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# How to adopt a **holistic approach** in the Early Years

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# About me

## Background

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- 27 years working with children and families
- OFSTED registered provider
- Multi award winning early years pioneer
- Creator of the “The Maisie Poppins way: An early years ecosystem”





The Maisie  
Poppins way:  
An early years  
ecosystem



- **Wellbeing is the key that unlocks everything else**
- **Care routines are an opportunity to learn and support wellbeing**
- **Clear communication is essential for everyone caring for a child**
- **Confidence/independence are built through nurture and support**



- **Ability to nurture and support are fostered through an enabling environment**
- **SEND/Neurodiversity acceptance, understanding and authentic inclusion.**
- **Behaviour = communication: What is the unmet need being expressed?**

## Current work

Holistic education consultant, specialising in:

- **Early years**
- **Neurodivergence**
- **Emotions/behaviors**
- **Project management**

# Holistic/Systemic approach

- Understanding the **social** and **environmental** factors which positively contribute to children's development
- Implementing **effective** strategies to consistently **nurture** such factors in an early years setting
- The “curriculum” is **not just** what children are **learning**, it is the whole structure and feeling of a setting, all aspects together as a whole must be attended too.



## Vision for your setting

*“Highly ambitious, broad and rich curriculum” (OFSTED)*

- Values
- Principles
- Methodology



# Values



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**Democracy**

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**The rule of law**

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**Individual liberty**

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**Mutual respect and tolerance of those  
with different faiths and beliefs**

- Values not to be taken for granted within your setting – are they well understood by all staff?
- Are staff supported to uphold these values, through the policies, procedures and working culture of the setting?

# Principles

- Environments need to be “enabling”, but how do we do this in tough times?
- Children develop and learn at different rates, so how do we approach this in practice?
- Positive relationships help children to be strong and independent

## Vision cont.

**A setting's vision needs to be:**

- Understandable
- Actionable
- Appealing for all involved

# Continuous professional development (CPD)

- Most staff learn by 'doing'
- Team meetings to workshop how to put theory into practice
- Group activities such as role-playing challenging scenarios to find solutions



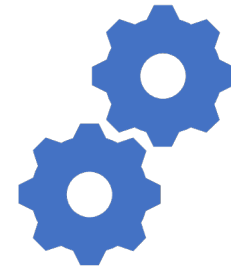
# Meaningful engagement – Intent



**Working environment is safe,  
nurturing and conducive to  
engagement with staff and  
families**



**Staff feel listened to and  
included in management  
structures**



**All internal processes are  
efficient and necessary**

## Examples

- Whistle blowing posters
- Health and safety in order
- Independent assessors
- Parent and family input authentic

# Meaningful engagement - Implementation

- Supervision

- A “self-audit” of your setting and staff experience

- Wellbeing and mental health informed

- Make use of the latest communication/collaboration software





## Meaningful engagement – Implementation cont.

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### Transparency and trust

- Open communication between staff, families and other professionals
  
- What does this look like in practice?



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- **Are leaders present and approachable?**
  - **Are there staff cliques that need exploring?**
  - **Are there safe emotional boundaries in the work place?**
  - **Is the staff room a nice place to be?**
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# Meaningful engagement – Implementation cont.

## Work/life balance

- Recognizing and responding to socio-political context (e.g. COVID-19, mental health, early years staffing crises)

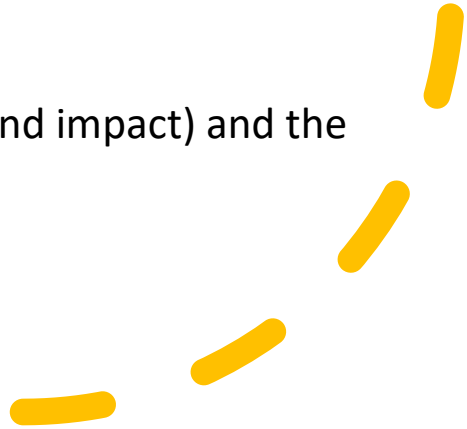
- Monitoring workloads and adjusting accordingly



# Meaningful engagement- Impact

- All staff members provide valuable insights and essential contributions to service delivery
- Everyone applying **3 I's** to their work = Collaborative approach to achieving excellence!

# To summarize...

- A holistic/systemic approach recognises and responds to the context in which the child is learning and developing
  - The importance of having a vision for your setting's curriculum
  - Meaningful engagement through CPD and supervision helps to enhance shared understanding among staff and with families, thereby helping your vision become a reality
  - Reflection on the three I's (Intent, implementation and impact) and the EYFS principles
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## Holistic Approach in the Early Years Top Tips

- Taking a holistic/systemic approach means seeing every aspect of the setting as interdependent and essential to the flourishing of both the staff and children within it and the families with whom we work. Top Tip: *If a staff member is feeling unhappy in the workplace, it is likely this will transfer into the child's experience in the room.*
- The curriculum is not just 'what' children are learning, it is how we empower and equip the children to learn through ensuring our environments are **authentically** enabling, both emotionally and physically. Top Tip: *Try sitting on the floor in different spaces in the room with a checklist of toys you must find, how easy is it to navigate the room as a toddler?*
- Children are in a constant conversation with their environment, and they live in the moment. Top Tip: *Its great having plans, but small incremental changes at no cost can be made straight away and have a great positive impact on children in your care.*
- Having a clear vision for your setting in which the values, principles and methodology are in alignment and understood by all, will enable positive working relationships, and help you to strive for excellence. Top Tip: *Staff can feel overwhelmed by lots of theory on top of their workload, streamline the info into visual images turn in to bitesize fun games and cascade across the FAMILY newsfeed*

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WORKING HOLISTICALLY TO ACHIEVE OUTSTANDING OUTCOMES

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- Clear and transparent communication, continuous professional development (CPD) and supervision are all tools to enhance shared understanding among staff and with families, thereby helping your vision become a reality. Top Tip: *To avoid confusion and overwhelm and embed a well-functioning communication culture, chart everything ahead on the FAMILY calendar and share with all staff and a separate one for all your families. Staff can be allocated leaderships over different areas of your holistic setting to hone responsibility, accountability and to embed the culture with full staff buy in.*
- With increased and more corporate competition in the early years field, having a recruitment and retention edge is essential to ensuring a happy well nurtured staff team who are committed to your setting and the children. Top Tip: *Ask staff what's important to them and deliver on it saving costs long term as you go. Signing up to perk apps for your staff, rewarding long term service and celebrating staff and their talents within your staff and family community can do wonders.*

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