Walker Learning Approach (WLA)

‘Investigation time’ takes place two mornings per week. The aim of the WLA classroom is to promote a sense of wonder, exploration, investigation and interest with a rich range of materials, resources and opportunities in which children can engage. Play and active investigation gives children opportunities to develop physical competence and enjoyment, to understand and make sense of their world, to interact with others, express and control emotions, and develop problem solving abilities. Research shows strong links between play and foundational capacities such as memory, oral language capabilities, self-regulation, social skills and success at school in general.

Collage Area.
The collage area provides rich opportunities for a never ending range of creativity and experimentation with all sorts of materials and where much literacy and numeracy occurs. The materials are open-ended and the focus is on the process rather than the end product.

Construction Area.
Children construct knowledge and understandings through hands-on creating. These experiences stimulate imagination and creativity and develop and extend spatial, geometric and thinking skills. The construction area provides opportunities for children to develop, plan, represent ideas, map out, construct, problem solve and complete designs. This area provides many opportunities to scaffold literacy and numeracy skills.

Role Play Area.
Children need many opportunities for dramatic play. This is a major way in which rich oral language and a range of literacy and numeracy skills are developed along with problem solving, decision making, persistence, collaboration, negotiation, creativeness and lateral thinking. The language in dramatic play is rich and purposeful and authentic. Children are highly motivated and engaged and the vocabulary, grammar, articulation and listening skills are highly evident in these areas. Through dramatic play, children explore perspectives and roles of others through opportunities to act out what they experience or observe in their own lives.

Drawing/Writing Area.
An area with pens, papers, and scissors and work-in-progress signs helps to create a learning environment to enable children to see that their writing and reading skills are an integral and purposeful tool in their investigations. Signs around this area, with letter formations modelled and with all sorts of paper and pens accessible to children, invite them to use writing and documenting within context and not just at a ‘specific’ writing time.

Reading Area.
Reading areas are used for relaxing, reading, researching, sharing information and storytelling. They are quiet, attractive and defined spaces, which also reflect an exciting or inviting place for children to visit. Reading spaces hold a range of non-fiction as well as fiction books that children may use in their research.
Mathematics Area.
An area with counters, scales, 2D and 3D shapes, pattern blocks, cubes, dice and work-in-progress signs helps to create a learning environment that children can then associate with numeracy as an integral and purposeful tool in their investigations. Many aspects of real life experiences promote numeracy and key elements include experiencing and representing, classification, seriation, number, time, spatial relations, shapes, colour, relative portions, patterning and subitising.

Tinkering Table.
Tinkering fuels a child’s natural curiosity about life. It develops fine motor and manipulative skills, higher order thinking, problem solving and peer relationships. Tinkering provides opportunities to pull apart, investigate, plan, rebuild, redesign and construct.

Sensory Area.
The senses are the most familiar way for a child to explore, process and come to understand new information. This area of play-based learning is extremely important for children in relation to therapeutic, psychological, cognitive, creative, language and explorative experiences. Children need a range of sensory experiences, as they provide opportunities for fine motor and hand-eye coordination, as well as creativity and allow children to be in tune with their sensory perceptions.

Carpenter’s Workshop.
This is an exciting and highly creative experience in which children can engage. The use of tools, the practice of building and constructing, taking responsibility, planning, designing and linking their woodwork to literacy and numeracy are some of the benefits of woodwork. Fine motor skills, oral language as children work alongside each other and other key skills including problem solving, perseverance and lateral thinking are all promoted in this experience.

Painting Area.
Painting easels are an effective tool for improving bilateral coordination and both fine and gross motor skills. They are useful for promoting oral language, thinking, planning and describing colour and shape concepts.