



Builders & Architects

Today in Stepping Stones a small group of children began to play with the large Duplo building blocks. These blocks hadn't been utilised in a while and the children approached them like they were new toys. Dylan, a normally quiet boy, came to life when he saw these blocks. Immediately he spoke up and took charge "it's okay, I know how to use these blocks. You use them for building houses!" Kayden, Dylan's friend, looks from Dylan to the blocks and back again at Dylan with a pensive look on his face. "Okay" he agrees, "let's build a house". "Right" says Dylan...."Right""okay"let's get the big ones first and put them at the bottom and then stick them together like this". He places one block on top of another. "We don't have cement but these yokes (connectors at the top of the blocks) will do to stick these blocks together" "My uncle Ken has real cement and blocks to build my house". "Oh that's really interesting Dylan – have you seen him building your house"? asks Lorraine who is observing from close by. "Yeah I have, I go to watch him sometimes so now I know how to build houses". "That's good Kayden" Dylan encourages his friend as they work together on building their house.



Dylan's family are building a house very close to the preschool. Lorraine quietly asks Dylan would he like to take a walk and show his friends his house being built. Dylan's eyes shine with unprecedented (in preschool) excitement and jumps up and says "yes"! Lorraine invites Dylan to offer an invitation to go see his new house to his friends at group time.



Hi vis jackets on and away we go!

The children respond enthusiastically to this invitation and so we take the short walk down the road.

The children are wearing our road safety hi visibility jackets as they walk down. Niamh says “we’re a little bit like builders today because we are wearing yellow jackets like they are”. She is walking beside Senan who responds with “oh yeah and I’m a bit like a



builder today too

because I have this small pen (from Argos) behind my ear and that’s where builders keep their pencils too”. We arrive at the house but remain outside the gate for safety reasons. We look on as the builders place blocks on top of each other. “A big lorry will have to come to put glass in them holes” says Mary referring to the

windows. “Yeah and they didn’t build my room yet” says Dylan “it’s going up in the roof”. When we return to school Lorraine explains that builders need a plan or a drawing to know how to build the house properly. The children were really interested in this and expressed an interest in building their own houses. We have large building blocks in storage so we took these out and the children began to work. Grace and Eoin in discussions as to what to build. Both children are exhibiting leadership qualities as they engage in debate. “I want to build something that I can get into” says Eoin. “Well it’s only fair if we can both build with them” responds Grace. “But we can work together to build something you can get into” Grace Compromises. Eoin takes ownership of the



building and steps inside to lay the last block. Following the session, the teachers reflect on the day. The trip was discussed and the learning for children and staff dissected. Teachers noted the interest the children had in the building. It was suggested that we introduce the plans of the preschool to the children. The rationale being that it is a building that the children are already familiar with and as the building has only two rooms and two toilets it is a simple plan to introduce.

The next day Lorraine explains to the children that she loved all the work they did yesterday on building and she had found the plans for Stepping Stones and would the children like to have a look

at them. There was a chorus of enthusiastic acquiescence. Lorraine introduces the plan at an impromptu group time. The children identified the two classrooms, the windows, the doors and the toilets. “Who drew this for you?” asks Senan. Lorraine explained that a man named Noel drew it



and that he is an architect and goes on to explain the role an architect plays in building a house. She introduced new language such as ‘front elevation’ and ‘side elevation’ and brought the children outside to check the accuracy of the drawings. “It looks like everything is in the right place” observes Niamh. Upon our return indoors, Senan dramatically pulls his pen from behind his ear and says “I could draw a plan like that” to a chorus of “so could I” from the children around him. “Okay, let’s do it” says Lorraine enthusiastically. While the children are drawing their plans, Lorraine is observing. The concentration from all children is amazing. Michelle, meantime, is gathering Lego, stickle bricks and wooden blocks so that the children have the option of building a 3D version of their drawing if they so wish. Below is a sample of the drawing the children made. Some children went to build their drawings while others stopped after the drawing phase. ‘I’m the architect, not the builder’ says Aoibhe when Lorraine asked her was she going to build her house.

Mary drew the plan to her house. She highlighted the most important room to her – the sitting room “where we sit and play and chat”





Mary using her plan as guidance for her construction



A work in progress



The finished product □

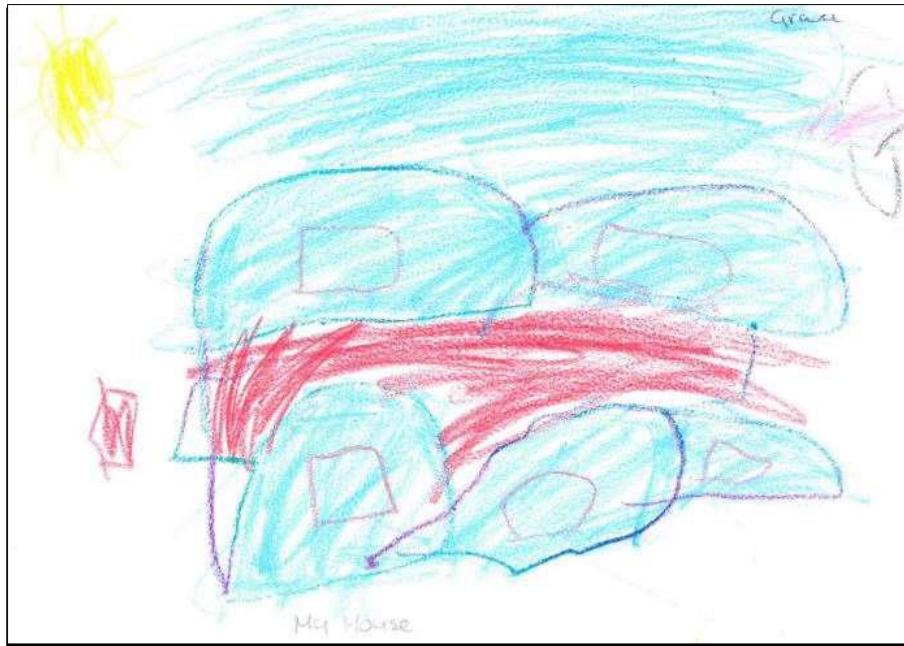


Dylan's plan of the roof.

Dylan was very specific with his drawing. He decided to only draw the roof. "I'm not a builder like Uncle Ken. I'm a roofer. The roofer needs a plan too; you know".



Dylan is gathering what he needs to build the roof of his house.



My House by Grace

Grace loved this project and gave it her full attention. She provided lots of colour to her drawing so it looked 'more real', "but that happens in real life, if the picture was a big as the building we wouldn't have enough paper"!



Grace presenting her plan, then using the plan to help direct her building project to the finished product.



“My house is going to be built on a sunny day” says Niamh decisively. “Why is that?” asks Lorraine. “Because its freezing outside today and I don’t want my builders to be cold” she responds rather considerately.



Aoibhe presents her drawing with a flourish to Lorraine. She points out the doors, the windows and the roof. “Excellent” says Lorraine, “are you going to build it now?” “No, I’m the architect, not the builder” she responds!



My House by Niamh RF

“It’s almost as big as me” says Niamh delighted with her work.

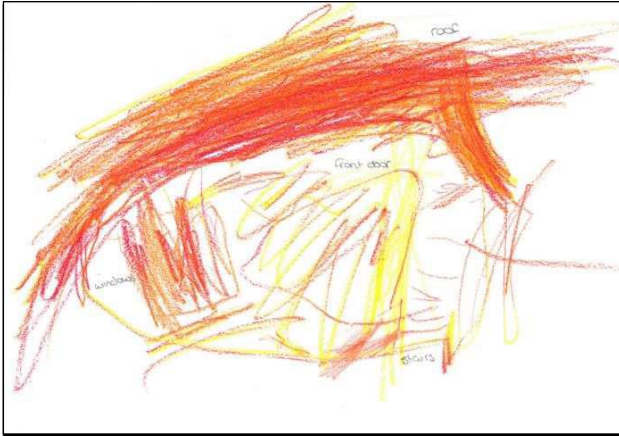


My House by Eoin

“I had to make the chimney really really big because how else will Santa get in?” Eoin tells Lorraine rather pragmatically.



The finished product with a suitably sized chimney for Santa.



My House by Sophie

To Sophie the most significant part of her house was the stairs.

“I’m trying to figure out how to make a stairs for the house” she tells Lorraine. She doesn’t ask for assistance and nor does her body language indicate she desires adult input so Lorraine leaves her to ‘figure it out’.

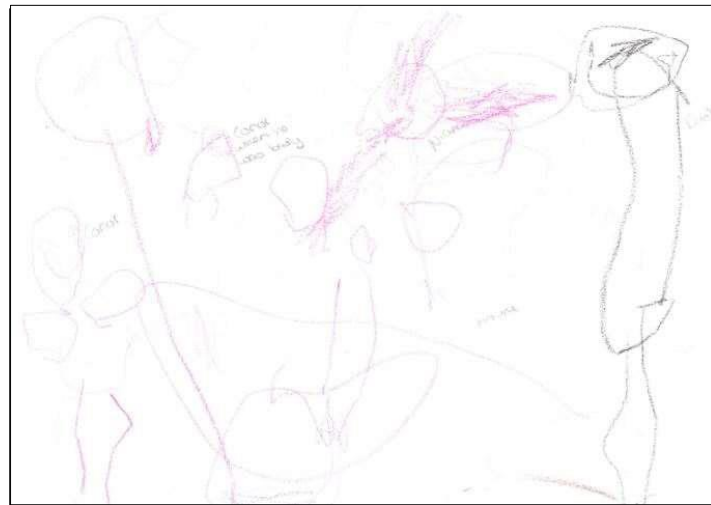


A visibly happy Sophie with her work. “That’s me at the top of the stairs. I’m going to bed!” she giggles.



A house with wheels by Senan

Senan has made a house on wheels. Lorraine enquires as to his motivation. “I just think a house on wheels would be cool” he says simply. Senan is very focused in his efforts to make his drawing a reality. He carefully picks through the Lego to find pieces that are suitable. He takes his time and when complete compares his drawing to his creation.



My Family House by Aoife S

Aoife draws a picture of her house with her family in it. Lorraine asks why she decided to include her family. “My house is where my family is so I have to put them in the picture too” she explains to Lorraine.

As the Stepping Stones staff reflect on the day we are struck by how the children’s strong sense of Identity and Belonging is visible throughout the play. Most children referred in some way to their own home which proved to be their inspiration for both their drawings and constructions. The trip

along with the follow on activities and extended learning encouraged the children to think about their environment and explore how their own houses became reality. Communication skills were developed and enhanced with the introduction of new language around the topic of building and architecture along with opportunities for children to work co-operatively with their peers. This activity encouraged teachers to think about our own approach to children's sense of identity and belonging. We make a significant effort to include children's family and community in the service (through family displays, Parent Stay & Play Sessions, involvement in community activities etc.) but it highlighted the important role the child's own home also plays in the child's development. Haven spoken to Dylan's parents about our trip to see their future home and the learning opportunities that have arisen from it, they are agreed and indeed encouraged us to continue to track and observe its progress with the children. We will do this by regular visits to the site and record these visits with photographs, children's comments and any other medium we deem appropriate as dictated by the children's interests. This learning story has involved many of the children in the group and will continue to do so with our plans for the future. We are keen to share children's ongoing learning with parents and so this story has been placed on the Stepping Stones Early Learning Centre Parents Portal where parents can see it and reflect on it with the children.

We hope you reading this learning story as much as we enjoyed living it.