

# AN INTRODUCTION TO THE HIGH/SCOPE APPROACH



In this booklet are some of the questions which parents ask most about the High/Scope Approach. We hope that the responses will help you in explaining how the High/Scope Approach can play a vital part in supporting young children's learning.

## What is High/Scope?

High/Scope is a way of working with children based on the idea that children learn best from active learning experiences which they plan and carry out themselves. In this way children learn that they are capable, able to make decisions and solve problems about activities which are personally meaningful to them.

## Where Did it Begin?

High/Scope began 30 years ago in an area of Michigan, USA, called Ypsilanti where the High/Scope Educational Research Foundation is based. Research shows that the young children who used the High/Scope Approach in the early year's school in Ypsilanti developed, as they grew older, very positive attitudes to education, work, personal relationships and society.

High/Scope is now used in over twenty countries throughout the world including the United Kingdom where it started its development about 10 years ago. It is a registered charity which has its headquarters in London and is used in Educational, Social Services, Private and Voluntary caring settings. Adults working in early years settings which purport to use High/Scope should all have had special training with a High/Scope Consultant or Endorsed Trainer in the High/Scope Approach.

### **Why Is It So Widely Used?**

Everyone is unique; we all develop at a different pace, have different interests, learn in different ways and have different experiences. This is particularly true of children and High/Scope recognises these differences, starts with what the child CAN do and encourages children from a very early age to make choices and decisions for themselves and be responsible within their own world. High/Scope also recognises that children need to be ACTIVE LEARNERS.

### **What Do We Mean By Active Learning?**

Young children need to be active, and they base all their growing knowledge, understanding and skills on real experiences by using real materials and through sharing their discoveries with others, not by sitting at a desk and learning things off by heart, doing repetitive paper and pencil work of attempting to do activities which are appropriate only for older children. Children, in their first five years of life, will learn more than they will ever learn again and much of this learning will occur through their play, these learning experiences need to be supported in an appropriate way.

High/Scope suggests the following ingredients for the young child's Active Learning:-

### **MATERIALS**

Having a variety of interesting materials which are always available and easy to find.

### **MANIPULATION**

This means that children are free to handle and explore the materials in many different ways.

### **CHOICE**

Research tells us that children need early experiences in practising this important life skill. They need opportunities to make choices about what materials they want to use, what activities they are interested in and would like to do.

### **LANGUAGE**

Children need to be allowed to choose their own words and express themselves in their own way. It is through practice and other children's and adult's examples as communicators that children will become fluent in language.

### **SUPPORT FROM ADULTS**

The role of the adult is to encourage children's efforts, talk with them, join in with their play, help them to solve their own problems and sometimes introduce new experiences.

### **Why does the learning setting have to be environment in a Certain Way?**

High/Scope believes that children learn best in a play environment which is stimulating but ordered. In early years settings the room is organised into interest areas which are easily recognised by the children and are stocked with materials which are clearly labelled and sorted so that children know where everything is and can get out, and put away materials for themselves.

This also helps children to begin what they have planned to do independently, quickly and efficiently.

The space and materials in a High scope setting are carefully chosen and arranged to promote active learning. The learning environment in a High scope setting has the following characteristics:

- Is welcoming to children.
- Provides enough materials for the children.
- Allows children to find use and return materials independently.
- Encourages different types of play and learning.
- Allows the children to see and easily move through all of the areas.
- Is flexible so children can extend their play by bringing materials from one area to another.
- Provides materials that reflect the diversity of children's family lives.

At home children can also have a special place where their toys and books are kept and can be sorted in labelled containers to which they have easy access so that they can play independently.

### **Why is a Daily Routine Important?**

Everyone uses some kind of routine at least some of the time, doing certain things at certain times helps us to know where we are. A predictable routine helps children to feel secure and so they are able to learn with confidence. A routine also helps them to relate to time and sequence. Knowing what is happening next is important for children, it helps them to feel secure, helps them to learn about the passage of time and to remember things that are past.

Research shows that planning and reviewing are the two components of the day which are most positively and significantly associated with children's developmental progress.

The goals are:

- To learn through active involvement with people, materials, events and ideas.
- To become independent, responsible and confident ready for school and ready for life.
- To learn to plan many of their own activities, carry them out and talk with others about what they have done and what they have learned.
- To gain knowledge and skills.

### **In the early years setting, each day the children:-**

**PLAN** what they would like to do. Children begin by planning in a simple way, as they gain experience of planning they will talk about what they want to do, what they will use, where they will do the activity, possibly with whom they will do it and what they hope to achieve. Planning will be supported by an adult who will ask appropriate questions and give encouragement. Planning is a complex and valuable skill, when children become familiar with the techniques of planning they will use them throughout their lives, at the early stage it encourages them to think before acting.

**DO** whatever play activities they have planned using all the materials available to them. The role of the adult at this time is to observe the learning which happened naturally and to share in it, supporting children by playing with materials etc.

**TIDY UP TIME** tidying away the materials they have been using is an important learning experience for children, it develops their sense of ownership or, and responsibility for, looking after their environment. Tidying also develops mathematical understanding and an ability to co-operate with others.

**REVIEW** their activities by telling (or showing in a variety of ways) other children and adults about what they have done. In an early years setting this will usually happen with the adult and group of children whom they did their planning. At home children may talk about what they have done with family and friends.

Other parts of the HighScope Daily Routine in early setting include:

**Circle Time** - This is the time when all the adults and children meet together to share songs and rhymes, experiences and feelings.

**Small Group Time** - In early years setting the HighScope daily routine also includes activities which are led by the adult and initiated by the children. The children will work in groups with carefully selected materials which will help them to develop learning 'Key Experiences'

### **How can parents/carers be involved with HighScope?**

Parents/carers involvement in the children's learning is vital in developing their educational potential and success. They can help their child by showing their interest about what is happening in the nursery through:

1. Talking about what the child might like to do in nursery that day (planning).
2. Asking what activities their child has done, which is asking them to review their work.
3. Reading any information about HighScope provided by the nursery and attending workshop sessions when they are available.

Parents/carers can help their child in the home environment by:

- Providing opportunities in the home for active learning
- Providing opportunities in the home for plan-do-review process.

### **The long term aims of the HighScope Approach**

Everyone wants what is best for their child. HighScope has long term aims which adults in the early years setting will be in partnership with parents/carers, working to achieve.

1. Develop each child's ability to make choices and decisions about what to do and how to do it, using their own time and energy effectively.
2. Develop each child's self-discipline to identify, pursue and complete self-chosen goals and tasks with originality and responsibility.
3. Develop each child's ability to work with other children and adults in group planning, so-operative efforts, and with shared leadership.
4. Develop each child's knowledge, skills and understanding in all curriculum areas.
5. Develop each child's ability to express thoughts, ideas and feelings and communicate them to others.
6. Develop each child's ability to understand other's spoken, written, dramatic and graphic representations.
7. Develop each child's ability to apply their reasoning abilities to a wide range of situations using a wide variety of materials.
8. Develop each child's positive 'learning dispositions' – initiatives, responsibly, curiosity, independence, trust and confidence.