

**Heuristic play** ( developed by Elinor Goldschmied and discussed in the book *People Under Three*) extends this opportunity by providing the child with a large number of different kinds of objects and containers to explore and play with. As with Treasure Basket play, the structuring of the materials, the place and the time are all crucial to the quality of this special part of the nursery day for children in their second year. Driven by the child's impulse to explore and discover, heuristic play matches the young toddler's fascination with materials, how they behave in space, and how they can be moved from one place to another and scattered, piled or contained.

The resources for heuristic play are special (they are not available in the free-flow environment) and time and space need to be carefully organised and protected by the adult. As with Treasure Basket play, the objects are a large variety of things from "real life", not toys, and the children make their own choices as they explore without interference or guidance, but with the warm and secure presence of adults who interact with sensitivity and care. The resources are carefully selected, and specially organised in draw-string bags, and the children are provided with large tins to support the play.

### **Treasure Basket and Heuristic Play as a context for development and learning in the EYFS**

Treasure Basket and Heuristic Play support personal, social and emotional development by providing the very youngest children with a play experience in which they can make choices and play autonomously, delighting in the exploration of very carefully chosen objects with all their senses and responding with excitement and interest to new items as well as remembering and returning to familiar ones.

Treasure Basket and Heuristic play also help children's developing communication, language and literacy as they vocalise and make sounds, often using a range of communication with each other from the youngest ages including making eye-contact, using facial expression and gesture, and using their whole bodies expressively. However these are not forms of play for the development of conversation between adults and children, nor a context for learning the names of things, as a flow of language would interrupt the child's involvement and exploration.

Children can develop their problem-solving, reasoning and numeracy by exploring matching (one item in each hand, for example, gives a first experience of one and two) and capacity as they fill and empty different containers. The structured materials of Heuristic Play especially give children an opportunity to experience different sizes, to find out about putting things in and taking them out, and at the end an opportunity to sort materials as they tidy up and put everything back into the correct bags.

Children can increase their knowledge and understanding of the world, exploring materials and their properties with all their senses and finding out

about cause-effect relationships (e.g. the noise the chain makes when dropped into the tin).

Their physical development is enhanced with opportunities to develop large and small motor skills by manipulating and exploring a range of objects large and small, developing hand-eye co-ordination to put objects into tins or to move them towards the mouth to taste, chew or suck.

Children's creative development is enhanced as children use their senses to connect to natural materials and enjoy moving and making sounds spontaneously.