



**Danemill**  
Primary School

*Only the best is good enough.*

Here in the Early Years Foundation Stage at Danemill Primary School we have done lots of research into how to provide a calming yet stimulating environment for learning. We have visited the Early Excellence Centre in London and taken their ethos on board. We have also researched the Reggio Emilia approach and explored Alistair Bryce Clegg's work. After consolidating our learning from these approaches, we have created our own vision which we believe has had a proven effect on our children's learning and behaviour.

In the Foundation Stage at Danemill Primary School, we have invested a lot of our time into the 'third teacher,' an approach beginning in Northern Italy in which the environment is recognised as a vital part of the children's learning experience. From our investigation into this we have developed our 'third teacher' to provide an engaging and stimulating environment for our children to learn in. We have carefully selected resources to ensure our children have the tools they will require to become inquisitive learners, who are keen to have a go and explore their environment independently. You may notice when you are in our setting that there are a variety of carefully selected resources presented to our children in order to develop the whole child and encourage them to think critically about the resources they engage with. The Early Excellence Centre state that "providing children with a broad range of resourcing, but not too much of the same, encourages many of the social skills we'd want to promote, patience, sharing, negotiating, co-operating and problem solving". Our aim through our environment is to ensure that our child-initiated learning is developed through our open-ended resources and deepened through open questioning and challenges set by our team of highly dedicated staff. The Early Excellence Centre supports this and argues that "Educators who understand are fully aware of the possibilities and opportunities provided by rich resourcing, will then observe, tune into children's current fascinations and contribute further to children's learning by enhancing the environment, whether that be tools, resources or ideas". We also pride ourselves on our invested attitudes towards child-led learning and this can be seen in our setting, our children's online learning journeys and through our planning.

The Reggio Emilia approach focuses on the natural environment and providing stimulation and challenge through natural and open-ended resources. This is the theory behind our natural approach, both in our indoor and outdoor classrooms and something we aspire to do wherever possible. At Danemill Primary School we endeavour to teach our children about the natural world as much as possible and allow them to explore and experience nature through our classroom and in our forest school. We have also adopted some of the other key values from the Reggio Emilia approach especially their emphasis on parental and community engagement and this is something we are looking to develop throughout the course of the year.

We have also toned down the colour scheme in our setting to reflect the natural world and provide a calming environment, this is something we strongly believe has influenced our children's behaviour and attitude to learning. Alastair Bryce Clegg argues that, "the louder, busier, more colourful your space is the worse it is for children's learning". In light of this, we have opted for neutral colours and we have noticed a stark change in the ways our children are interacting with the setting. You will not see lots of brightly coloured displays and work hanging all around the room, instead you will notice that everything has been displayed for a reason. You will see specific photographs in the different zoned areas to enhance learning opportunities, questioning and spark imagination. We have also adapted our displays and adopted a learning journey type approach in which the children can interact with their displays and recognise their achievements on display which is rapidly developing their wellbeing and self-esteem. We also feel that our displays give our children ownership of their own learning environment as they can see how their learning has progressed.

In summary, our learning environment is something we have taken a lot of time to establish and it is continuously evolving in order to suit our children's needs and desires. As suggested by Malaguzzi what children learn is not an automatic result of what is taught but it is in response to how they engage in it afterwards.