

BLACKBERRY HOUSE Day Nursery

& Forest School



Blackberries Childcare Group Blogs

Spring 2026

News, updates and stories
from across our nurseries



Blackberries Childcare Group - May 2026

Michalina Jonczyk – Early Years People and Quality Assurance Lead

BLACKBERRY HOUSE Day Nursery & Forest School

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BABY ROOM LITTLE CHEFS

Chopping Salad – Exploring New Textures & Tastes

Following on from last week's Little Chefs session chopping fruit, we are now exploring **vegetables and salad!**

Baby Led,
Baby
Focused
FUN!



ABOUT OUR BABY ROOM LITTLE CHEFS SESSION

Today our little chefs are exploring a variety of salad vegetables including **tomatoes, celery sticks and peppers.**

Babies are supported to explore, touch, smell, taste and chop using a child-safe knife. This is all about the experience, not the end result!

We follow each baby's lead, encouraging curiosity, independence and choice every step of the way.



WHAT ARE WE DOING?

- 1 Exploring the vegetables**
Looking, touching, smelling and feeling the different colours and textures. 
- 2 Talking together**
Introducing new words for the vegetables and their colours. 
- 3 Chopping with care**
Babies are shown how to use a child-safe knife and encouraged to have a go in their own way. 
- 4 Tasting and discovering**
Trying new flavours and textures at their own pace. 
- 5 Reflecting and celebrating**
We celebrate effort, choices and new discoveries! 

VEGETABLES WE'RE EXPLORING TODAY



TOMATOES

Soft, juicy and full of colour!



CELERY STICKS

Crunchy and interesting to chew!



PEPPERS

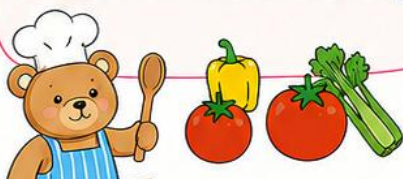
Bright, colourful and sweet!

We introduce new textures and tastes gently and respect each baby's individual preferences.



BENEFITS OF OUR LITTLE CHEFS SESSION

- ♥ Encourages independence and confidence
- ♥ Builds fine motor skills and hand strength
- ♥ Develops coordination using a knife
- ♥ Introduces new textures, tastes and smells
- ♥ Supports language development – colours, vegetable names and describing words
- ♥ Encourages healthy eating habits
- ♥ Promotes curiosity, exploration and problem solving
- ♥ Builds concentration and resilience
- ♥ Supports self-help skills and mealtimes
- ♥ Promotes social interaction and turn taking



Every baby explores, learns and enjoys in their own special way.

We celebrate every step!

LINKS TO THE EYFS

-  **Personal, Social and Emotional Development**
Building confidence, independence and self-care skills. Making choices and expressing likes and dislikes.
-  **Communication and Language**
Listening, speaking and expanding vocabulary. Learning new words for colours, vegetables and describing words.
-  **Physical Development**
Developing fine motor skills, hand strength and coordination when chopping and handling tools.
-  **Understanding the World**
Exploring the natural world, noticing similarities and differences in vegetables, textures, colours and tastes.
-  **Expressive Arts and Design**
Being creative, using senses to explore and expressing ideas through actions and play.



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Corby's Forest School Blog: Bug Hunting Adventure



Our recent forest school session was filled with curiosity, creativity, and hands-on exploration as the children immersed themselves in the world of bugs.

We began the session with a simple plan created by staff, linking our activities to the curriculum while ensuring opportunities for exploration and discovery. However, as always in forest school, the true direction of the session was led by the children—their interests, questions, and excitement shaped the experience.



Exploring and Hunting for Bugs

The children eagerly set off on a bug hunt, using magnifying glasses and small collection pots to carefully search for insects in their natural habitats. Logs were gently lifted, leaves turned over, and explored with great focus and care. There was a real sense of awe as the children discovered different bugs, from tiny crawling insects to moving beetles.

Using magnifying glasses allowed the children to look more closely, encouraging observation skills and sparking conversations about what they could see. Together, we talked about the bugs' features, where they lived, and why they might choose those environments.



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Creative Exploration

The children were invited to extend their learning through creativity. Using clay, they moulded and shaped their own bugs, carefully adding details they had noticed during their hunt. Some created long worms, others made beetles with textured backs, showing how their observations translated into their play.

We also played a fun game of *Beetle*, where the children rolled dice to draw different parts of a ladybird. This encouraged turn-taking, listening, and excitement as their bugs gradually came to life on paper.

Following the Child's Lead



Although the session was planned with clear intentions, it was the children's choices that guided the flow. Some children spent a long time deeply engaged in bug hunting, while others moved between exploring, creating, and observing. This flexibility is a key part of forest school, allowing each child to learn in a way that feels meaningful to them.

Linking to the EYFS

This session supported several areas of learning within the EYFS:

- **Understanding the World:** Children explored living things in their natural environment, developing early knowledge of insects and habitats
- **Communication and Language:** Rich discussions took place as children described what they found and asked questions

- **Physical Development:** Fine motor skills were developed through handling tools, collecting bugs, and moulding clay
- **Personal, Social and Emotional Development:** Children built confidence, worked together, and showed care and respect for living creatures

Importantly, the session also reflected the EYFS principle of **child-led learning**, where children's interests drive meaningful experiences.



The Importance of Outdoor Exploration and Child Choice

Outdoor learning provides a unique and stimulating environment that cannot be replicated indoors. The space, fresh air, and natural resources support children's well-being and engagement. In this session, being outdoors encouraged freedom, movement, and a deeper connection to nature.

Equally important was the emphasis on child choice. Allowing children to decide how they engaged—whether hunting for bugs, observing quietly, or creating with clay—helped them feel empowered and motivated. This autonomy fosters independence, curiosity, and a genuine love of learning.

Extending the Learning Next Time

Building on this session, there are many ways we can extend the children's learning:

- Introduce simple bug identification charts to support early classification skills
- Create bug hotels to encourage insects to visit and allow for longer-term observation
- Revisit the same area to observe changes over time and seasonal differences
- Incorporate storytelling or small world play based on the bugs they discovered
- Encourage mark-making by drawing and labelling bugs in more detail



Final Thoughts

This forest school session highlighted the power of combining planned learning with child-led exploration. From carefully observing tiny insects to creatively expressing their ideas through clay and drawing, the children were fully engaged in meaningful, hands-on experiences.

By valuing children's choices and embracing the natural outdoor environment, we create opportunities for deeper learning, curiosity, and connection with the world around them.

Celebrating 100 Years of Sir David Attenborough in Our Peterborough Nursery 🌿



Our nursery celebrated a very special milestone — the 100th birthday of Sir David Attenborough, a lifelong explorer of the natural world and an inspiration to generations of children and adults alike.

Sir David Attenborough David Attenborough has spent his life helping us understand and care for the planet, making him the perfect inspiration for our own learning about animals, habitats, and the environment.

Across the week, the children immersed themselves in a range of hands-on, sensory, and creative activities designed to spark curiosity about wildlife and the natural world.

Animal Exploration and Imaginative Play 🐾

To kick off our celebration, the children took part in an animal dress-up day, arriving as their favourite creatures. From roaring lions to fluttering butterflies, the nursery was filled with excitement and imagination.

We extended this through:

- Reading a variety of animal-themed story books
- Talking about different habitats and where animals live
- Encouraging children to describe animal movements and sounds



These activities helped support language development and early communication skills while building knowledge of the world.

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Sensory and Messy Play Experiences 🌿💧

Our sensory play areas were transformed into wild environments:

- A shaving foam sensory tray filled with jungle animals and sea creatures allowed children to explore textures and storytelling
- A spider web sensory tray encouraged fine motor skills as children rescued and moved creatures through the

“web”

- Water play stations using blue and green water represented oceans and ponds, supporting exploration of sea life and habitats

These experiences helped children engage their senses while developing early scientific thinking.



Creative Arts and Natural Materials 🎨🌿

Children explored creativity using both traditional and natural materials:

- Clay making with natural resources such as leaves, sticks, and stones
- Painting wood and natural objects, encouraging observation and texture exploration
- Talking about patterns, shapes, and how materials feel and change

These activities supported expressive arts and design while encouraging curiosity about the natural world.



Caring for Living Things 🌱🐾

A favourite activity was washing toy animals, where children used brushes, sponges, and water to clean animals from different habitats.

This simple but meaningful activity supported:

- Understanding of caring for living things
- Fine motor development
- Early discussions about responsibility and empathy



Building and Role Play: Wilderness Tents 🏕️🌲

The children worked together to create wilderness tents, using fabrics, pegs, and natural materials. This encouraged teamwork, problem-solving, and imaginative storytelling as they pretended to camp in the wild.



Linking to the EYFS Framework 📄

Our activities were carefully planned to support the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS),

particularly:

- **Communication and Language** – through storytelling, animal discussions, and role play
- **Personal, Social and Emotional Development** – teamwork, sharing resources, and caring for animals
- **Physical Development** – fine motor skills through sensory play, painting, and clay work
- **Understanding the World** – exploring animals, habitats, and natural materials
- **Expressive Arts and Design** – creative making, painting, and imaginative play

These experiences helped children learn through play, curiosity, and exploration — all key principles of the EYFS

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Final Thoughts 🌍

Celebrating the legacy of Sir David Attenborough helped us inspire awe and wonder in the natural world. The children showed incredible curiosity, care, and creativity throughout the week, and we look forward to continuing to explore wildlife and habitats in our future learning.

Carrot Cake cupcakes



The children enjoyed making carrot cake as part of a fun and engaging cooking activity. They explored the different textures of the ingredients, feeling the softness of the flour and the stickiness of the mixture, and some children tasted small pieces of carrot. As we mixed the ingredients together, the children watched with curiosity as the texture changed and the ingredients combined into a thick



batter. They then helped to scoop the mixture into cake cases, supporting the development of their hand-eye coordination and early independence. This activity also linked to the areas of learning, particularly **Mathematics** through early measuring, scooping and filling, **Communication and Language** as practitioners talked with the children about what they could see, feel and taste, and **Physical Development** as the children used their hands and tools to mix and scoop. The experience encouraged curiosity, sensory exploration and early participation in simple cooking activities.





Bunny Cupcakes



The under 2's enjoyed making bunny cupcakes using a simple recipe of flour, sugar, baking powder, cinnamon and butter. The children explored the ingredients and took part in mixing them together, watching how the texture changed as the ingredients combined to form the cake mixture. To create the bunny ear shape, we placed a small piece of foil in the side of the cupcake tin, gently pushing the case in to form the ears. The children were very engaged in the process and enjoyed helping to scoop the mixture into the cases.

Once the cakes were baked and cooled, the children used a vegan buttercream to decorate their bunny cupcakes. They had great fun spreading and adding the icing, exploring the texture while developing their hand-eye coordination and early fine motor skills. All of the children participated well in the activity and were very proud of the finished results!





Art with Michalina



We recently had a wonderful opportunity for our Preschool children to explore their creativity through art with Michalina.

She kindly brought in some of her own artwork from home, which sparked lots of curiosity and discussion. The children enjoyed talking about what they could see, while Michalina explained the materials and techniques she had used.



Inspired by this, the children were invited to create their own artwork using a wide range of resources, including different types of brushes, rollers, and wooden tools.

Furniture was moved to create space, allowing them to work on the floor and use their gross motor skills to explore art in a more physical and



expressive way. Many of the children naturally extended their exploration by using their hands, fully immersing themselves in the sensory experience. The session lasted for nearly two hours, with children coming and going, deeply engaged in mixing colours, experimenting with techniques, and discovering new ways to paint.



Our Lower Preschool children have also been inspired by this approach, and we have continued to extend their interests by incorporating seasonal elements. Recently, preschool and toddler children have been creating artwork using flowers and natural resources found around our garden's areas, linking creativity with the world around them.



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These experiences play a key role in supporting school readiness, particularly in developing early mark-making skills. Through exploring a variety of tools, movements, and surfaces, children are strengthening the muscles needed for later writing, as well as building confidence in expressing their ideas. The freedom to explore on both small and large scales encourages children to experiment with control, coordination, and creativity—laying strong foundations for writing and communication.



This experience strongly supports the principles of the EYFS, particularly within Expressive Arts and Design and Physical Development. Encouraging children to explore, use and refine a variety of artistic effects, and to develop their own ideas and creativity through open-ended experiences. It also aligns with the Ofsted Education Inspection Framework,

promoting a rich, engaging curriculum and high-quality interactions that support children to become deeply involved in their learning.



Michalina was fantastic, and it was a pleasure to see her so engaged and passionate, sharing her love of art with the children. The children thoroughly enjoyed the experience, and it has been wonderful to see their creativity continue to grow.



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Babies in the Mud Kitchen

During our recent mud kitchen session, I observed how sensory play—particularly through smell—allowed every baby to take part in their own way. Some babies actively reached for the herbs, squeezing and exploring them with their hands, while others were more observant, quietly taking in the scents around them. One baby remained still, simply watching and smelling, showing that participation doesn't always need to be physical to be meaningful.



There was no “right way” for the babies to engage, which naturally removed barriers and supported an inclusive experience for all. Each child interacted at their own pace and in their own way, reinforcing the importance of offering open-ended opportunities.

In this session, inclusion was evident through how the environment was set up and how the babies responded:



- Resources such as herbs and flowers were placed within easy reach, allowing even less mobile babies to access them independently
- The use of strong, natural scents like mint and lavender supported babies who relied more on sensory input beyond vision
- Some babies revisited the same herbs repeatedly, showing how familiar smells can provide comfort and support those who

benefit from routine

- The calm outdoor space helped babies who may feel overwhelmed remain regulated and engaged



This experience reinforced that inclusion comes from adapting the environment, not the child. By doing so, we created a space where every baby could feel a sense of belonging.

Taking the session outdoors added noticeable value. The babies had more space to move freely, and the natural environment seemed to spark greater curiosity. The fresh air and open space supported their well-being, with several babies remaining engaged for periods than usual.

Linking to the EYFS

- Communication and Language: Babies were exposed to simple descriptive language such as "smell the mint" and "that's fresh," supporting early vocabulary development
- Physical Development: Picking herbs, grasping petals, and stirring supported fine motor skills
- Personal, Social and Emotional Development: The calm, inclusive environment helped babies feel safe and confident to explore
- Understanding the World: Babies engaged with natural materials, beginning to make connections with plants and their environment

The Role of the Adult

During the session, we focused on observing how each baby chose to engage and responded accordingly. Rather than directing play, we modelled simple language and allowed the babies time to explore without interruption. Small adaptations such as repositioning resources or simplifying the space helped ensure all babies could participate comfortably.



This session highlighted how important it is to slow down and give babies the time and space they need.

This mud kitchen experience showed that even simple activities can become powerful learning opportunities when they are inclusive and sensory-rich. Watching the babies smell herbs, crush leaves, and engage with the natural environment demonstrated how meaningful these small moments are.

It reinforced for me that by providing thoughtful, adaptable environments especially outdoors we can support every baby to explore, learn, and develop a sense of curiosity about the world around them.



Forest School Stay and Play at March

We were delighted to welcome our families to our recent Forest School Stay and Play session, where everyone had the opportunity to explore, create and learn together in our outdoor environment.

The children thoroughly enjoyed making woodland creatures from clay, using a variety of natural



resources such as sticks, leaves, seeds and flowers to add details to their creations. This encouraged the children to use their imagination, express their ideas and explore different textures and materials found in nature.

Our mud kitchen was a hive of activity as the children and their families worked together to create imaginative potions using natural resources collected from around the Forest School



area. The children poured, stirred, experimented with different materials, developing their and creativity engaging in rich conversations with peers and



mixed, and with curiosity while with their families.

During our Forest School circle time, everyone came together to sing familiar Forest School songs and share experiences from the session. This provided opportunities for children to build confidence, develop listening and attention skills and feel part of the wider group.

Another popular activity was creating bubble wands using natural materials. The children explored different shapes and sizes, testing their creations and discovering which designs worked best for making bubbles. This encouraged problem-solving, investigation and critical thinking skills.

The children also worked with their families to create shapes using natural resources found within the environment. They carefully selected sticks, leaves, stones and other materials to construct a variety of shapes, developing their mathematical understanding while exploring the outdoor environment. Throughout the session, the children demonstrated a real sense of curiosity, confidence and independence as they explored the Forest School environment. It was wonderful to see families learning alongside their children and sharing in their excitement and discoveries.



This experience provided valuable opportunities for children to connect with nature, develop their creativity and strengthen relationships with both their peers and family members through shared learning experiences.

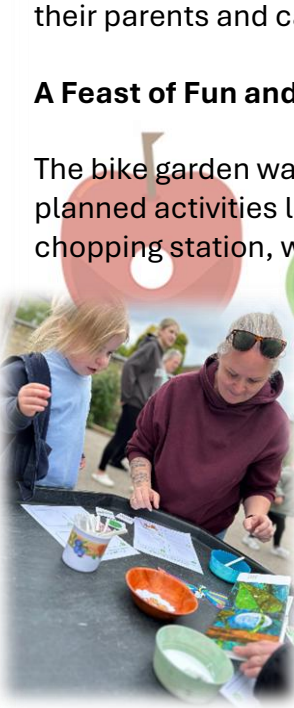
Hungry Caterpillar Stay & Play in the Bike Garden

A joyful afternoon of exploration, creativity, and partnership in our Lower Preschool

Our Lower Preschool children recently enjoyed a *Hungry Caterpillar Stay & Play* session in the bike garden, bringing learning to life through hands-on activities inspired by the much-loved story. With families invited to join, the session created a warm, collaborative atmosphere where children could explore, create, and grow alongside their parents and carers.

A Feast of Fun and Learning

The bike garden was transformed into a learning space filled with planned activities linked to the story. One of the highlights was the fruit-chopping station, where children explored healthy foods such as oranges, apples, and pears. With support from adults, they practised safe cutting skills, developed hand-eye coordination, and engaged in meaningful conversations about textures, colours, and tastes. This activity not only encouraged independence but also promoted early understanding of healthy eating.



Nearby, creativity flourished at the painting tray. Children designed and decorated their own butterflies using a variety of colours and tools. This expressive activity supported fine motor development while allowing children to explore symmetry, patterns, and imagination—key elements of early artistic development.

Story Sequencing and Communication

To deepen their connection with the story, children took part in a sequencing activity, retelling the journey of the Hungry Caterpillar. Using visual prompts, they worked alongside their parents to place events in order. This supported early literacy skills, including comprehension, recall, and language development, while also building confidence in storytelling.

Active Play and Physical Development

The session also included a ball pit and parachute games, which brought energy and excitement to the afternoon. These activities supported gross motor development, coordination, and teamwork. The parachute in particular encouraged children to follow instructions, cooperate with others, and experience the joy of shared play.

The Importance of Parent Partnership

A key focus of the session was strengthening the partnership between parents and the setting. By participating in activities alongside their children, parents gained insight into how learning is supported through play. It also provided an opportunity for practitioners to model interactions, share ideas, and celebrate each child's development.



These shared experiences help build strong relationships, ensuring consistency between home and setting. When parents are actively involved in their child's learning journey, children feel more secure, confident, and motivated to explore.

Links to the EYFS

The session was thoughtfully planned in line with the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) framework, supporting

all areas of learning:

- **Communication and Language:** Through storytelling, discussions, and shared activities.
- **Physical Development:** Via fruit chopping, painting, and active play.
- **Personal, Social and Emotional Development:** Encouraging collaboration, confidence, and independence.
- **Literacy:** Story sequencing and engagement with familiar texts.
- **Understanding the World:** Exploring food, nature, and life cycles.
- **Expressive Arts and Design:** Creative butterfly painting and imaginative play.



The Hungry Caterpillar Stay & Play session was a wonderful celebration of learning through play, curiosity, and connection. It highlighted how meaningful experiences—especially those shared with families—can nurture a love of learning and support every child's development in a holistic way.



We look forward to welcoming families to more sessions like this!



Toddlers Stay and Play



Spring bloom

Our toddler Stay and Play session was filled with the beauty and wonder of our “Spring Bloom” theme. The children explored a variety of exciting sensory and investigative activities that encouraged curiosity, creativity, and early learning through play.

The toddlers loved matching the colourful spaghetti “worms” to the correct coloured bowls. This activity supported colour recognition, hand-eye coordination, and fine motor development while providing lots of fun and laughter.

The children also enjoyed using clay to mould and create different insects, using their imagination and developing their finger strength and control. Alongside this, they explored pressing plastic insects into play dough, creating patterns and prints while talking about the different bugs they could see.



In our mud kitchen, the children made their own “flower soup” using natural materials such as petals, leaves, and water. This sensory experience encouraged imaginative play, communication, and teamwork as the children mixed and served their creations to one another.

Another exciting investigation activity involved scooping soil into magnifying glass cups so the children could closely explore what creatures might be living underneath. The children were fascinated as they searched for insects and worms, encouraging their curiosity about the natural world and developing early scientific thinking skills.

We were also very pleased to welcome Fiona, our Lower Pre-School Room Leader, who brought some of the Lower Pre-School children to join our Stay and Play session. This was a wonderful opportunity for the toddlers to meet some of the children they may be playing with when they transition into Lower Pre-School in September.

It was also lovely for parents to meet Fiona and begin building those important relationships ahead of the transition. Fiona spent time introducing herself to families, helping to create a sense of familiarity and reassurance for both children and parents as they prepare for this exciting next step.

Thank you to all the families who joined us for such a wonderful spring-themed session full of exploration, creativity, and fun!



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Earth day!

The under 2's have been learning about earth day!

We have carried out a variety of different activities, these include, leaf rubbing, water printing of leaves, painting the world using dabbers and fingers, we then created a colour mixing activity with the colours blue and green.

We have been enabling the children to explore the world around them whilst looking at the different schemas to support their development.

This week we have focused on the empty and filling schema and dabbling schema.



From this activity, we have been introducing new language to the under 2's such as pouring, mixing etc. The under 2's have grasped these activities very well and are now at a strong point of being confident in schemas and understanding the different techniques.

Under 2's Little Chefs at March

Creating our very own mini pizzas



The children took part in a **Little Chefs activity**, where they used wraps and a variety of ingredients to create their own pizzas. To ensure inclusion, we used **vegan ingredients** to support a child in our unit, and together the children made a **snowman pizza** using vegan chicken, vegan cheese, tomatoes, and tomato purée. Each child had their own bowl of ingredients and was encouraged to **cut their own wrap**, spread the purée independently, and **choose their own toppings**,

supporting independence and fine motor skills. Children were also given the opportunity to **taste the leftover vegan ingredients**, allowing them to explore new

textures and flavours. This was a fantastic hands-on experience, and **every child was fully engaged and participated with enthusiasm.**



Northern Lights Biscuits



For our **Northern Lights** shortbread biscuits, the children explored colour mixing and how shades blend together to create new effects. As they added and **swirled the colours**, they developed their fine motor skills through using pincer and palm grasps, strengthening the **small muscles** in their hands that support **early mark-making and self-feeding skills**. This activity also encouraged creativity, curiosity and sensory exploration, as the children observed changes in **colour and texture**. The children practised **turn-taking**, built their **attention and concentration skills**, and were introduced to **new descriptive language** linked to colours and patterns.



Snowflake Shortbread Biscuits

We also made snowflake shortbread biscuits, spreading butter icing and sprinkling desiccated coconut to create a frosty finish. This activity supported **hand-eye coordination and control** as the children used tools to spread and sprinkle. They explored different textures, noticing the smoothness of the icing and the light, flaky feel of the

coconut. Through this experience, the babies **developed independence and decision-making skills**, as all ingredients were laid out for them to choose from. Encouraging choice has had a very positive impact in the Under 2s room, helping children to feel **calm, safe and confident** around food. As a result, we are seeing greater willingness to try new tastes and textures, building healthy relationships with food from an early age.





Puff Pastry Flowers

The children thoroughly enjoyed taking part in our puff pastry flower baking activity. They carefully used cutters to shape two pieces of puff pastry, before selecting their preferred filling from a choice of lemon curd or jam.



Our younger children (under twos) were supported in creating a small hole in one of the pastry shapes before thoughtfully placing the second piece on top. The pastries were then baked to perfection, and once cooled, the children finished them with a light dusting of icing sugar.

This hands-on activity provided a wonderful opportunity to develop fine motor skills, encourage independence, and explore simple cooking processes in a fun and engaging way.



Upper Preschool School Readiness Stay and Play 20th May 2026



Our Stay and Play session focused on school readiness and how to support children transitioning to school in September. Each of our activities provided an insight into how they support children's development for school



readiness. Every area reflected the 7 Areas of Learning as outlined in the Development Matters document.

Our Personal, Social and Emotional Development area was linked to the story *The Colour Monster Goes to School*, which explores the range of emotions children may experience when starting school.



Our literacy area was supported with books about starting school,

and it was lovely to see parents reading these stories with their children. In our writing area, each child had a laminated sheet with their name written on it, and they proudly showed their parents how well they can write their names. Some parents commented on how amazed they were by their children's progress in name writing.



We also received lovely feedback from parents who shared that their child is recognising letters at home, highlighting the importance of our "Letter of the Week" activities. Although it may not always seem evident at the time that children are taking in the information, comments like these from parents show us that our activities and support are having a positive impact on the children's learning and development.



A particularly popular area was Understanding the World, where activities were based on the children's current interests in minibeasts. It was wonderful to hear one child telling their parent about the bug hunt we had been on earlier that day during Forest School. They described the insects we found, where we found them, and collected the plastic insects from the tray to show their parent. The child also spoke confidently about using a checklist sheet to tick

off the insects they discovered.



The Upper Preschool staff spoke with parents about any concerns they may have regarding their child starting school and offered practical advice on how they can support their children at home. This information was also displayed in frames around the room, which parents said they found especially useful.

The best part for us Preschool staff was watching the children proudly showing their parents their artwork on the notice boards as well as speaking about what they have been doing in Preschool.



Celebrating David Attenborough 100th birthday in Upper Preschool at Corby

Our day began in Forest School, where we started with circle time and discussed how to stay safe in the forest so that we do not



hurt ourselves or the animals and insects around us. We spoke about who David Attenborough is and why he is being celebrated. Being one hundred years old is amazing but I am not too sure the children understood what this meant. I have to say, some of the children thought it was our Chef David's birthday!



As the children arrived dressed as either explorers or animals, we decided to play a game of hide and seek where the “animals” hid amongst the trees and the “explorers” had to find them. All this exploring and hiding is challenging work, so afterwards we sat down together for a snack and read a story.

We then went on a dinosaur hunt using our binoculars and magnifying glasses. The children discovered dinosaurs hidden even trying to
Once they found a
for their friends to



in the grass and
climb trees.
dinosaur, they would hide it again
find.





We also discussed different animals and where the children thought they might live, such as in forests, jungles, or oceans. The children then used modelling clay to create some of these animals.

After lunch, we watched clips from David Attenborough's programmes, and the children were fascinated by the gorillas in the jungle. We also explored the jungle and ocean tuff trays and talked about the different animals found within them.

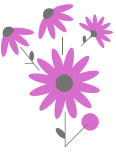
Being explorers is hard work!





Teddy Bear Picnic Stay & Play

April 2026



We recently hosted a wonderful Teddy Bear Picnic Stay & Play session in our baby room garden, and what a fantastic day it was! The outdoor space was full of excitement, curiosity, and laughter as children and their families joined us for a busy afternoon of play, discovery, and shared experiences in the fresh air.



Our garden was carefully set up to provide a rich variety of sensory and exploratory activities; all thoughtfully linked to the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS).

In the mud kitchen, children explored herbs and flowers, mixing, scooping, and smelling as they created imaginative "recipes." This supported *Understanding the World* through exploration of natural materials, alongside *Communication and Language* as children and adults talked about what they could see, feel, and smell.

Children explored a range of musical instruments, investigating how to make different sounds by shaking, tapping, and banging. This encouraged curiosity and self-expression, supporting *Expressive Arts and Design*, while also developing listening skills within *Communication and Language*.

At the easel, children engaged in mark-making using a variety of tools, supporting early *Literacy* skills and strengthening muscles needed for writing within *Physical Development*. The bubble machine encouraged children to move, reach, and pop bubbles, promoting coordination and *Physical Development*, as well as shared enjoyment.



The sandpit offered opportunities for digging and filling, supporting *Mathematics* through early concepts such as capacity, while the ball pit with guttering allowed children to explore movement and cause and effect, linking to both *Understanding the World* and *Physical Development*.

Imaginative play flourished during our teddy bear picnic, where children explored baskets of pretend food with their teddies, supporting *Personal, Social and Emotional Development* and *Communication and Language*. We then came together to enjoy a shared picnic, helping children build a sense of belonging and develop social skills.

The Importance of Parent Partnership

A particularly special part of the session was not only the children's learning, but the time created for parents to connect with one another.

Stay & Play sessions provide a valuable space for parents to slow down, spend quality time with their children, and engage with other families who are experiencing similar stages of early parenthood. Within the relaxed garden environment, parents were able to talk openly, share experiences, and reflect on their journeys.

For many families, time apart from their babies, especially in the early days of starting nursery can bring a mix of emotions. Opportunities like this allow parents to reflect on separation, share feelings, and gain reassurance from both practitioners and other parents. These conversations help to normalise emotions, build confidence, and strengthen trust in the nursery environment.

This links closely to the EYFS principle of positive relationships, recognising that supporting parents emotionally is just as important as supporting children. When parents feel confident, secure, and listened to, this has a direct positive impact on children's *Personal, Social and Emotional Development*. Children are more likely to feel safe, settled, and ready to explore when they see strong, trusting relationships between home and nursery.

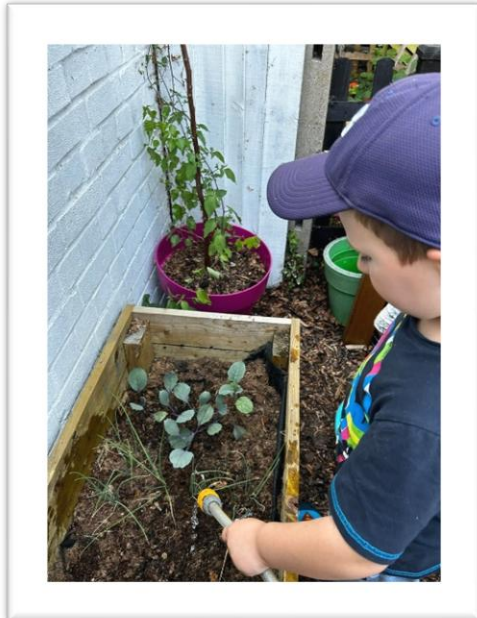
These shared experiences also support the *Characteristics of Effective Learning*, as children benefit from consistent approaches between home and nursery, and from seeing their parents actively involved in their learning environment.

We would like to thank all the families who joined us in the baby room garden for this special event. It was a meaningful day not only for the children's learning, but for building connections, sharing experiences, and supporting one another as a community. We look forward to welcoming you to more Stay & Play sessions soon!



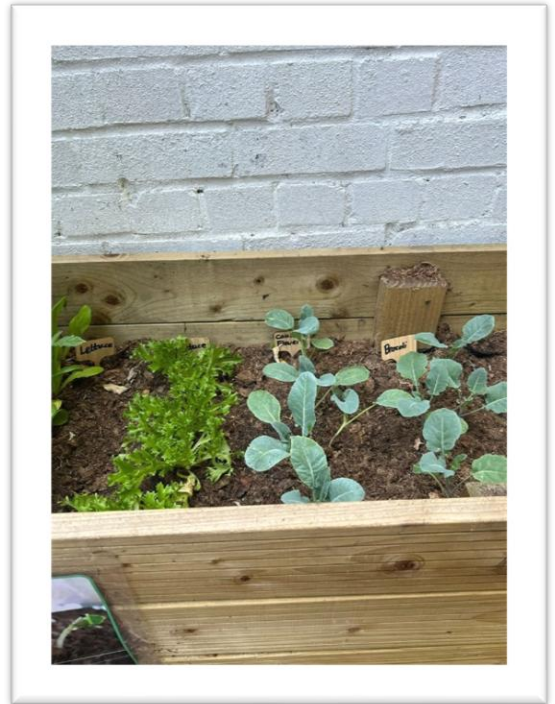
Gardening at Wisbech!

The children had lots of fun planting a variety of vegetables and plants at the beginning of spring. Over the past few weeks, they have taken great pride in caring for them each



day by watering, observing and discussing the changes they could see. It has now come the time to explore the plants that we continue to nurture and look after every day.

We have recently started to see the first fruits of our tomato plants beginning to grow, which the children were very



excited about and proud of. They eagerly shared their

observations with their friends and practitioners, demonstrating curiosity and enthusiasm as they noticed the changes taking place in the garden.

This experience has provided many opportunities for the children to learn about the natural world and understand how living things grow and change over time. Through caring for the plants, the children have been developing their understanding of responsibility, patience and the importance of looking after the environment.

This activity links closely to the Development Matters guidance, supporting children to explore the natural world around them, make observations and talk about what they see. It has also encouraged the Characteristics of Effective Learning, particularly Playing and Exploring, as the children investigated how plants grow; Active Learning, as they remained motivated and engaged in caring for the plants over time; and Creating and Thinking Critically, as they made connections between watering, sunlight and plant growth and discussed their ideas with others.

We look forward to continuing to observe the tomatoes grow and discovering what changes happen next!



Butterfly Release at Wisbech and March

The children have thoroughly enjoyed taking part in our butterfly project at both Wisbech and March. Our journey began when we welcomed a group of caterpillars into the setting. The children showed great care and responsibility as they helped to look after them each day, observing them closely and discussing the changes they could see.

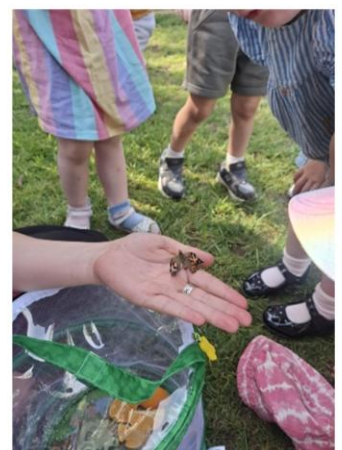
Throughout the experience, the children learned about the lifecycle of a butterfly, from caterpillar to chrysalis and finally to butterfly. They were fascinated by the transformation and eagerly checked on the caterpillars each day to see what had changed. This provided many opportunities for conversations, questions and predictions as the children developed their understanding of growth and change.



Once the butterflies had emerged and were ready to fly, the children gathered together to release them into the environment. There was great excitement as they watched the butterflies spread their wings and fly away. The children spoke about how they had helped care for them and showed a real sense of pride in being part of their journey.

This wonderful experience supported the children's understanding of the natural world and encouraged them to develop respect and care for living things. It also provided opportunities to learn new vocabulary and

discuss life cycles, habitats and the needs of living creatures.



Forest School Stay and Play - Celebrating 100 years of Sir David Attenborough at Wisbech

Our children and families recently came together for a very special Forest School Stay and Play session to celebrate 100 years of Sir David Attenborough and his incredible contribution to our understanding of the natural world.



The children arrived dressed as their favourite animals, creating a wonderful atmosphere filled with excitement and imagination. Throughout the session, families joined the children in a range of Forest School activities designed to encourage exploration, curiosity and a love of nature.

Together, we explored the mud kitchen, investigated different textures and materials, and enjoyed getting messy while developing our sensory experiences.

The children and their families also took part in a bug hunt, carefully searching for minibeasts in their natural habitats and discussing what they found.

This sparked lots of conversation, questioning and opportunities to learn about the creatures that share our environment.

Another popular activity was creating nature-inspired clay models using natural resources found around the Forest School area. The children used sticks, leaves, flowers and other treasures to decorate their creations, demonstrating creativity and problem-solving skills while expressing their own ideas.



Blackberries Childcare Group - May 2026

Michalina Jonczyk – Early Years People and Quality Assurance Lead

The event provided a wonderful opportunity for families to learn alongside their children and celebrate the importance of caring for the natural world, a message that Sir David Attenborough has championed throughout his life. The children showed great enthusiasm as they explored, discovered and shared their findings with others.

This experience linked closely to Development Matters, particularly within Understanding the World, as children explored the natural environment, observed living things and discussed their discoveries. It also supported Communication and Language through conversations with peers, practitioners and family members, as well as Physical Development through digging, searching, collecting and manipulating natural materials.

The activities strongly reflected the Characteristics of Effective Learning. The children demonstrated Playing and Exploring as they investigated the outdoor environment and



discovered new things, Active Learning through their sustained engagement and enthusiasm during each activity, and Creating and Thinking Critically as they solved problems, developed their own ideas and used natural materials in imaginative ways.

We would like to thank all of our families who joined us for this special celebration. It was a fantastic opportunity to come together, enjoy the outdoors and inspire a lifelong appreciation of nature and the world around us

Art Curriculum at Peterborough

At Peterborough, the children have been enthusiastically exploring our carefully planned art curriculum, which introduces them to a variety of focus paintings and artists throughout the year. These experiences provide opportunities for children to investigate colour, shape, texture and different ways of expressing themselves creatively.



Through exploring a range of artwork, the children have been encouraged to discuss what they can see, share their own ideas and make connections between colours, patterns and shapes. They have particularly enjoyed experimenting with colour mixing, discovering how different colours can be combined to create new shades and effects. This hands-on exploration has sparked curiosity and excitement as the children investigate and test their own ideas.

The activities have also supported the development of both fine and gross motor skills. Children have used a variety of tools and techniques, including paintbrushes, sponges, rollers, dabbers and large-scale painting resources. These experiences help to strengthen hand muscles, improve coordination and develop control, while also encouraging children to use larger body movements to create marks and patterns.



Art provides children with valuable opportunities to express themselves, communicate their thoughts and feelings, and develop confidence in sharing their own ideas. Throughout the curriculum, children are encouraged to explore freely, take creative risks and celebrate their unique creations.

By engaging with different artists, paintings and artistic techniques, the children are developing an appreciation of creativity while building important skills that support learning across all areas of the curriculum.



BLACKBERRY HOUSE
Day Nursery
& Forest School



Thank you
for reading 
our newsletter!



We look forward to
sharing more learning
with you soon! 