



Take Part, Reflect and Take Impact...

On the 24th and 25th of October, The OnSite Suite at Bescot Stadium transformed into a hub of creativity and innovation as 165 Early Years practitioners gathered for the Curiosity, Innovation, and Discovery Conference:

Play for Today, Tomorrow, and the Future. Delivered by Alice Sharp and her inspiring team, this event challenged attendees to reimagine play and learning for young children.



With themes that spanned Virtual Reality v Reality, the power of multisensory experiences, and preparing children to be the engineers and architects of the future, practitioners left equipped with innovative strategies to enrich their settings.

Key Themes Explored

- **Virtual Reality v Reality:** Exploring how to innovate play by blending real-world experiences with technology to stimulate cognitive growth.
- **Multisensory Experiences:** Focusing on the "five doors into the brain" (sight, sound, touch, taste, and smell) to create environments that spark thinking through sensory engagement.
- **Encouraging Divergent Thinking:** Using resources like loose parts to inspire curiosity, investigation, and creativity in children.
- **Physical Development:** Emphasizing tools and materials that build motor skills and strengthen core foundations for learning.
- **The Magic of Light:** Highlighting the role of light in creating moments of awe and wonder through shadows, reflections, and patterns.
- **Sustainability in Action:** Promoting eco-conscious learning by reducing, reusing, and recycling in Early Years settings.

Settings and Schools who attended the event, were keen to share how they have implemented learning from the day.

Here is a celebration of their actions....



Celebrating Impact: How Settings Are Bringing the Learning to Life



Ryders Hayes School

Ryders Hayes has been integrating light and sensory experiences into their provision with inspiring results:

- **Strength and Resistance:** Tools like lemon juicers have encouraged children to develop core motor skills while expanding vocabulary with words like twist, bend, and manoeuvre.
- **Light and Shadow Play:** Using sheer and transparent materials, children explored the interplay of light and shadow, sparking creativity and wonder.
- **Loose Parts in Role Play:** Items like pine cones and log slices have transformed play, promoting imaginative scenarios and developing mathematical concepts.

Fullbrook Nursery School

Fullbrook's exploration of light has encouraged children to:

- Dance with UV light, creating memorable multisensory experiences.
- Use lightboxes and torches to bring storytelling to life, blending movement and language into deeper, more engaging narratives.





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Netherton Park Nursery School

For their two-year-olds, the introduction of light and shadows has been a revelation.

Using projectors, children experimented with scarves and blocks, observing colours and shadows, fostering prolonged engagement and curiosity.

St. Matthew's Little Monkeys

This team embraced the conference's ethos by:

- Creating a "talking back" area with phones and microphones, which has significantly enhanced speech development.
- Auditing their toys to maximize learning potential while incorporating light for exploration and discovery.

A Shared Vision for the Future

The conference highlighted how thoughtful resources, innovative play, and a focus on sustainability can transform Early Years practice. Practitioners returned to their settings brimming with ideas to engage children in ways that enhance their curiosity, creativity, and confidence.

As educators, we are the architects of the future, crafting experiences that lay firm foundations for lifelong learning. By embracing curiosity and innovation, we unlock the boundless potential within every child.





Further Resources to Support Early Years Professionals

To help you implement the inspiring ideas from the Curiosity, Innovation, and Discovery Conference, we've curated a selection of resources available on the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) Evidence Store. These resources are designed to support evidence-informed practice in Early Years settings and can be accessed online:

- **Early Years Toolkit:** This toolkit summarizes effective strategies for learning and development, providing insights into their average impact and practical guidance for implementation. It's an excellent starting point for exploring approaches to enhance cognitive development and curiosity in young children. Access the toolkit here:
<https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/early-years/toolkit>
- **Early Years Evidence Store:** Tailored for practitioners, this resource illustrates how evidence-based strategies can be integrated into daily practices, including examples of multisensory experiences and the use of sustainable materials. Explore the Evidence Store here:
<https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/early-years/evidence-store>
- **Focus Areas in Early Years Education:** For those keen on implementing changes related to physical development or language acquisition, the EEF's resources offer specific strategies to foster motor skills and enrich vocabulary development through intelligent resources and storytelling. More details can be found here:
<https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/early-years/evidence-store/communication-and-language>

