

# QUESTION TIME



NDNA quality manager, **Laura Robshaw**, summarises how schemas can be used to support and extend children's learning and development...

## Q: What are schemas?

**A** Schemas are patterns of repeated behaviour in young children, for example, placing objects next to one another in a series or enclosing them in materials. All practitioners should have an understanding of the different types of schemas and how these link to the age and stage of development of children in their care. Understanding and recognising schemas in young children is important so that they can be supported and extended appropriately.

## Q: How can I recognise schemas?

**A** Although there are set types of schemas, the patterns of behaviour may differ from child to child and some children may display a cluster of schemas. Often the patterns of behaviour that young children display can be mistaken as negative behaviour, for example, continuously emptying containers or transporting materials from one place to another.

Understanding these actions as stages of development can avoid this misconception.

Practitioners must carry out regular observations of children's play to identify each child's individual interests and repeated pattern of behaviour. Observations could include photographs, video clips, written transcripts or time samples. Having a range of different observations enables practitioners to build up a bigger picture of the child and identify interests and behaviours. It is also important to gather information from other practitioners and parents. Once the interests and schemas have been identified, these

should then be incorporated into the planning of the individual child's next steps in learning.

Practitioners should share information about schemas with parents so they too can recognise them, develop their understanding of the stages their child is going through, and extend them at home.

Observing, recognising and supporting schemas in children's play supports and extends their learning and development. Having free-flow indoor and outdoor play, where possible, enables children to engage in deeper learning and sustained shared thinking between them and practitioners.

## find out more

To access an NDNA member factsheet 'Supporting schemas in your setting', visit [www.ndna.org.uk/factsheets](http://www.ndna.org.uk/factsheets). For NDNA's online training 'Let's look at... schemas', visit [www.ndna.org.uk/development-zone](http://www.ndna.org.uk/development-zone).

## Q: What are the different types of schemas and how can I support them?

**A** The most common schemas include...

**Trajectory** - This can be diagonal, vertical or horizontal. Repeated behaviours include dropping items or food from cots or playing with running water from the tap. Activities include building and knocking down towers and throwing, bouncing and kicking balls.

**Rotation** - This is anything that spins or rolls. Children may enjoy watching the washing machine or riding on

roundabouts. Activities and resources include round objects and wheeled toys.

**Enveloping and containing** - Children who develop this schema may like to hide or be covered up. Resources include dressing up clothes and lots of fabrics to build dens. Having lots of opportunities to fill and empty containers or bags repeatedly also enables children to pursue this schema.

**Transporting** - This is when children move objects from one area to another. Resources include lots of bags, prams or trolleys, so children can move their friends or toys around.

**Connection** - Children may join or connect materials or objects together, for example, connecting a train track together or using any type of tape, string or bands to connect materials. Outdoors they may spend time transporting guttering or planks and use string

to connect these together.

**Enclosing** - Children usually display behaviours such as climbing into boxes, tunnels or pop up houses, so it is important to give children the opportunity to do this. They may also draw borders around their mark making. Emptying and filling boxes or constructing enclosures around themselves also fall under this type of schema.

**Transforming** - This schema is when children like to explore and see changes, so offer opportunities where they can add colour to cornflour, mix paints together and manipulate playdough.

**Positioning** - Patterns of behaviour for this schema can include positioning items in lines, rows or by size, and walking around sand tray edges or on walls. Ensure your environment has the resources and space for children to do this.

FOR MORE **INFORMATION** ON SCHEMAS IN THIS ISSUE, TURN TO **PAGE 26** AND THE SECOND PART OF **FRANCES ATHERTON'S** SERIES ON **CHILDREN'S** PATTERNS OF **BEHAVIOUR**.