



St Cecilia's Childcare & Kindergarten Tarxien

Educational Programme

At St Cecilia's we aim to provide the children with a holistic developmental experience in a loving environment through various educational activities and experiences.

Pedagogy and Strategies

At St Cecilia's the pedagogy for learning revolves around the theories of Jean Piaget and Lev Vygotsky, learning activities are then implemented through the Reggio Emilia Approach. Children are exposed to a variety of experiences whereby they experiment and explore different materials in a learning by doing mentality. They are given opportunities to learn on their own, then should the child require, they are aided through a scaffolded method. The Reggio Emilia approach is implemented through using ideas coming from the children and then creating projects using a variety of natural materials, that in turn heighten their sensory exposure and thus contribute to their holistic development.

These hands-on learning experiences help them master five broad learning outcomes (as outlined in the National Curriculum Framework), namely:

- Children who develop a strong sense of identity
- Children who have a positive self-image
- Children who are socially adept
- Children who are effective communicators
- Children who nurture positive attitudes towards learning and become engaged and confident learners.

These are developed through different experiences and activities which occur during the school day. Literacy, numeracy, science and religion are explored through a project-based approach. Sensory play, music, art, storytelling, outdoor play and role-play are fundamental in our

educational programme and are incorporated in different ways throughout the day. This provides children with all the benefits of a cross-curricular approach to learning and development.

Through a mixture of adult-led and child-led learning opportunities, children develop their own ideas, share with their peers and learn to believe in themselves and their capabilities. Through a mixture of structured and spontaneous play, they develop and refine their social skills and discover new talents.

Assessment

In kindergarten the main form of assessment is observation. This is mainly carried out by the class kindergarten educator; at times the observation and input of the head teacher is also referred to. These observations are carried out continuously during class activities in order to assess the children's development in the learning outcomes outlined in the National Curriculum Framework.

Outcomes from these observations are communicated with the child to help for further improvement and consolidate good practices. This is done through different means depending on the child and situation; conversations, narratives and public displays are some of the methods used.

Tangible means of assessment are also part of our continuous assessment, these include photos, videos, individual portfolios and reports. The photos and videos are taken during all daily activities, including lessons, and used to further substantiate the portfolios. All photos and videos are also shared with parents through online means, as a way of keeping parents regularly updated with their child's experience at school.

Individual portfolios are shared with parents during parents' days (which are held once every term). The child's development is discussed, and the way forward is established in order to guide the child for further improvement and consolidation of achieved goals.

At the end of the scholastic year, a general developmental report is generated and given to parents so that they have a tangible record of their child's development level based on the outcomes described in the National Outcomes Framework.

Implementation

During their duration at school, the children experience a variety of learning opportunities that make learning fun and help them develop in a holistic manner. Through both structured and unstructured activities, children develop their literacy, numeracy, fine motor, gross motor, musical, ethical and scientific skills.

A typical school day starts at 8am with about an hour of free play, to give the children enough time to arrive and settle down. Then this is followed by about thirty minutes of circle time, where the children talk with their kindergarten educator about anything they might wish as well as listen to their peers' recounts. The circle time is also a means of introducing/consolidating the general topic that will be explored. The children are invited to give feedback and specific elements which interest the children are then elicited from the discussion. These are then used as the basis for the days' activities.

After circle time the children then move on to about one hour of real-life learning experiences. These are structured in a way to allow the children's interests from the circle time to be integrated (example, if the KGE has the aim of introducing the letter 's' during the real-life experience session, during circle time she might introduce the topic of Christmas and discuss with the children what elements of Christmas they like and wish to work on for the main class project. Then during the real-life experience session, she links with the circle time activity and invites children to think of Christmas-related words which start with the letter 's').

After the real-life experience session, the children have about thirty minutes in which to eat their lunch, which is a learning opportunity in itself since table manners and hygiene are given their due importance. After their lunch time, the daily timetable varies depending on the day of the week due to a rotation system for using common areas (such as the yard). During the following three thirty-minute sessions the children experience a variety of music/drama, religion, physical education, art, science and cooking sessions. Physical education, music/drama, art and storytelling occur daily, while religion, science and cooking occur on specific days during the week.

At the end of the school day, the children have about thirty minutes for storytelling, this varies between being teacher-led or child-led in nature and is followed by a discussion about the story. This final session helps the children settle down at the end of the day and gets them prepared for going home time at 1pm.

Lesson planning in the Reggio Emilia approach is very flexible and allows for various alterations and amendments so as to cater for the interests of the children. In their planning, the kindergarten educators prepare what skills and activities will take place (based on the Learning Outcome Framework). Sometimes these are completely changed due to the children's interests.

A typical activity plan includes the following sections: Title/Theme of activity, Area of learning/development, Learning outcome/s, Link to the LoFs, Resources and materials required, a Description of the activity as well as room for notes on both the activity and any observations of the children. A final section in their daily plan is that of Spontaneous learning opportunity, this gives the kindergarten educator the opportunity of noting down any spontaneous activity which the children might come up with during a structured/planned activity. This would then aid in planning further emergent opportunities for the children, based on this observed spontaneous activity.

Extra-curricular Activities

Holistic development is an essential aspect in a child's growth process. Being exposed to different opportunities gives them the chance to explore their own capabilities and discover any hidden talents, besides helping to develop different skills which will assist them later in life.

At St Cecilia's the children are given the opportunity to take part in two different concerts during the scholastic year. One at Christmas time and the other during Spring time, the distance between the two concerts allows for the children to grow and develop further their dramatic and musical skills. It also gives them the opportunity to grow in terms of stage presence and confidence to perform in front of an audience.

The children also take part in a structured Sports Day during the last term of the scholastic year. This gives them an opportunity to showcase their motor skills development in a fun way. The variety of activities prepared are a mixture of both adult and child-generated ideas so that the children feel a sense of ownership of what they are doing.

During the scholastic year the children are also given the opportunity to take part in educational outings which add a different element to their learning experience. Outings organised are in-line, as much as possible, with what is happening in class, so that the children get a more realistic experience of their classroom learning. Example: taking part in a semi-structured gardening activity at school is one thing, however being exposed to a field/farm/large garden outside school premises is another. These out-of-school experiences have a long-lasting effect on the children's development and thus cater towards their holistic development.

Professional Development

Professional development is given due importance at St Cecilia's. The staff are provided with a total of 40 hours during the scholastic year. Topics vary according to the needs which arise, both individually as well as a school. Opportunities to further develop their professional skills in a variety of topics are organised, such as, new developments in teaching and learning strategies, children with special needs, children who are gifted, planning skills, classroom management, etc.

Support in order to integrate new learning with current practices is also provided as part of the professional development opportunities. Both formal and informal meetings are held with members of staff so as to provide opportunities to discuss professional development as well as feedback with regards to both personal as well as at year group level. Staff members are encouraged to embrace lifelong learning not just as part of the school professional development opportunities, as this would help their professional development further.