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More preschools using play-based teaching

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Preschool kids at Avondale Grammar School play-acting with puppets in class. More preschools and kindergartens have come to realise the importance of using play in early childhood education. -- ST PHOTO: ASHLEIGH SIM

MORE preschools and kindergartens are getting their pupils to learn through playing rather than just sitting still and listening to the teachers.

This year, at least two schools have introduced programmes that follow what is known as the play-based philosophy.

International school Avondale Grammar School in Toa Payoh started a play-based preschool class in January for children aged three to five.

Objects and learning aids in the classroom are arranged thematically into learning centres, and children move around for different activities.

So in a 'dramatic centre', children use props and costumes to re-enact scenes from daily life, while in a 'manipulative centre', they work with building blocks.

Teachers do not stick strictly to a fixed lesson plan each day. Instead, they look out for areas that the children show more interest in and ask questions about during class, and teach them skills such as reading and writing through these areas.

For example, if a child is curious about the attendance sheet while the teacher is taking attendance, the teacher explains what it is, and also takes the opportunity to teach him about the days of the week.

Local kindergarten chain PAP Community Foundation is introducing more play time in its schools too.

In June, 20 of them were rebranded as Little Wings schools and given a new curriculum that focuses on learning through play and hands-on activities.

Play-based learning has been available in some schools here such as NTUC, Learning Vision and Chiltern House for several years now.

But in recent years, more schools are starting to implement it as they have come to realise the importance of using play in early childhood education.