



Pedagogical Policy

Three Little Ships



“Sending my son to TLS was the best decision. All the teachers are fantastic, super passionate and dedicated to taking care of all kids and also teaching them new things in such a beautiful manner. The school atmosphere is very loving and caring. My son enjoys every moment of his school time and has grown exponentially. He loves it at TLS!”

Introduction

The Pedagogical Policy describes what Three Little Ships (TLS) considers important in terms of nutrition, exercise, sleep, risk and child protection. This policy document describes what we do in terms of health and safety and why we do it the way we do.

TLS believes that a Pedagogical Policy is only propagated and applied when there is support for it within the team. For this reason, the policy was drafted in 2020 in collaboration with management and all colleagues and then submitted to the TLS parents' committee for advice. Every year, (new) parents are informed about the Pedagogical Policy and it is posted on the website.

In 2023, it was decided to change the format. This resulted in a separate document for parents, elaborating on how we give concrete form to this policy.

The Pedagogical Policy is kept 'alive' by discussing it during team meetings. Substitute staff, volunteers and interns are informed of any changes.



Pedagogical objectives

The Dutch law on pre-school education (Wet Innovatie en Kwaliteit Kinderopvang) states: “Responsible preschool education contributes to a good and healthy development of the child in a safe environment”. The law specifies four development objectives which are based on research of Mrs. M. Riksen-Walraven¹:

1. Providing a feeling of emotional security
2. Stimulating personal competencies
3. Stimulating social competencies
4. Socialisation: offering (cultural) rules, norms and values

The HSV organisation feels that the words 'nurturing', 'encouraging' and 'modelling' will best describe children's development in relation to these areas. Therefore, the four developmental objectives based on research of Mrs. M. Riksen-Walraven will be described as follows:

1. Providing a feeling of emotional security
2. Nurturing personal qualities and skills
3. Nurturing social qualities and skills
4. Socialisation: encouraging and modelling (cultural) rules, norms and values

The way in which TLS pursues the pedagogical objectives is set out on the next pages.

¹Riksen-Walraven, M. (2004). 'Pedagogische Kwaliteit in de kinderopvang: doelstellingen en kwaliteitscriteria'. In: IJzendoorn, R. van, Tavecchio, L., Riksen-Walraven, M., *De Kwaliteit van de Nederlandse Kinderopvang* (pp 100-124). Amsterdam: Boom.

Providing a feeling of emotional security

Having emotional security is one of the basic human needs of any child. It is even more important for children who move on a regular basis because of the expatriate lives of their parents.

In TLS a feeling of security is created by and maintained through:

- a consistent team of teaching assistants;
- a stable group of children of more or less the same age that generally remains the same throughout the school year;
- an identified place for each child in the group;
a well-organised classroom with various areas for learning through play;



- clear rules on how to interact with each other and with the environment using songs and materials of PBS (Positive Behaviour Support) of which the core values are: *“Be respectful, be safe, be responsible”*;
- a strong link between the preschool and the parents through communication via email or the Seesaw app (message function), the weekly newsletter, open mornings, a meeting by the mentor after the child has been at school for 6 weeks and one in March to discuss their child’s progress.

Nurturing personal qualities and skills

The development of personal qualities and skills such as resilience, independence, self-confidence, flexibility and creativity enables children to cope with all sorts of challenges and adapt successfully to changing circumstances. Children develop these qualities and skills through playing and investigating their environment.

In TLS personal qualities and skills are stimulated by:

- planning in the moment², an educational pedagogy that is child led; (see below in this policy document);
- the educational materials that are available in the preschool are appropriate to the age and developmental level of the children;
- the children are given the time and space to initiate and develop their activities, while being facilitated by the staff members to challenge themselves to develop their ideas further;

- a safe and supportive environment in which children are given opportunities to resolve challenges on their own or with others and develop personal competencies;
- the self-help skills of eating and drinking and personal hygiene are practised daily;
- the development of children's self-confidence through verbal praise.



Nurturing social qualities and skills

Social qualities and skills include the ability to consider another person's point of view, to communicate, to cooperate, to assist with others, to prevent and solve conflicts and the development of social responsibility. Being part of a group and having opportunities for interacting with peers are important in the development of social qualities and skills. Social qualities and skills are also developed by working cooperatively with others, by waiting for a turn in a game and by helping others.



The Three Little Ships preschool offers many opportunities for social interactions in different ways:

- the staff members provide activities in flexible groupings;
- children play in large and in small groups with their peers;
- the presence of children with additional needs in the same preschool class offers a unique possibility to learn skills for helping each other;
- the staff members stimulate positive interactions between the children, supporting them when necessary. ;
- the staff members model positive interactions between themselves and with the children, providing a good example for children to imitate.



Socialisation: Encouraging and modelling (cultural) rules, norms and values

Joining the Three Little Ships preschool may give children the first opportunity to meet children from different family backgrounds. Parents of children in preschool have many different nationalities and cultures. They may also have different values (beliefs) and norms (behaviours) from each other and may have different ideas about upbringing.

The school is based on Western European norms of upbringing and education. The children are taught that the preschool has its own rules, which may sometimes be different from those at home. The preschool aims to prepare the children to take their place in an international school community. The preschool also plays a role in informing the parents about international school expectations, creating a bridge between home and (future) school.

The following values (beliefs) and norms (behaviours) are important for the pre-school and are taught to the children: respect, equality, solidarity, honesty, justice, consideration and environmental respect.



Staff members have an important role in creating a classroom atmosphere where these norms and values are put in practice. Through watching the behaviour of the staff members, the children learn positive, friendly and open ways of engaging with each other.

Planning in the moment

Here the child is free to interact with the environment on their terms - following their interests and intrinsic needs. The teachers become observers of the children ready to enhance their learning by posing open-ended questions and facilitating the next steps of their learning journey. In this way the children's levels of involvement rise³.

Planning in the moment includes three steps:

The Child's Spark – This is when the child first shows an interest in something. There should be an air of fascination around the object and concentration in what they are now doing.

The Teachable Moment – The teacher will notice this and approach the child. This is the opportunity to extend their interest, by asking open-ended questions and considering ways to apply this interest to other options within the environment.

The Documentation – At a later date, we document the observation. This will help to map out each child's interests and plan an environment that works for them all.

³ The Leuven Scale for Involvement , Ferre Laevers

Development matters

Six different areas of focus are distinguished. Regular meetings of the staff members ensure that children's individual needs are responded to (In line with the Developmental Matters norms) and that adaptations to the environment can be made effectively and efficiently.

Communication, Language and Literacy

The children in the preschool speak a variety of languages at home. It is important for the children to learn to understand and speak English, as they are most likely to continue their education in English-medium international schools. Language learning is a fundamental part of the curriculum for all the children.



Personal, Social and Emotional Development

These areas have been described in more detail in the previous sections 'Pedagogical objectives: Nurturing personal qualities and skills and Nurturing social qualities and skills.'

Physical and (sensory) Development

Physical and sensory development skills include both gross and fine motor skills, and the development of the senses: feeling, smelling, tasting, hearing and seeing. It is important that children have opportunities to play inside the class, outside in the playground and inside in a gym to learn, develop and practise these skills.



Mathematics

Mathematical skills and language are fundamental to problem-solving and critical thinking. Mathematical concepts are taught as part of the routines of the day. The children are stimulated to use mathematics in their own chosen play activities, for example, when playing in the home corner, counting how many plates and cups they need to lay the table for everyone.



Understanding of the world

Children are naturally curious about themselves and their world. The children in TLS come from many different countries and cultures and this gives the pre-school exciting learning opportunities for children to develop an interest in the lives of others and to develop understanding and tolerance.

Expressive Arts and Design

The creative process is more important than the end result. The creative expression of the children often reflects their interests, and their development, as they explore new ideas, practise vocabulary and reinforce their own learning.

Learning outside the classroom

The preschool children have access to the international school facilities. They visit the mini-gym once a week and the large gym for a lesson with our trained gym teacher also once a week. The children also visit the library in the school once a week: They choose a book to take home to read and share with their parents and siblings and return it a week later.

The Three Little Ships team believes that outdoor learning both in and outside school is vital to the development of the child. In 'Planning in the moment', free flow opportunities arise at different times of the day when the children can choose where they play; in the class, corridor or outside on the TLS / IDF playground. A safe outdoor environment has been created with the specific needs of preschool children in mind. This area is fenced off from the main school playground for safety and includes a small house with a slide and a diverse assortment of outdoor materials. This area is shared with other school-aged children (IDF) and sometimes it is only for the preschool children. The adults move around on the playground so that all the children are constantly in view.



Staffing

The TLS team is led by the head of school. The head of recruitment and admissions is responsible for recruiting. The head of school, leader for learning and preschool coordinator are jointly responsible for leading the pedagogical programme of the preschool.

The quality of the staff members is clearly of the utmost importance in achieving the four educational goals. They are expected to have a thorough understanding of typical developmental milestones for 2-5 year olds (Development Matters). The staff members are expected to adhere to and be able to demonstrate the values and norms described in 'Pedagogical Objectives'.

The staff members are qualified to work with young children, according to Dutch qualification standards, and most have specific experience or qualifications relating to children with additional needs.

Children

Mentor

Each child is assigned to a mentor during their time in the TLS classroom. A notice on the parents' noticeboard and via email informs the parents of the mentor assigned to their child. The mentor tracks the child's development through Development Matters and is responsible for communicating the progress of the child (at parent conferences), or any concerns, to the parents and preschool coordinator.

The first parent teacher conference is 6 weeks after the child starts to share how they have settled in and address questions and/or concerns. The staff members complete an early years developmental assessment (three times per school year) of each child. The assessments are completed approximately around October, February and June. Verbal feedback is given to the parents in a 15 minute meeting after the October and February assessments. (If the child joins at the beginning of the school year). At the end of the school year, each child will receive a written progress report reflecting the final assessment and describing the development of their time in the TLS class.



Children with additional needs

The Three Little Ships has a lot of in-house expertise regarding the development and behaviour of children; many of the staff are trained and/or experienced in working with children with additional (learning) needs. If there are concerns about a child's development or if a learning disorder is suspected, then the child can generally stay in the Three Little Ships preschool while assessment and initial therapy takes place.

The parents will be advised by the staff about any concerns regarding their child. They will be put in touch with the therapists who work in the school who are able to carry out observations and assessments. There is a child psychologist attached to the school who can also be consulted. The preschool tracks children with additional needs in a more detailed and structured manner using the program B squared. Parents are informed of any concerns as they arise. The staff members work on the IEP (Individual Education Plan) goals on a daily basis with the children with additional needs to ensure that goals are being met and progress is being tracked carefully.



Future schooling

Many of the children transfer to local international schools. These schools send requests to the Three Little Ships coordinator for developmental information and references. These requests and references are completed, after written consent has been received from the parents. Some schools also wish to observe applicants in the preschool setting. These observations are arranged by the TLS coordinator at an appropriate time for the class and after permission has been received from the parents. School reports are not passed to the next school by the Three Little Ships. Parents are asked to supply the reports to the schools themselves.

Class organization

Permanent faces criterion and Staff-student-ratio

There are five permanent staff members working at TLS. There is a ratio of one staff member per eight children. Because children with additional needs attend the preschool, an extra member of staff is employed full-time to support these children and the team. This means that three staff members are present each day. In case of absence of one of the permanent staff members due to illness and/or (special) leave, she is replaced as much as possible by one of the other permanent staff members. If this is not possible, a known substitute from the Haagsche Schoolvereniging will fill in.

At lunchtime, a volunteer lunch-time supervisor attends the class for an hour to enable the permanent staff members to have their break on a rotational basis.

For off-site trips, a ratio of one staff member to four children is applied.



Substitute staff

The Head of School aims to keep a list of available substitute staff who can fill in for absent staff. Substitute staff hold relevant, approved diplomas; they have a current VOG and are entered in the Personenregister Kinderopvang.

Volunteers

At lunchtime, volunteers assist in the classroom, under the direction of the preschool staff members. All volunteers are interviewed by the Lunchtime Coordinator before being added to the rota. Lunchtime volunteers have a current VOG and are entered in the Personenregister Kinderopvang.

Volunteers are also used to accompany the preschool children on school trips. These are always in addition to the preschool staff members and are often parents of the preschool children.

Interns

The preschool occasionally has an intern on work placement. A work placement can only be agreed by the Head of School and a formal interview of the intern takes place before the placement is agreed. A contract is signed by the Head of School and the intern or the intern's mentor. The intern has to have a current VOG and is entered in the Personenregister Kinderopvang. Evaluations of the intern's work are carried out by the preschool coordinator and the Head of School.