

An Introduction to the HighScope Approach



In this document are some of the questions which parents/carers ask most about the HighScope Approach.

We hope that the responses will help you in explaining how the HighScope Approach can play a vital part in supporting young children's learning.

What is HighScope?

HighScope 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 themselves.

Where did it begin?

HighScope began over 40 years ago in an area of Michigan, USA called Ypsilanti where the HighScope Educational Research Foundation is based. Research shows that the young children who used HighScope in the early years 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 20 years ago. It is a registered charity which has its headquarters in Newcastle and is used in

educational, social care, private and voluntary caring settings.

Adults working in a HighScope quality assured setting, should all have had special training with a HighScope Consultant or Endorsed Trainer in the HighScope Approach.

Why is it so widely used?

Everyone is unique; we all develop at a different pace, have different interests, lean in different ways and have different experiences. This is particularly true of children and HighScope recognises these differences, starting 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. HighScope 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 or 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.

HighScope 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 adults 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 play, help them to solve their own problems and sometimes introduce new experiences.

Why does the learning environment have to be organised in a certain way?

HighScope believes that children learn best in a play environment which is stimulating but ordered. In HighScope Quality Assured 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.

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 the Daily Routine important?

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, helps them to

learn about the passage of time and to remember things that are past.

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 happens naturally and to share in it, supporting children by playing with the 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 with. At home children may talk about what they have done with family and friends.

Other parts of the HighScope Daily Routine in early years 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 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.

Parents/carers can help their child by showing their interest about what is happening in the nursery through:-

Talking about what the child might like to do in the nursery that day (planning).

Asking what activities their child has done, which is asking them to review their work.

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 the 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, co-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, responsibility, curiosity, independence, trust and confidence.