

# **Sand and Water exploration is essential !**

Sand is an adaptable natural material which children enjoy touching and being in. Indoors, the younger children have a mini-beach-like experience where they can sit in sand, wallow and feel, using all five senses. This is mirrored in the outdoor experience of sand where they can do deep digging; the sand is coarser to the touch and can be made into castles, or shapes. Sand trays are resourced with natural materials for imaginative play, as well as buckets and spades for digging and building. Often being in the sand prompts children to develop small world and imaginative play, and will involve making structures and using the sand to pretend with. The older children can transport the sand, add water to it, mix it to use it for their imaginative play, cook with it, make a hole to go to another place etc. In the sand, footprints and shoe prints can be carefully examined and various mark-making materials such as combs and sticks can be used to experiment and make patterns.

Water is another natural material that is enjoyable to experience and supports well-being. Children use all their five senses to explore it. Suitable clothing is provided so that the children can experience the rain, splashing in puddles, both on bikes and on foot. They can feel the rain running over the exposed parts of their bodies. Taps/ hose and drainpipes help children to experiment with the sensations of running water, to observe levels changing and how water can cascade downwards, and experience how much energy is needed to move water. Water also adds to the children's play scenarios and is experienced, like the sand, both indoors and out.

Both sand and water promote mathematical thinking (exploring quantities as you transfer the material from one size of container to another) and scientific thinking (experiencing the force of "uplift" which makes things float, knowing that plants and animals need water to survive and finding out about how materials are washed with water, for example).

# Sand and water as a context for development and learning in the EYFS

Sand and water enhance children's **personal, social and emotional development** by being interesting and also calming materials to play with on your own, alongside others and collaboratively. Children can explore with enjoyment and can sustain involvement for periods of time, with or without adult support, developing their confidence and their skills.

Sand and water play also helps children's developing **communication, language and literacy** as they vocalise, make sounds, talk about what they are doing and collaborate with others. Children will sometimes negotiate and talk ideas through. Sand and water can provide a context for pretend play (making cakes with the sand, playing with small world equipment in sand or water, for example) enabling children to develop narratives and extend their experiences and ideas through play. Children can make marks in sand using their fingers and using tools, supporting their emergent writing.

They can develop their **problem-solving, reasoning and numeracy** by exploring capacity as they fill and empty different containers. Sand and water provide a first-hand experience of dividing a large quantity of a material into smaller amounts, and a context for counting (e.g. the number of cakes), matching (giving one cake to each person), comparing sizes (e.g. different-sized sandcastles) and weights (small and large containers of sand and water).

Children can increase their **knowledge and understanding of the world**, exploring these natural materials and how they can be changed, for example how adding water changes the properties of sand, and that this is a reversible change as the sand will dry out again, and how water is used to wash materials.

Their **physical development** is enhanced with opportunities to develop large and small motor skills, from picking up big heavy buckets and containers to using tiny teaspoons in the sand or pouring with care from one container to another. Children can use tools, like whisks in the water and spades in the sand, manipulating the materials to achieve the results they want and developing their skills in using the tools and their eye-hand co-ordination.

**Creative development** is enhanced as children use their senses to connect to natural materials and use sand to make models, exploring textures and sometimes adding marks and decorations. Sand and water can also support imaginative play (pouring out drinks, for example).