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A New Practical Series

Shared language. Stronger Practice

Early Years Explained







EDITION NO. 1

Pedagogy

Greater Lincolnshire Early Years Stronger Practice Hub

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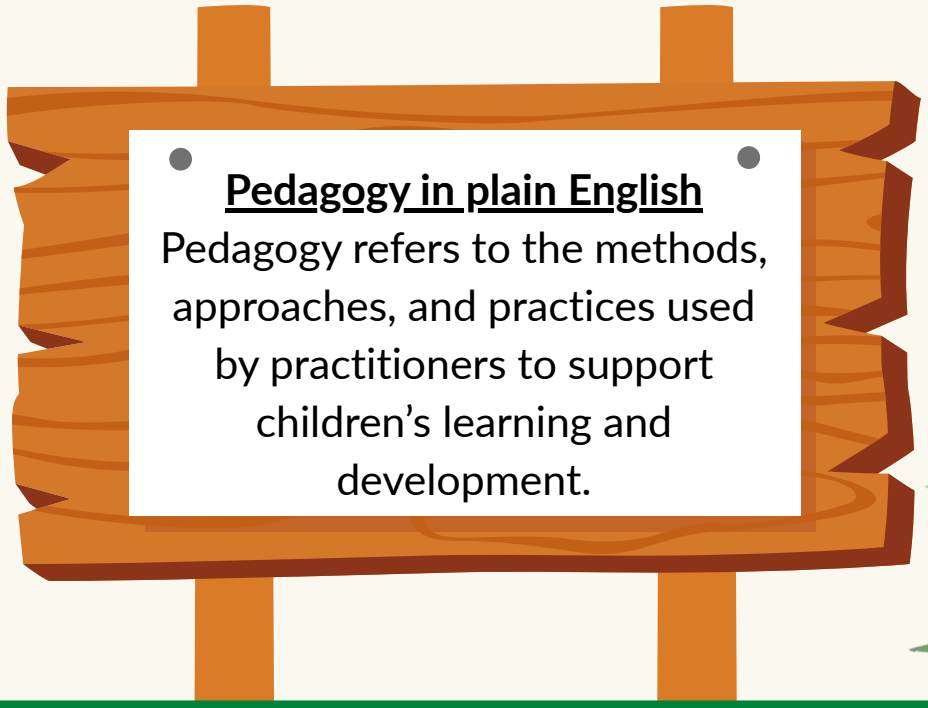
What does it mean?



Pedagogy in plain English

Pedagogy refers to the methods, approaches, and practices used by practitioners to support children's learning and development.

Pedagogy is how we help children learn.

The curriculum is what we want children to learn and experience. Pedagogy is how we bring that to life through play, routines, relationships, the spaces and resources we provide, and the ways we model, guide and teach.

Pedagogy in practice: Babies

Responding to a baby's cues

A baby turns away and starts to fuss during play. The adult pauses, speaks softly and gives them a moment. When the baby reaches towards them, the adult offers a cuddle.

Why it matters

When adults notice and respond to their cues, babies experience that their communication matters.

Making care routines a time to connect

During a nappy change, the adult says, "I'm going to lift your legs now." The baby kicks and makes a sound. The adult smiles, responds to the sound and pauses for the baby to take another turn.

Why it matters

A familiar routine gives babies repeated opportunities to connect, hear language in context and take part in a back-and-forth exchange.

Sharing attention and adding words

A baby squeezes a soft ball. The adult says, "Soft ball," then waits. The baby squeezes it again and the adult responds, "Squeeze!"

Why it matters

The adult puts words to what the baby is already exploring and gives them time to respond through movement, expression or sound

Giving just enough help

A baby reaches for a ball and it rolls away. The adult steadies it close enough for the baby to reach, then pauses while they have another go.

Why it matters

A small adjustment keeps the challenge manageable and gives the baby time to explore what they can do.

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Pedagogy in practice: Two-Year-Olds

Joining pretend play
A child hands the adult an empty cup. The adult takes a pretend sip and says, “Mmm, warm tea.” The child reaches for the jug to pour some more, and the adult holds out the cup.
Why it matters
Following the child’s idea keeps the play going and gives them a reason to communicate and take turns.

Giving a small clue
A child tries to fit a puzzle piece into a space. The adult points to the piece and says, “Try turning it,” then waits while the child has another go.
Why it matters
A small cue gives the child a strategy they can try for themselves.

Supporting independence at coat time
The adult holds the coat open while the child finds the first sleeve. They pause to see what the child can do next and offer more help if needed.
Why it matters
Doing one manageable part of a familiar routine helps the child build independence over time.

Building on what a child says
A child says, “Big truck.” The adult replies, “Yes, a big blue truck,” then pauses to see what the child says or shows them next.
Why it matters
Adding a word to the child’s own phrase gives them a slightly fuller model and leaves space for them to take another turn.

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Pedagogy in practice: Preschoolers

Following children's curiosity

Children spot a woodlouse under a log. The adult offers a magnifier and says, "I noticed it was damp under there." The children look under another log to see what they can find and share what they notice.

Why it matters

The adult builds on the children's interest and helps them look closely, compare and share observations.

Thinking together

A child notices that one seedling has grown taller than another. "That one's by the window," they say. The adult replies, "You think where it's growing might make a difference. How could we find out?" The child suggests putting one pot by the window and leaving the other where it is. Together they mark the plants' heights on strips of paper so they can compare them again in a few days.

Why it matters

Both the child and the adult contribute an idea, and together they work out how to investigate it. That's sustained shared thinking.

Revisiting an idea through play

A child notices their toy car travels further down a steeper ramp. The next day, the adult puts out the same car, ramp and blocks. The child suggests adding another block under the ramp, and together they use tape to mark where the car stops each time.

Why it matters

Coming back to the same idea gives children time to test a prediction, compare what happens and build on what they found out before.

Using maths outdoors

Two children want to find out who has the longer stick. The adult shows them how to line up one end of each stick. The children try it with another pair and show each other which is longer.

Why it matters

A real question gives children a reason to compare lengths and use words like longer and shorter in context.

Read more:

Click on the links below to read more information and advice!

Development Matters

EEF's ShREC approach

Sustained shared thinking

Pedagogy ECEC

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Reflection

A question for your self or your team:

Choose one everyday routine this week. What does the child already do or communicate, and how could your response help them take the next step?

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