

# Pedagogical plan of action



## PLAYING & EXPLORING TOGETHER



## Contents

Introduction: Day Care and After School Care	3
A different approach	5
Vision Statement	6
Playing and Exploring Together	7
Uk & Puk	7
The 'Four Eyes Principle'	9
Supervising children in a climate of <b>emotional safety</b>	10
Helping children to acquire self-knowledge and achieve or maintain a positive self-image ( <b>personal competence</b> )	14
Helping children to benefit from playing together as part of a group ( <b>social competence</b> )	17
Teaching children <b>morals and values</b>	19

## Introduction

### True Colors childcare (TC)

TC has seven groups, spread over two floors, with five day care groups, one after school care group and a central play space located downstairs and three day care groups and a central play space upstairs. All the day care groups are mixed age groups, made up of children of different ages ranging from 0 to 4 years. Each group contains a maximum of 12 children, supervised by 2 members of our pedagogical team, depending on the number of children. All pedagogical team members have a minimum of an MBO 3 level qualification and a current first aid or emergency response certificate.

### Day Care Centre (DC)

The ideal mix for a day care group is 3 children under 1 year, 3 children aged 1 year, 3 children aged 2 years and 3 children aged 3 years.

If the number of children in a group is less than 12 (either regularly or incidentally, for example during the holidays) then it is possible that the ratio calculator\* will indicate that one pedagogical team member is required or that groups will be merged. Our policy at TC is that whenever possible the usual staff will be used in the interests of the children's emotional safety.

*\* The ratio calculator indicates, on the basis of the statutory rules and the corresponding assessment criteria used by the municipal health services, the ratio of team members to children that is required.*

### After School Care (ASC)

The ASC group accommodates 10 children aged between three and six/seven years who attend the British School in Leidschenveen.

The children arrive at the ASC by bus at approximately 15.30 and first change out of their school uniform into normal clothes.

From 15.30 to 16.00: children play outside, getting a chance to let off steam.

From 16.00 to 16.30: time for a drink and some fruit.

From 16.30 to 17.30: children choose to play inside or outside, either taking part in structured activities, making use of the play areas or having some quiet time.

From 17.30 to 18.30: time for a drink and a snack (a biscuit or breadstick), followed by play inside or outside.

Some children leave our care to go to a Dutch primary school when they turn four. Other children leave to go to an international school, which may accept pupils from the age of three. Some children who are going to an international school remain with us after their fourth birthday and leave to take up their place at school the following September.

When the children at the ASC play outside or in an indoor play space at the same time as children who are at the DC this is arranged between the members of the pedagogical team and appropriately supervised. The children's safety takes the highest priority. Decisions on whether play takes place together or separately are always based on ensuring we adhere to our vision statement.

When the children at the ASC leave the centre for an outing, the ASC excursions protocol of Stichting Rijswijkse Kinderopvang (SRK) is always followed.

When the British School has holidays at the same time as the Dutch schools or if more than five children attend the ASC each day, holiday care for ASC children takes place at the Wereldplek child care centre. If there are less than five children, the children remain at TC. In that case, the pedagogical team member organises their own holiday programme.

Due to the facilities available, the Wereldplek child care centre is better equipped to provide holiday care than our own centre and it provides excellent holiday programmes. During the holidays the children also go on a planned excursion. This also takes place in accordance with the excursions protocol. The excursions protocol is discussed with parents or provided during the introductory interview.

The usual staff member responsible for ASC at TC also goes to Wereldplek during the holidays to ensure a sense of familiarity and safety for the children. Combining the ASC at the two centres during the holidays also has the advantage of giving the ASC children at TC the opportunity to get to know the Wereldplek child care centre, the place where after school care is provided once they reach the age of six or seven.

## A different approach

TC is different from the other childcare centres run by Stichting Rijswijkse Kinderopvang (SRK) because all of the children here have parents who work for international organisations such as the European Patent Office or Shell. The children's parents come from a wide variety of different European countries and in many cases do not speak a great deal of Dutch, if any. Our staff often communicate with parents in English. Many of these parents are bringing up their children to be multilingual, speaking two, three or even four languages. Our agreement with parents is that our pedagogical team only use the Dutch language when speaking to the children.

In working to stimulate language development we use various methods including 'Uk & Puk'.

Parents' expectations of childcare are often shaped by their experience of childcare in their home country. This may differ a great deal from the way day care centres in the Netherlands operate, so we make sure parents are fully informed about how we do things in Dutch day care centres and make efforts to understand parents' cultural background.

Compared with other SRK childcare centres, a relatively high proportion of children attend TC for four or five full days a week. This means that our pedagogical team has more involvement in a child's upbringing, which increases the importance of their role. They can also offer support to parents in dealing with upbringing issues, which is particularly appreciated by parents with a limited social network in the Netherlands.

Another cultural difference is in our approach to meals. Parents have expressed a clear preference for more substantial and varied meals than are usual in the Netherlands, ideally including a hot meal at lunch time. In reflection of these wishes, we serve a hot lunch three times a week.

We offer extra activities for the children such as yoga, gym and music lessons and we have a hairdresser who visits TC regularly.

TC is a place where parents, children and staff can meet one another. The importance of meeting and connecting with one another is reflected in the design of the building: its central spaces enable children to play together and engage in activities and parents to meet one another. We achieve this interaction using the handbook (*De Wegwijzer*), the newsletter, emails and personal meetings.

Despite all this, TC is still just a normal childcare centre: our pedagogical team look after the children and stimulate them to develop into independent individuals. Although we are different from other day care centres, TC is still run in accordance with the SRK's vision statement.

The members of our pedagogical team work to assist one another and also receive assistance and support from the manager and the head of the TC child care centre. The ASC pedagogical team member is also assisted by colleagues at the Wereldplek centre. All staff can refer questions on pedagogical issues to the pedagogical work staff officers at SRK and obtain assistance from them.

## Vision Statement

TC's vision statement reads:

"We provide children with an atmosphere of trust and respect in which they can develop positively through challenging activities in interaction with others"

The key elements of our pedagogical vision are a warm welcome, interaction and connection.

Our primary pedagogical goals are:

- Offering emotional safety. Emotional safety contributes to a child's wellbeing – if a child feels safe, he is free to explore and develop.
- Promoting personal competence. Helping children to discover their talents and interests and helping them to establish and maintain a positive self-image.
- Promoting social competence. Enabling children to get the most out of playing together as part of a group.
- Helping children assimilate morals and values. Teaching children the boundaries and what others expect of them.

## Playing and Exploring Together

In applying our pedagogical vision, we apply an 'open door' policy. At TC, we call this "Playing and Exploring Together". As part of "Playing and Exploring Together", we offer the children regular opportunities to leave their own group area to interact with other children and encounter different learning materials and activities.

Spending the whole day in a single enclosed space creates an unnatural situation. A child's natural energy is confined to one space, offering few challenges and little freedom to explore. Our open door policy allows our pedagogical team to give the children regular opportunities to discover the environment outside the group area by playing with children from other groups either outside, in one of the central spaces or in the splash room.

At TC we follow a daily timetable for Playing and Exploring Together.



The ASC children arrive by bus from the British School in Leidschenveen at approximately 15.30. Between 15.30 and 18.30 it is possible for the children at the ASC and the DC to play together. This takes place by arrangement between the ASC and DC staff members.

The activity programme Uk & Puk is also offered as part of Playing and Exploring Together.

## Uk & Puk

At TC we use the Uk & Puk method. This programme is designed to stimulate development, with the emphasis on linguistic development. At TC, our use of the Uk & Puk programme is centred around the needs of the toddlers. The main aim of Uk & Puk is to lay the foundations of the Dutch language, giving toddlers the tools they need to enter primary education. The programme also aims to develop the children's early numeracy and social communication.

The puppet Puk plays an important role in presenting language and stimulating communication. Puk forms a channel of communication between the pedagogical team members and the children. The puppet is used to involve the children in the activity. Puk plays out everyday occurrences in the toddlers' lives, creating safe, familiar situations. This stimulates the child's emotional safety.

The activities in the Uk & Puk programme cover various topic areas corresponding with the toddlers' own experiences and the way they perceive their surroundings. This ensures that the children acquire language appropriate to the knowledge and skills they already have, so they are more readily able to understand and use it. The current topic is always displayed in the play zones on both floors of the childcare centre. In the course of the year we explore 6 or 8 of the following topics:

- Welcome Puk!
- Cuddly toys
- A-choo!
- Me and my family
- What am I wearing today?
- Rain
- This is me!
- Let's eat!
- Animals
- Traffic
- Giants and dwarves
- Gosh, it's warm!
- I'm nearly 4

The topics are closely related to the toddler's own experience and revolve around events taking place there and then. The activities for each topic are closely connected and focused on the topic, so that the topic-led approach guarantees cohesion between the activities. This reinforces the importance of the language covered and allows for more repetition.

New topics are introduced from time to time.

For each of our goals, we indicate the corresponding Uk & Puk topic and the activities used.

Playing and Exploring Together takes place in combination with Uk & Puk. The activity elements always reflect the Uk & Puk topic.

Of course, we also spend time on festivities such as Sinterklaas, Christmas, King's Day, Mother's Day etc.





### The 'Four Eyes Principle'

TC's guidelines regarding the 'four eyes principle' for child safety are consistent with the SRK guidelines. Both sets of guidelines have been discussed with and approved by the Parent Committee. These guidelines are available from the head of the child care centre.

From when the child care centre opens until it closes at least two staff members are always present at the centre.

## **1. Supervising children in a climate of emotional safety**

All the actions of our pedagogical team have the basic aim of offering the child a sense of safety. Safety is not merely a factor in a child's individual wellbeing; it forms the basis for all other development. A child who feels himself to be in a safe and familiar environment has the confidence to adopt an open approach, to make contact and to take risks. To achieve this, our pedagogical team deliberately foster a bond between the child and the individual team members. The pedagogical team member creates this bond by noticing the signals communicated by the child (sensitivity) and responding to them in the right way (responsiveness). This gives the child the sense that the other person understands him and is considerate of his feelings and wishes. A predictable daily routine, the layout of the space and the presence of other children and staff who are familiar also help to create a sense of familiarity.

### **How we work**

#### **Interaction with the children at the DC**

- We follow a structured daily routine. This creates safety and security for children.
- All our pedagogical team apply the same rules. This consistent approach gives children clear boundaries and helps create emotional safety.
- When talking to the children, our pedagogical team members attempt, where possible, to give the child the appropriate language to describe his feelings (happiness, sadness).
- It is our policy to use permanent staff whenever possible to ensure the presence of a familiar face.
- The pedagogical team member on duty also gives her attention to each parent. This creates a sense of familiarity and trust for the child and the parent. She also contributes to this sense of familiarity by giving the parent detailed information about the child's day, for example activities he participated in, what he played with and the other children he played with, as well as the standard information about nap times and what he ate.
- Pedagogical team members respond sensitively to the children, fostering the pedagogical relationship between the child and the staff member.
- Whenever possible, we keep each of the materials and play areas in the same location in the central play space to help create emotional safety for the children.
- During Playing and Exploring Together, the pedagogical team members play with the children in the various play areas and supervise the children's play. This approach helps the children to explore the possibilities fully.
- After each Playing and Exploring Together activity, the pedagogical team members who have supervised the children brief the team members in the child's group, enabling them to take account of the child's emotional needs.
- At the moment when a child arrives and when it leaves to go home, the pedagogical team member welcoming him or saying goodbye gives her full attention to that child. She lets the child see that she is pleased to see him.
- Our pedagogical team don't just take account of the needs of the group of children; they ensure each child receives individual attention, for example when changing his nappy, during meals and at snack or drink times, when putting him down for a nap, when he's upset and needs comforting and during one-to-one activities.

- The presence of pedagogical team members in various play areas stimulates the children to play there. Engaging the children in different play areas creates a sense of order in the play space as a whole.
- Some one-year-olds are ready to join the toddlers in the central play space, but we decide on an individual basis when each child is ready for this new experience.



### **Babies:**

- Each of the group areas has a special quiet corner for babies.
- Each day we offer opportunities for the babies to participate in Playing and Exploring Together.
- Pedagogical team members foster a relationship of trust with each baby by responding sensitively to the baby.
- The pedagogical team member mirrors the baby's actions by imitating him. For example, by copying his facial expressions or the sounds he makes.
- The pedagogical team member makes regular eye contact with the baby.
- The pedagogical team member talks to the baby about what she is doing so that he knows what is happening and uses varying intonation.
- Pedagogical team members regularly give individual attention to each baby. They regularly hold each baby to give him a cuddle or soothe him.
- Babies are given their bottle or breast-fed in a quiet corner to ensure they get the time and attention they need.

### **Interaction with parents (and other carers) of children at the DC**

We ask parents to:

- Read the information on the screens showing which team members are working that day. These are located at the entry to the central space on the 'photo tree' and on the television screens. Parents receive the timetable and menu for hot meals by email a week in advance, so they can tell their child what to expect.
- Make sure they allow enough time and give the necessary attention to bringing and collecting their children.
- Bring and collect their children at the appointed times (before 9.15 and after 16.00), so that the daily programme is not interrupted. If this is not possible, they should let a member of our pedagogical team know when to expect them so that they can have a brief

- discussion with the team member at that time and proper attention can be given to the child and his needs.
- Make time to attend an annual interview to discuss your child's progress. This enables us to agree with you on our care and supervision of your child wherever possible.

### **Corresponding Uk & Puk topic areas**

Uk & Puk activities are integrated into the daily programme for Playing and Exploring Together. This touches on all the areas of development (social development, motor development, cognitive development etc.).

- “Welcome Puk!” This topic area introduces the children to the puppet Puk. Puk is attending the childcare centre for the first time. Many of the children have already been coming to TC for some time. They are able to show Puk around the group and explain what to expect. The children who have not been attending TC for very long benefit from the older children’s experiences.
- “Cuddly toys” This topic area focuses on cuddly toys and cuddles. Having a cuddle with Daddy and Mummy, with one of the pedagogical team members and maybe even with other children. Cuddling someone means touching them with your hand and your cheek, being nice to one another and becoming friends. We always cuddle in a pedagogical or emotional context.

## **2. Helping children to acquire self-knowledge and achieve or maintain a positive self-image (personal competence)**

We give every child the opportunity to try out new things, as appropriate to his stage of development, pace and temperament. This allows children to discover their own potential and discover their own limits. We also encourage the children to develop flexibility and creativity. This helps them to establish a positive self-image.

Explorative play encourages the children to look for solutions to all kinds of challenges before seeking help. Within safe boundaries, we observe their progress without intervening, so that they gain a sense of their own abilities and limits. We believe in the importance of learning through experience. Our aim is to enable the children to judge for themselves what they can safely do in a given situation.

### **How we work**

#### **Interaction with the children**

- Children are encouraged to dress and undress themselves, to climb up and down the stairs, to butter their own bread and to use the toilet. We praise them when they try to do these things independently.
- Children are allowed to decide which activity they want to do in the central space during Playing and Exploring Together. Our pedagogical team guide their choices to ensure that they experience a variety of activities.
- Children need to be given the opportunity to make mistakes and find their own solutions to problems, where necessary assisted by our pedagogical team.
- When we observe the child doing something positive, we mention and praise this.
- We teach the children that when they are unable to do something they should ask for help from our pedagogical team and the other children.



## Interaction with parents (and other carers)

- We encourage parents to respond positively to any activities their child takes part in.
- Parents are asked to foster their children's independence at home as well, for example by toilet training them as soon as they are ready and encouraging them to get themselves dressed and undressed and help prepare their own food (a good place to start is buttering their own bread).
- We ask parents to hang up their child's key ring themselves, together with the child.

## Corresponding Uk & Puk topic areas

- "This is me!" topic area This topic focuses on the child's face. The children consider the different features that make up the face and what each of the features can do. They use their noses to smell, clean their teeth, wash their faces and practise different facial expressions (such as 'happy' or 'cross'). We also talk about the different emotions.
- "What am I wearing today?" topic area This topic is all about clothing. It is linked to the "This is me!" topic area. The activities revolve around the children's clothes. The children dress up for a fashion show, they look forward to wearing special clothes for a party, talk about their clothes and so on. They also help Puk to pack his suitcase to go to stay with the children.
- "Rain" topic area It rains often in the Netherlands. This means that rain is familiar to toddlers. For example, they recognise the sound of rain and they know that rain can make them wet. In this topic area, we use play and exploration to teach the children vocabulary to do with 'rain' and they experiment with the sounds made by different types of weather.
- "Gosh, it's warm!" topic area This topic is ideally suited to a warm spring or hot summer. The warm weather allows us to have fun splashing water about, making ice cubes and buying ice lollies from the ice cream van. The children help Puk to cool down and act out the story of 'Floortje', a pig who wants to cool down in some water.
- "Let's eat!" topic area This topic is all about eating and food. The children use their taste buds to decide which foods are 'yummy' and which they find 'yucky', they set the table in the play house and regularly bake or cook something delicious to eat together.
- "I'm nearly 4!" topic area During our Playing and Exploring Together session in the early afternoon we consider this topic with the children who will soon be going to primary school. This topic is repeated several times a year.
- "Traffic!" topic area This topic is all about traffic. Sometimes we go out cycling with the children and Puk and crossing the road is another aspect of this topic. A 'road' can be marked out in chalk in the grounds of the child care centre.

## Mother Nature's playground

At TC the outdoor play area and rooftop gardens have been designed using natural materials to allow for outdoor play in a natural environment. We try to ensure that the children play outside every day.

To make sure we can go outside even when it rains, we provide rain ponchos and rubber boots for the children and umbrellas and rubber boots for our staff.

## Excursions

The children leave their group area each day to play in the hallway or outside. Sometimes the children go on an outing near the child care centre. We always follow SRK's excursions protocol.

These outings take place whenever the opportunity arises. During the holidays the children also go on a planned excursion. This also takes place in accordance with the excursions protocol. The excursions protocol is discussed with parents or provided during the introductory interview.





### **3. Helping children to benefit from playing together as part of a group (social competence).**

Interacting with others gives children the opportunity to get to know and show respect for other people and to assert themselves. Both in the group and during Playing and Exploring Together we foster these skills through activities involving helping one another, tidying up and celebrating special occasions. The emphasis TC places on working and playing together is also reflected in interaction between the different groups and with the music, gym and yoga teachers.

Participating in different group situations outside the confines of their own group teaches the children to deal with different types of behaviour and experience the response their own behaviour provokes in others. Our aim is to make the child aware of this and teach him to deal with these consequences proactively, so that he understands how his actions affect the situation. Playing and Exploring Together broadens the child's social development by bringing him into contact with children and staff from other groups.

#### **How we work**

##### **Interaction with the children**

- Our approach of letting the children resolve conflicts themselves, where possible, teaches children how to function as part of a group. Our pedagogical team show the children the right way to behave in a group and during Playing and Exploring Together by setting a good example for the children to imitate. We correct inappropriate behaviour by explaining why this behaviour is not appropriate and the effect it has on others. Pedagogical team members explain to the child how it can express its frustration in a different way. Appropriate behaviour is rewarded.
- The members of our pedagogical team set an example for the children. For example, our policy is that when a child wants to say something it should wait until the person it wants to speak to has finished talking to someone else. Setting an example means that this also applies when a member of our pedagogical team is having a conversation with a child, so other adults must wait until that conversation has finished before they speak.
- The mixed age groups (including children aged from 0 to 4 years) at TC mean that the younger children learn from the older children and the older children learn to be considerate of younger children. They also allow us to place siblings in the same group.

##### **Interaction with parents (and other carers)**

- We believe that it is in the child's interests for the parent to make time for a proper conversation with one of our pedagogical team on arrival and collection. And to allow the child enough time and scope to finish off his activities at the childcare centre and say goodbye before going home.
- We believe that children benefit from having both pedagogical team members and parents set a good example. As part of this, we place a high priority on discussing with you the approach that is appropriate for your child.

## Corresponding Uk & Puk topic area

- “Let’s eat!” topic area This topic is all about eating and food. The children use their taste buds to decide which foods are ‘yummy’ and which they find ‘yucky’, bake or cook something delicious to eat together or set the table in the play house.
- “Giants and dwarves” topic area This topic opens with a story about a dwarf and a giant playing together. Building on the story, the children apply the concepts of ‘big’ and ‘small’. They experience how it feels to be too big or too small for something, they practise moving like a giant or like a dwarf and they compare big objects and small objects in the room.
- “Me and my family” topic area This topic is all about family. The children learn which people are part of their family. They talk about being ‘young’ and ‘old’, different family members, birthdays and doing things together. Activities include making a collage of family photographs and talking about Puk going to stay with his Grandma and Granddad.
- “A-choo!” topic area This topic revolves around Puk having a cold. The children take care of Puk, they go to visit him while he’s ill and they take him to the doctor. Fortunately, the children take good care of Puk and he makes a full recovery at the end of the topic.
- “Animals” topic area We make animal noises, sing songs and visit a petting zoo.



#### **4. Teaching children morals and values**

Morals and values are given a high priority at TC. Assimilating morals and values forms part of a child's moral development. Many of the situations a child encounters in the group and during Playing and Exploring Together offer opportunities to learn morals and values (for example, when conflicts arise or a child experiences pain or distress). The responses of our pedagogical team help the children to distinguish what is acceptable and what is not. Our society includes many different cultures. Rather than concentrating on differences, our aim is to show that all children are equally important.

#### **How we work**

##### **...with the children**

- We believe that it is important for the children that we have clear rules about acceptable behaviour in the group and during Explorative Play Together. It's important for the rules to be repeated frequently. These include rules about contact between children, such as taking toys from another child, giving each other a cuddle or comforting each other.
- Our pedagogical team set an example to the children in the way they apply morals and values and they should be aware of this when dealing with the children and in their interaction with colleagues and parents.
- During explorative play together, our pedagogical team include opportunities to assimilate morals and values in the activities in each of the play areas.
- Children learn to wait their turn.
- Pedagogical team members set an example to the children by taking responsibility for their actions.
- The children are involved in looking after plants and animals (for example, tending the garden).
- Both the children and members of the pedagogical team keep their word: a promise is a promise (say what you do and do what you say). This makes situations predictable for the children, creating trust.
- If a child forgets his promise, we remind him of what he promised to do.
- At specified times in the day, the children have their hands and faces washed. Where possible, our pedagogical team allow the children to try to do this themselves before helping them.
- At lunch, drink time and snack time, our pedagogical team regularly offer the children different foods and drinks to allow them to experience new tastes and introduce variety, for example by serving cooked meals.
- Pedagogical team members encourage children to taste foods and drinks that are unfamiliar.
- The extra activities we offer, such as toddler gym, children's yoga and music lessons, also include opportunities for the children to assimilate morals and values.

##### **... with parents (and other carers)**

At TC we try to accommodate parents' wishes relating to morals and values from other cultures whenever possible. We also expect parents to show respect for the morals and values that we at TC consider important. Some examples of this mutual respect:

- At TC we serve a cooked meal three times a week to accommodate parents' wishes.
- When you bring your child to TC and collect him, please ensure there is a clear handover of responsibility so that it is clear to him who is in charge.

- We would appreciate your cooperation with our policy that it is important for the children to go outside whatever the weather conditions.
- Parents are requested to use the overshoes available at the entrance. The children in the groups upstairs are allowed to go upstairs without putting on overshoes or taking off their shoes to prevent accidents on the stairs.

### **Corresponding Uk & Puk topic areas**

- “Me and my family” topic area This topic is all about family. The children learn which people are part of their family. They talk about being ‘young’ and ‘old’, different family members, birthdays and doing things together. Activities include making a collage of family photographs and talking about Puk going to stay with his Grandma and Granddad.
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