

The Anna Freud Nursery School

This film of the Anna Freud Centre Nursery School in London shows the principles and practice underlying the daily running of a group of 13 children aged 2 and a half to 5 years and the work of their two teachers.

It is a family grouping of mixed ages enabling older children to serve as 'models' and learn to be helpful and caring to the younger ones. Preference is given to children from disadvantaged backgrounds.

The following principles are followed:

Each child's particular developmental needs are assessed and provision is made to meet them

Activities are organised to enable flexibility within a firm and planned structure

Transitions are carefully prepared for and managed: home to nursery; nursery to school

Play is supervised, whether outdoors or indoors, but children also have space for privacy

There are discussions with parents and functions for them

Children are divided into small groups. This enables genuine relationships to be made and gives children a chance to talk about their feelings and experiences to a listener who has time, interest and a knowledge of them and their problems.

Ordinary domestic tasks such as making bread for tea are integrated into the nursery day

Difficult behaviour is discussed and managed, not ignored or punished.

Detailed written observations of each child are made daily by staff and students within the framework of Anna Freud's Developmental Lines. These are discussed in weekly meetings led by a nursery consultant who is trained in psychoanalytic theory.

What is Good Child Care ?

Young Children are primarily attached to their parents who supply their physical and emotional needs. These early years lay the foundation for a more or less secure base from which to grow and begin to explore the world. The quality of the attachment varies and can be affected by the substitute caretaking. Thus the quality of day care a child receives can be of critical importance for its development.

Research into the effects on children of attendance at day-care institutions has led to the formulation of principles which need to be followed if children are to find their day care experience enriching:

Continuity of care

Preparation for and management of transitions and separations: home to day care; within day groups; day care to school

Individual case assignment rather than indiscriminate group care

Facilitation of close personal ties between staff and young children

Individual assessment of children's and parent's needs and provision to meet them

Staff ratios which reflect the changing attachment needs of children as they develop

Staff attention to the psychological as well as the physical needs of children

Time for staff to think and talk about their work

Involvement of parents