

Welcome to **Healthy Body, Happy Me 2024!**

Off we grow

We have provided a series of activities designed to support you with creating an environment where every child can thrive, regardless of ability or background. The theme encapsulates the essence of growing and thriving, not just in physical terms but also in respect to the emotional, social and cognitive areas of a child's development. By choosing this theme, we acknowledge the significance of early childhood experiences and the profound impact that all practitioners working in this sector have on a child's development. The daily activities encourage you to be intentional in every interaction, recognising that every moment is an opportunity to contribute to the growth of young children and the development of their brains.

Research into the architecture of the brain by Harvard University (2011) clearly demonstrates that "in the first few years of life, more than one million new neural connections form every second." Knowing this, practitioners need to ensure that the interactions a young child has with ourselves, surrounding adults, other children and their immediate environment are quality interactions which serve to build their brains and lay the foundations for learning now and in the future. The activities contained in Off We Grow are intended to foster attachments and friendships and enhance connections - whether in the context of play, sharing stories, cuddling in a cosy corner or involved with a parent at home.

By putting play at the core of our growth and development activities we strive to make the experiences enjoyable while also perfectly aligning with a child's natural way of exploratory learning.

Attuned practitioners are the cornerstone of quality care and education and support the immediate needs of young children while laying the foundations for their long-term growth, development, confidence and well-being. Play researchers Perry Else and Gordon Sturrock (1998) state that "the play cue comes from the thoughts of the child, their internal world, into the physical world in the expectation of getting a response." Cues can be anything from a subtle look or a simple gesture to an overt request to "play superheroes with me?" and everything in between. Being attuned and responsive adults for the children we are with – in the nursery or at home – is an expectation woven into each of the Healthy Body, Happy Me activities.

On the final day, our activities extend beyond the setting and recognise the indispensable role of parents and carers in a child's holistic care and development. We offer insights and strategies that emphasise relaxation, connection and joy in the context of a relaxed and playful home environment. These activities help to form a bridge between nursery and home, fostering a collaborative approach to each child's growth.

So let's embark on this enriching journey together and witness the magic that happens when we cultivate an inclusive and responsive early years environment where every child grows and thrives.

