

SMALL WORLD

Small World areas should be inviting and engaging, offering children opportunities to be creative, imaginative, and to develop understanding of the world around them.

Play in the Small World area enables children to be the storytellers of their own miniature adventures, exploring and recreating familiar events and experiences or using their imagination to create fictional stories.

The area should be reflective of current interests in the nursery. Through high-quality observations, practitioners can pick up on these interests and offer Small World play and resources to extend this or provide an intentional promotion to support exploration of new learning.

CURRICULAR & DEVELOPMENTAL

Health & Wellbeing

The area encourages children to share and communicate with each other, supporting understanding of how to resolve issues and solve problems together.

Children can explore and understand their own feelings and anxieties as well as the emotions of others through the safety of a character, such as a fairy, animal or police officer.

Small World environments, such as hospitals, police stations and fire stations help children recognise and understand rules within their own communities, learning about concepts relating to adult life.

Children can communicate their knowledge about life and the world around them within a safe, contained environment.



Literacy

Language skills are developed as children explore and extend their vocabulary through the use of both new and existing words as they identify and name resources such as animals, vehicles and buildings.

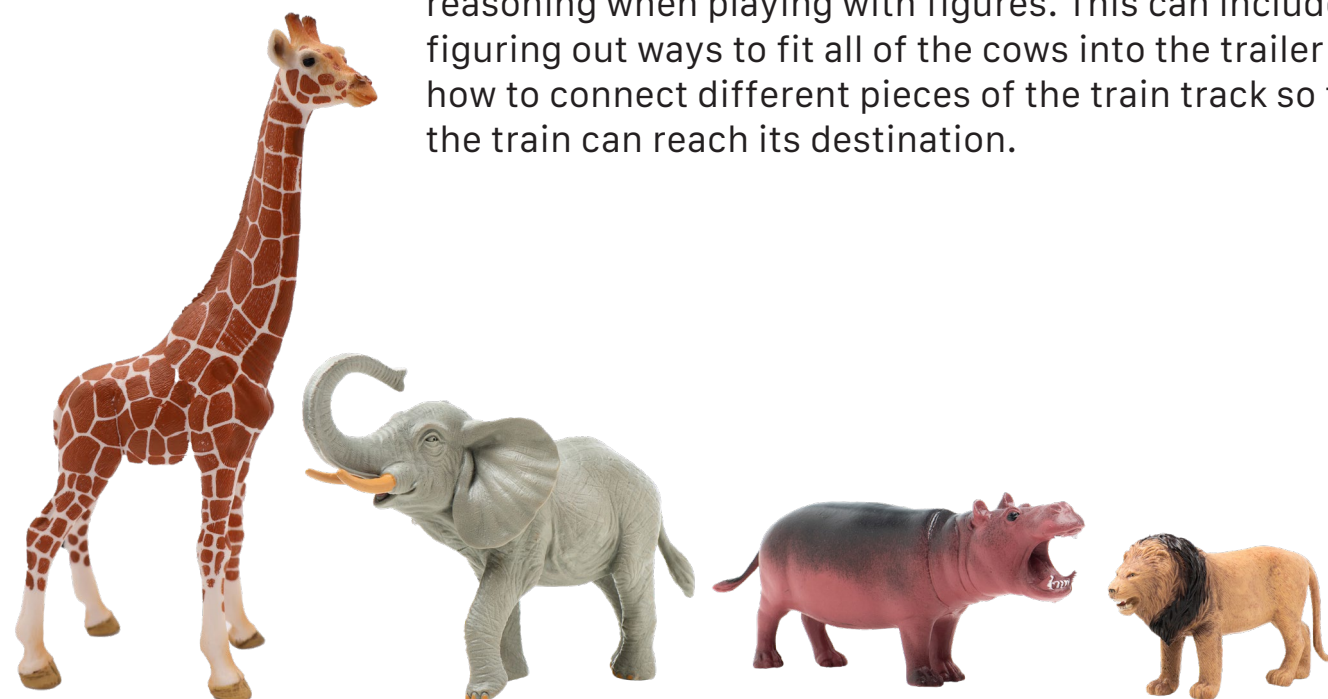
Through mimicking voices and sounds, children can explore characterisation, expressive language, communication and early storytelling concepts in both real and imaginary situations.

Maths & Numeracy

Within Small World, the resources provide opportunities for grouping, sorting and counting. For example, sorting animals according to size, counting how many animals are in the pen, or sorting different types of dinosaur into groups.

Children can explore the concepts of space and size, developing understanding of the space around them and how to use it with others.

Small World play inspires problem solving as children experiment and apply reasoning when playing with figures. This can include figuring out ways to fit all of the cows into the trailer or how to connect different pieces of the train track so that the train can reach its destination.



Sorting animals of the African Plains according to height/size.

Other

Through engaging in imaginative play scenarios, children can explore the ways in which people lived in the past and how these lives differ from their own, for instance, knights and castles.

Imaginative play scenarios support children to consider ways that people and services within their local community provide help and support in their daily lives, these include: the police force, fire service, or doctors and nurses.



ROLE OF THE ADULT

Practitioners should carefully consider when to introduce appropriate resources, ensuring that this addition enhances or extends children’s play and learning without impacting upon creativity. When children are creating their own castles, it may be more beneficial to only add figures that can support this play rather than a ready-made castle set.

The effective role-modelling of Small World resources can support children to handle these with care and respect, being gentle with more fragile items.

By joining-in and role-modelling play around Small World scenarios, practitioners can support the introduction of new language and vocabulary associated with children’s current interests.

ROOM STRUCTURE & LAYOUT

Ideally, Small World areas are best located in a secluded, small and intimate space where individual children or small groups can play.

Consideration should be given to where the Small World area is located. Positioning it next to the Block Play area can support children to extend their learning and play, as children use Small World resources and figures in their Block Play creations.

RESOURCE IDEAS

Garage & cars
Hospital
Fire station
Airport
Animals: Farmyard & Zoo
Dinosaurs
Train-set, trains & carriages

General vehicles: lorries/ trucks
Pirates
Castles: Knights, Kings, Queens
Characters from well-known stories
Mini-Me blocks
Related books, stories, images
Natural loose parts

REFLECTION POINTS

- Without making assumptions, how do practitioners find out what children really want to learn about? Are high-quality interactions and effective questioning used to unpick children’s curiosities around Small World play?
- Is it okay for children to transport Small World items into other provision areas? Whilst this isn’t appropriate for every area of core provision, Small World learning can be extended through transportation of resources into other areas, such as Block Play, Story Corner or other forms of Small World play. Is this a consistent approach across the setting?

