

# MINI CASE STUDY: BLOCK PLAY

At Childhaven Nursery School we promote block play in our day, both indoors and outdoors.

Indoors, within our front room space, we have an area with a large clear floor space and a variety of different sized and shaped wooden blocks and planks. We also are big users of loose parts as a core resource and have many of these too. Items such as cardboard boxes in different sizes, bottle lids, sticks, material and more. We have a simple, 'less is more' set up on purpose.

**Anything can be a loose part!**

**By giving the children the opportunity to have these resources, they can create anything.**

The initial stage of block play is for a child to transport the blocks around and not use them for 'building'. The next five stages of block play lead up to the children constructing linking to their real life experiences or stories.

Our creations have been varied, from a tower to a Land Rover. Whilst busy constructing with peers there is so much opportunity for maths and the range of language is endless. The children always lead the way with their ideas...

**"I've got 6 to build it this big look."  
"If I put this here it's a light on my car."  
"The pigs house is sticks."  
"This is my hammer to fix my wall."  
"A long line to there."**

Why not have a go in your setting?  
Clear a space indoors or outdoors, then the range of blocks and resources is up to you. If you have not got blocks, you can use other things that are FREE, such as cardboard boxes, instead. You could even create a small set up alongside a story.



# What does the evidence say?

Did you know that something very simple in set up, such as block play, offers such a wealth of learning opportunities? All supported by the latest research.

A key learning opportunity with block play is the potential to develop communication and language. During block play, this can take place while the children are using their ideas and linking them with their own experiences, and finding ways linguistically to express these ideas. As they work together, the children use language to collaborate and work together to reach a goal. The adult alongside can provide new vocabulary, offer questions and introduce areas of discussion to further support this.

In a blog written by Louise Jackson, Content Specialist for the Early Years, it is highlighted that, due to its open-ended nature, block play provides many opportunities for positive interactions in the Early Years. For example, constructing blocks together allows for collaborative play, problem solving and negotiation. Louise further adds that due to the accessibility and affordability of block play, it is a valuable resource for children who are socio-economically disadvantaged. Louise suggests introducing books alongside block play, such as Rosie Revere Engineer, to engage children in discussions about emotions and feelings.

The EEF evidence store has approaches to support personal, social and emotional development in the Early Years. These approaches are well linked with block play. For example if we look at 'Teaching and Modelling Social Communication': during block play, as the children work alongside one another and an adult, they have the opportunity to observe non-verbal communication and body language such as positioning and gestures. Important skills that show how our actions can enhance or inhibit social communication. You can find a link to the EEF approaches summary poster below, as well as a link to the EEF Evidence Store.

**Resources** Louise Jackson blog: <https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/news/eef-blog>  
Approaches summary poster:  
[https://d2tic4wvo1iusb.cloudfront.net/production/documents/news/EY\\_PSED\\_Recommendations\\_Poster\\_0.2.pdf?v=1717171174](https://d2tic4wvo1iusb.cloudfront.net/production/documents/news/EY_PSED_Recommendations_Poster_0.2.pdf?v=1717171174) EEF Evidence Store: <https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/support-for-schools/evidence-for-the-early-years/early-years-evidence-store>



THANK YOU FOR READING.

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