

Saplings Nursery Philosophy & Educational Approach

We believe the child has a fundamental right to 'realise and expand their potential'. That a child has many strengths and abilities and that they are valued and 'listened to'. This is fundamental to our approach.

While literacy and numeracy activities undoubtedly have their place in the daily activities of our setting, we acknowledge that for young children

1. imagination plays a key role in their search for knowledge and understanding.
2. the process for learning is more important than any final product of learning.
3. time, routines and opportunities to develop socially, emotionally and physically are needed
4. the environment is happy and enabling
5. challenging physical play is a priority
6. 'hands on' activities are important
7. a rich speaking environment is essential

At Saplings we consider it a mistake to take any single approach and assume like a flower that you can take it from one soil and put it in another and it will continue to grow. Unfortunately, all too often as any gardener knows this often just doesn't work.

Our Philosophy is underpinned by what we believe to be true about working with young children and their families. Our knowledge is contingent, that is, it is always changing, and as a group of professionals, we are open to multiple understandings and perspectives so that we always engage in quality practice with young children and their families. It is for this reason we constantly update our knowledge and staff training becomes an essential ingredient of our 'soil'. Thus our educational philosophy is built on principles of practice that are underpinned by theory and literature that is accepted as "truth" about working with young children. However, "truths" are also ever changing and so therefore, we are aware of the need keep up to date and aware of contemporary understanding in practice.

At the present time, Saplings ideology involves the integration of two key approaches, namely Reggio Emilia and Steiner, into our pre-existing [High Scope](#) approach. All influences contribute to lead our professional guidance and assist us to form the foundation of our philosophical and educational approaches in working with young children.

The [Reggio Emilia approach](#) assumes that a child has much strength and ability and that they should be valued and 'listened to'. This is a longstanding fundamental principle that we adopted early in our inception, to meet the requirements of individual educational goals for each child; rather than viewing the child as an empty vessel waiting eagerly to be filled with knowledge, we believe strongly in a child with unlimited potential who is eager to interact with and contribute to the world around them, we value them highly. Of equal importance, you will also find influences of the [Steiner approach](#) to early years education which is centred in the belief that a child will learn more effectively if he/she has had plenty of time and opportunity to develop socially, emotionally and physically; where the environment is secure, enabling and harmonious; where creativity and challenging physical play are prioritised, hands on activities are available; choices both indoors and outdoors abound in a rich environment that encourages language and communication through listening and speaking

How do we view Formal Learning at Saplings?

Very topical at present, particularly with the future Government proposal of children as young as 2 years old entering a formal educational environment, it is a subject that requires further attention beyond the scope of this article. However, **we** believe that children from birth to their 6th birthday do not benefit from formal educational learning. We continue therefore to adopt the belief that a child primarily plays and in playing the child will learn all the necessary skills and knowledge to prepare them for formal learning at a later stage.

Good staff development is not something that is undertaken every now and then, reflecting only on the words of someone else. Instead, it is a vital and daily aspect of our work, of our personal and professional identities. Staff development is seen above all as an indispensable vehicle by which to make stronger the quality of our interaction with children and among ourselves for the benefit of young children and their families.