Early Years as stated by OFSTED (2015):

Teaching should not be taken to imply a 'top down' or formal way of working. It is a broad term which covers the many ways in which adults help young children learn. It includes their interactions with children during planned and child-initiated play and activities: communicating and modelling language, showing, explaining, demonstrating, exploring ideas, encouraging, questioning, recalling, providing a narrative for what they are doing, facilitating, and setting challenges. It takes account of the equipment they provide and the attention to the physical environment as well as the structure and routines of the day that establish expectations. Integral to teaching is how practitioners assess what children know, understand and can do as well as take account of their interests and dispositions to learning (characteristics of effective learning), and use this information to plan children's next steps in learning and monitor their progress.

The role of the environment

The importance of each adult to support progression is crucial, however, we equally understand that in times when a child is on their own independent learning journey the environment plays a significant role in development.

"When it comes to what we have and where we have it, then nothing should be left to chance" Alistair Bryce-Clegg, 2015.

At Alsager Highfields, each area of the classroom is organised as a defined learning space including resources that are open-ended to encourage creativity, imagination, and high order thinking skills. For example, the creative area may contain pastels, paints, wax crayons, felt tip pens, chalk, coloured paper etc. Areas of our outside role play are deconstructed with access to blocks, planks, stepping stones, and tyres. These resources can become anything and have unlimited potential. Our timetable allows for long uninterrupted periods of continuous provision that allow the children time to reach a deep level of involvement as they engage, play, investigate, and talk.

EYFS 2024 for school-based providers

At Alsager Highfields, we follow the EYFS Statutory Framework (2024). Within this framework, there are four guiding principles which shape our practice.

These are:

1. Every child is a unique child, who is constantly learning and can be resilient, capable, confident, and self-assured.
2. Children learn to be strong and independent through positive relationships.
3. Children learn and develop well in enabling environments with teaching and support from adults, who respond to their individual interests and needs and help them to build their learning over time. Children benefit from a strong partnership between practitioners and parents and/or carers.
4. Children develop and learn at different rates.

The framework covers the education and care of all children in early years provision, including children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

EYFS learning and development requirements

Our curriculum encompasses seven areas of learning and development. All areas of learning and development are important and interconnected.

Three areas are particularly important for building a foundation for igniting children's curiosity and enthusiasm for learning, forming relationships, and thriving. These are called the prime areas:

Communication and language

Physical development

Personal, social, and emotional development

Alsager Highfields also supports children in four specific areas, through which the three prime areas are strengthened and applied. The specific areas are:

Literacy

Mathematics

Understanding the world

Expressive arts and design

Throughout their time in the Reception Year our children partake in an ambitious curriculum which is designed in a sequential way to ensure progress towards our end of reception curriculum goals and reflects guidance from Development Matters (2023). As previously outlined, our curriculum incorporates learning through play, learning by adults modelling, by observing each other and through guided learning and direct teaching. It is also important to highlight that our plans

are flexible to allow us to respond quickly to children's new interests and/or needs.

Transition

The Early Years Lead facilitates transition before children start school by visiting nurseries, talking with EYFS practitioners, and meeting new starters in their settings. Expectations regarding starting school are clearly communicated to pre-school settings and shared with practitioners. Children participate in both formal and informal transition activities, and there is an informational meeting for parents.

In the final year of the EYFS, as Reception children prepare for the transition to year 1, our focus shifts towards providing a blend of independent and adult-led activities to prepare children for more formal learning. The curriculum remains broad and balanced but gradually becomes more structured to ensure children are ready for the next stage of their education.

Reading in the EYFS

At Alsager Highfields, we believe that all our children can become fluent readers and writers. This is why we teach reading through Read Write Inc (RWI) which is a systematic and synthetic phonics programme. We start teaching phonics in Reception and follow the RWI progression, which ensures children build on their growing knowledge of the alphabetic code, mastering phonics to read and spell as they move through school. As a result, all our children are able to tackle any unfamiliar words as they read. At Alsager Highfields, we also model the application of the alphabetic code through phonics in shared reading and writing, both inside and outside of the phonics lesson and across the curriculum. We have a strong focus on language development for our children because we know that speaking and listening are crucial skills for reading and writing in all subjects.

Comprehension

We value reading as a crucial life skill. By the time children leave us, they read confidently for meaning and regularly enjoy reading for pleasure. Our readers are equipped with the tools to tackle unfamiliar vocabulary. We encourage our

children to see themselves as readers for both pleasure and purpose. Because we believe teaching every child to read is so important, we have a Reading Lead who drives the early reading programme in our school. This person is highly skilled at teaching phonics and reading, and they monitor and support our reading team, so everyone teaches with fidelity to the RWI scheme.

Daily phonics lessons in Reception

We teach phonics for 30 minutes a day. In Reception, we build from 10-minute lessons, with additional daily oral blending games, to the full-length lesson as quickly as possible. Each Thursday and Friday, we review the week's teaching to help children become fluent readers. Children make a strong start in Reception: teaching begins in Week 2 of the Autumn term. Children in Reception are taught to read and spell words using Set 1 and 2 grapheme phoneme correspondences (GPCs), and words with adjacent consonants with fluency and accuracy.

Daily Keep-up lessons ensure every child learns to read

Any child who needs additional practice has daily 1:1 Keep-up support, taught by a fully trained adult. 1:1 lessons match the structure of class teaching, and use the same procedures, resources, and mantras, but in smaller steps with more repetition, so that every child secures their learning. Every teacher who teaches RWI has been trained to teach reading, so we have the same expectations of progress. We all use the same language, routines, and resources to teach children to read so that we lower children's cognitive load.

Shared exploration of language

Reading is the single most important indicator of a child's success.' (OECD 2002)

At Alsager Highfields, we believe the key to success in reading is communication. Research clearly shows that the level of development in language and communication is the greatest predictor of success in later life. Within the EYFS communication and language development is a prime area of learning.

At school children use language to:

- Build strong relationships.
- Communicate their ideas and their feelings.
- Think creatively and critically.
- As a tool for learning.
- Become confident with the written word.

(Julie Fisher, 2016)

The development of a young child's communication and language comes primarily from tuning in to conversations that are meaningful to the child. The preparation for all aspects of written language develops through one to one conversation with a responsive adult. Alongside quality interactions, rich and varied experiences ensure language provides the foundation of thinking and learning. Improving young children's vocabulary is paramount. Exploring and extending pupils' vocabulary is part of everyday teaching. Lessons are planned to enrich vocabulary and incidental opportunities are exploited. Tier two words are explicitly taught, these words are likely to be unfamiliar to young children and yet they are words whose concept our children can identify with and use in normal conversation. At Alsager Highfields we create an "energised verbal environment", a classroom where words are in play almost all of the time - noticed, investigated and savoured - and where every opportunity is taken to add words to children's surroundings.

Shared reading

We read to children every day. We choose these books carefully as we want children to experience a wide range of books, including books that reflect the children at Alsager Highfields and our local community as well as books that open windows into other worlds and cultures. Through experiencing a variety of texts children will become aware of the range of strategies required when reading for different purposes.

The million-word gap

Young children who are read five books a day by the age of 5 have heard about 1.4 million more words than children who were never read to. Ohio State University, (2019)

3 a day

At Alsager Highfields, children are read to at least 3 times a day in reception, in addition to quality picture books provided for home reading. We share books with children for many reasons: enjoying stories together, linking with personal experiences, vocabulary building, developing imagination and language, learning about books. Listening to stories being read and reread helps children to gain insights into meaning and story structure.

Home reading

"It is through others that we develop into ourselves" Lev Vygotsky, 1981

The children take home their decodable reading practice book to ensure success is shared with the family. Reading for pleasure books also go home for parents to share and read to children. We share the research behind the importance and impact of sharing quality children's books with parents. We use RWI resources to engage our families and share information about phonics, the benefits of sharing books, how children learn to blend and other aspects of our provision. Each child receives a pack of RWI sound cards in order to practise their sounds and blending games at home.

Writing in the EYFS

Mark making and speech provide children with powerful tools for thinking, reasoning and problem solving. Time, space and attention is given to children's mark making, mathematical graphics, drawing and writing experiences. Throughout each day, children have opportunities for spontaneous mark making, drawing and writing in both the indoor and outdoor environment. Resources are carefully chosen, well organised and attractively presented, so that the children can decide independently how they want to represent their ideas and which medium would best suit their purpose. High value is placed upon imagination, ideas and self-expression demonstrated by the children. Throughout reception, children often require a lot of support as they embark on the writing process. Initially we use dictation so that children can focus on their transcription writing skills rather than the composition of the sentence. Adults dictate a sentence to

the child, the adult says each word as it is written, pointing out finger spaces and punctuation. The children realise groups of letters make up a word and a group of words make sentences. The children then begin to write the initial sound of a word or a CVC word and the adult continues to support them to hear the rest of the sounds in a word. Children use their 'Fred Fingers' to help them sound out a word (modelled and practiced in phonic sessions). Next more phonetically correct words are written by the children along with common words, such as 'the'. Gradually children are able to write more and more, until eventually they are writing complete phrases.

Maths in the EYFS

Children learn about maths through play and their daily experiences. The more meaningful to them and hands on it is, the better. Our setting is full of mathematical opportunities for children to explore, sort, compare, count, calculate and describe. We provide a safe environment to be creative, critical thinkers, problem solvers and to have a go. Mathematics is identified as one of the specific areas of learning, alongside expressive arts and design, literacy, and understanding the world. Our objective is to ensure that all children develop firm mathematical foundations in a way that is engaging, and appropriate for their age. This means actively learning using resources and activities provided in the environment. We follow the Maths no Problem scheme and maths is explicitly taught daily as short whole class sessions and followed up with small group work within the environment. Our children develop positive attitudes to maths and learn about counting, problem solving, patterns and shapes (among others) through fun games and activities.

Concrete - Pictorial - Abstract Mastery of mathematical concepts in the EYFS takes the following approach:

Concrete - children use concrete objects and manipulatives to help them understand what they are doing.

Pictorial - children build on this concrete approach by using pictorial representations. These representations can then be used to reason and solve problems.

Abstract - with the foundations firmly laid, children move to an abstract approach using numbers and key concepts with confidence.

Maths is everywhere

Here are a few examples of how our environment promotes mathematical development:

- Sand & Water can develop mathematical concepts and language, e.g. heavy, light, empty, full, big, little
- Malleable - dough can develop mathematical language - short, long, fat, thin. Children can make shapes of different dimensions - flat shapes, 3-d shapes.
- Imaginative play - set the table for dinner can develop counting skills. Sorting clothes into different colours, or different types of clothes, e.g. t-shirts and socks will develop knowledge of shapes and colours.
- Physical play can develop fine motor skills e.g. Sorting out a jigsaw, threading beads. Block play or playing with toy cars can help to develop sequencing according to size, colour. Playing with different sized blocks can help to develop an understanding of weight and dimensions. Tidying toys allows children to sort into different sizes and colours. It can also develop mathematical language - first, second, third, how many are blue, which is largest / smallest.
- Outdoors - Children may plant seeds this can develop understanding of time and the life cycle of plants. As the plants grow children use measures and develop mathematical language of size.
- Books & Rhymes - Enjoying stories and rhymes with a mathematical element, e.g. "One-two buckle my shoe" can develop number concepts, knowing direction that the print reads from left to right.

Parent Engagement

Parents are the first and most important influence on their child's development and future outcomes. Children have two main educators in their lives - their parents and their teachers. Therefore, the school and the parents all have crucial roles to play. The impact on a child's education is greater if parents and schools work in partnership. At Alsager Highfields, parents are invited to be involved in every step of a child's journey in education. Beginning with a pre- starting school meeting, followed up with nursery visits and the invitation for their child to attend several 'transition' sessions before the Autumn term commences. We use an online learning journal, 'Seesaw' to communicate and celebrate success made by each child. Seesaw enhances this special time in a child's life and captures

children's experiences as well as monitors development and learning. Text, images and videos can be uploaded by parents to share learning and experiences from home. Every entry helps to create a complete story of a child's time at school. Throughout the year families are invited to events such as Christmas plays, music festivals and Mothers' and Fathers' Day events. We pride ourselves on building positive relationships with the families of Alsager Highfields creating a 'triangle of trust' (Elfer et al.) between children, parents and practitioners. We understand that when parents relinquish part of the care and teaching of their child to the staff in our setting it is a big step. We create an environment that is conducive to interactions where all feelings can be considered. A warm welcome each day often leads to a deeper knowledge and understanding of each child and their family. As stated earlier, 'it is knowing the child and family that opens up endless possibilities for interactions that deepen the emotional bonds between a practitioner and a child, and lead, in turn, to educational opportunities to support and extend learning.' (Fisher, 2016)

Impact

Children enter Key Stage One ready to begin the next chapter of the educational journey. They are equipped with a broad range of knowledge and skills that provide the right foundation for future progress through school and life. In 2017, a 'Study of Early Education and Development: Good Practice in Early Education' was published which outlined 3 themes that underpin effective practice that are aligned with our ethos and development.

At Alsager Highfields we:

1. Tailor practice to the needs of the children - the child is at the centre of our practice. We have a clear vision of what we want to achieve for the children in our care, and these clear goals inform all areas of our practice.
2. Invest in skilled and experienced staff - that support children to reach their full potential.
3. Operate an open and reflective culture - our culture is driven by continuous improvement. We seek out other settings and professionals to learn from, share and reflect practice. We recognise the knowledge and expertise of our own staff and value open discussion and staff consultation; and embedded within our school is a culture of self-evaluation as a means of driving continuous improvement.

Health and Safety

At Alsager Highfields, there are clear procedures for assessing risk (see whole school Health and Safety policy and Child Protection Policy.)

In line with the EYFS statutory framework 2024, at Alsager Highfields we:

- Have a whole school medicine policy whereby prescribed and non-prescribed medicine is administered e.g. calpol. Training is provided for staff where the administration of medicine requires medical or technical knowledge. A written record is also kept each time a medicine is administered to a child
- Give every child a water bottle on entry to the school and provide drinking water available throughout the day alongside fruit and milk.
- Provide a care plan for children with specific allergies and/or medical conditions so that all staff are aware of the steps to be taken should a reaction occur
- Complete a health and safety audit of the areas used by children in the foundation stage and have set procedures which cover identifying, reporting and dealing with accidents, hazards and faulty equipment
- Have termly fire and emergency evacuation practices
- Include how mobile phones and cameras are to be used and stored securely whilst children are in the setting in our whole school safeguarding policy.

Rachel Millichap EYFS Lead September 2024

Appendix

Leuven Scale for Well-Being

Level	Well-being	Signals
1	Extremely low	The child clearly shows signs of discomfort such as crying or screaming. They may look dejected, sad, frightened or angry. The child does not respond to the environment, avoids contact and is withdrawn. The child may behave aggressively, hurting him/ herself or others.
2	Low	The posture, facial expression and actions indicate that the child does not feel at ease. However, the signals are less explicit than under level 1 or the sense of discomfort is not expressed the whole time.
3	Moderate	The child has a neutral posture. Facial expression and posture show little or no emotion. There are no signs indicating sadness or pleasure, comfort or discomfort.
4	High	The child shows obvious signs of satisfaction (as listed under level 5). However, these signals are not constantly present with the same intensity.
5	Extremely high	The child looks happy and cheerful, smiles, cries out with pleasure. They may be lively and full of energy. Actions can be spontaneous and expressive. The child may talk to him/herself, play with sounds, hum, sing. The child appears relaxed and does not show any signs of stress or tension. He/she is open and accessible to the environment. The child expressed self-confidence and self-assurance.

Leuven Scale for Involvement

Level	Well-being	Signals
1	Extremely low	Activity is simple, repetitive and passive. The child seems absent and displays no energy. They may stare into space or look around to see what others are doing.
2	Low	Frequently interrupted activity. The child will be engaged in the activity for some of the time they are observed, but there will be moments of non-activity when they will stare into space, or be distracted by what is going on around.
3	Moderate	Mainly continuous activity. The child is busy with the activity but at a fairly routine level and there are few signs of real involvement. They make some progress with what they are doing but don't show much energy and concentration and can be easily distracted.
4	High	Continuous activity with intense moments. The child's activity has intense moments and at all times they seem involved. They are not easily distracted.
5	Extremely high	The child shows continuous and intense activity revealing the greatest involvement. They are concentrated, creative, energetic and persistent throughout nearly all the observed period.