**Sticky Fish Preschool Teaching and Learning Policy**

At Sticky Fish it is our aim to provide a place which enables all children to play, explore, learn and develop in a supportive environment where each child can feel safe, secure, loved and listened to. Through exploring the world around them and interacting with others, children grow in confidence and begin to see themselves as competent, capable learners. This stage of children’s development is valuable in its own right and it also provides important foundations for future learning. At the centre of our teaching and learning are the **Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) principles: A unique child; Positive relationships; Enabling environments; Learning and development.**

**A unique child:**

Through our daily observations of children as they play and learn, we get to know each child as an individual so that we can differentiate our teaching to meet their needs. We use ‘in the moment planning’ as we believe this is the best way for all practitioners in our team to really get to know each child and plan learning opportunities that are appropriate and meaningful. We aim to meet each child where they are in their development and help them to build on what they already know. We strive to ensure all children can access the resources they need to support their unique learning journey. As reflective practitioners, we are continually reflecting on our practice, sharing and discovering together new ways to meet the learning and development needs of each child and ensuring all children feel included and valued.

**Positive relationships:**

We see positive relationships as central to our preschool and believe forming strong attachments is vital to children’s development. We want all children to feel confident to explore the world around them and begin to make new friendships with others. We notice that when children are fully supported by adults who have a genuine interest in them and who support them to view themselves as valuable members of our preschool, they are keen to get involved with new experiences more quickly and their learning makes good progress because of this. We model respect for all within our preschool and this helps children to learn how they should be respectful towards others. Over time, children learn to work collaboratively and solve problems together as strong friendships are formed. Each child is assigned to a key-group when they join our preschool. This means that every child will have a key-person to help them to initially settle into preschool, helping them to feel secure and confident enough to build relationships with others in the group and who will take a lead role in supporting them in their learning journey throughout their time at Sticky Fish.

As parents/carers are children’s first and most important educators, we want to work alongside each family and build strong partnerships so that together we can effectively support each child’s development. We recognise the importance of sharing information between preschool and families and know how families have lots of different circumstances, so we offer different channels of communication in an effort to meet the needs of all families. We also welcome offers of help from parents/carers and value any contributions of time, however small, where they can support the running of the preschool and find out more about our approach to learning.

**Enabling environments:**

Research shows that children learn best when they are involved in activities which interest them and when they have high levels of wellbeing, so we want our environment to promote these things. We see creating and maintaining our learning environment as a vital part of our practice. We encourage children to explore our inside and outside environments and select which type of learning activity they would like to get involved with. We want all children at Sticky Fish to engage with learning activities which are relevant to their interests and current level of development and so we provide accessible and varied learning spaces and learning provocations to reflect these. We also encourage children to help care for our environment in many ways such as helping with our gardening and keeping our inside learning areas tidy as this helps children to develop a sense of responsibility and belonging, as well as promoting an understanding of teamwork.

Whilst we ensure children have significant periods of time where they can explore, play and set themselves challenges, we also understand the importance of adult-led teaching moments. We join children in their play and sensitively support and extend their learning through a range of teaching strategies such as modelling language, providing narrative for play, questioning and encouraging (see end of this policy for Ofsted’s definition of teaching in the early years). Daily social routines, as well as being times that promote children’s sense of wellbeing and belonging, are key times for supporting children’s learning in areas such as communication and language and personal, social and emotional development. We also spend time in small groups where we deliver planned activities according to children’s needs.

**Learning and development:**

We look at children’s learning in a holistic way, taking into consideration all the different aspects of a child’s life which can influence their development. Through our observations of all children in our care, we identify each child’s levels of wellbeing, involvement, strengths, interests and areas where development is needed. We can then provide activities, provocations and experiences which will support children to make progress and become curious, resilient, independent learners. Through placing a particular focus on the three prime areas of learning (communication and language, physical development, personal, social and emotional development) and helping children to develop characteristics of effective learning, we believe that we are providing excellent opportunities for each one to:

* Build strong foundations for all other areas of learning, eg. literacy and maths.
* Learn through pursuing their own interests.
* Become increasingly independent and self-confident.
* Enjoy finding out new things and learning new skills.
* Learn to assess risks and discover what is and what is not an appropriate risk to take.
* Develop creativity, critical thinking and problem-solving skills.
* Begin to work with others collaboratively and to find out about how to approach challenges.
* Focus on the process of how they are learning rather than an end product.

Please speak to your child’s key person for more information about the seven areas of learning and the characteristics of effective learning within the EYFS.

 Ofsted definition of teaching in the early years 2015:

 ‘Teaching should not be taken to imply a ‘top down’ or formal way of working. It is a broad term which covers the many different ways in which adults help young children learn. It includes their interactions with children during planned and child-initiated play and activities: communicating and modelling language, showing, explaining, demonstrating, exploring ideas, encouraging, questioning, recalling, providing a narrative for what they are doing, facilitating and setting challenges. It takes account of the equipment they provide and the attention to the physical environment as well as the structure and routines of the day that establish expectations. Integral to teaching is how practitioners assess what children know, understand and can do as well as take account of their interests and dispositions to learning (characteristics of effective learning), and use this information to plan children’s next steps in learning and monitor their progress.’