



# PLAY AND ACTIVE LEARNING POLICY

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Play provides opportunities for children to experience learning in a meaningful and purposeful way. It is a means by which children can develop the skills and capabilities to be effective learners. Play provides a context for children to access content of the curriculum in a practical and purposeful way.

### **PLAY:**

- Develops the fundamental skills of Literacy, Numeracy and oral communication
- Provides rich and varied contexts for developing skills such as observing, organising, recording, interpreting and predicting
- Promotes positive attitudes to school and to learning
- Provides opportunities to learn in a practical way
- Provides opportunities for developing movement and manipulative skills
- Develops natural curiosity and stimulates imagination
- Provides opportunities for exploration, investigation, problem solving and decision-making
- Provides opportunities to develop knowledge, understanding and skills through a range of contexts spanning all subjects in the curriculum especially Thinking Skills and Personal Capabilities

The child's right to play is enshrined in Article 31 of the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child (1989):

- ‘1. State parties recognise the right of the child to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and arts.
2. State parties shall respect and promote the right of the child to participate fully in cultural and artistic life and shall encourage the provision of appropriate and equal opportunities for cultural, artistic and recreational and leisure activities.’

### **TEACHERS' ROLE**

- To plan for and provide appropriate activities/experiences
- To organise and provide a stimulating learning environment
- To facilitate learning and scaffold support
- To be aware of the potential learning in all areas of the curriculum
- To observe, assess and record play
- To realise where/when not to intervene- sensitively interact
- To work alongside children, modelling skills and attitudes
- To evaluate and extend the provision
- To pose exciting challenges
- To interact with children
- To ask open-ended questions/make suggestions
- To enjoy the experience and become a co-player.

## **THE TEACHERS' AND CLASSROOM ASSISTANTS' ROLES**

- Observe/assess and record children's play development and use this information (visual, auditory e.g. Written comments/ observations, photographs, video clips, recordings and samples of children's drawings/artwork and writing) and to plan as a team to extend the play
- Record children's' comments e.g. When they tell the adult about their drawing/painting/writing
- Display/ celebrate children's creativity
- Stimulate discussions and lead children to predict what will happen next and think of conclusions
- Provide different resources to extend play and bring out possibilities in an existing situation
- Build on the children's spontaneous play and take his/her cues from the children
- Provide space, adequate time and materials
- Ensure materials and play areas are prepared, safe, clean, attractive and stimulating
- Become involved through participation, initiation and intervention when appropriate

## **PLANNING**

When planning for play teachers should seek to build on children's earlier learning to ensure that the overall programme of learning in year groups is broad and balanced, and that there is continuity and progression.

The children in St John's PS are involved with the planning of the play activities and their planning ideas are recorded. Learning should take account of the children's interests and experiences.

## **REVIEWING**

Progress is evaluated throughout, and improvements made when necessary. The teacher reflects on the pupils' thinking and learning, transferring this to other contexts.

The children will also reflect on their own experiences of the play session; what really made me think; the most important thing I learnt was...; what I enjoyed most was...; what I want to find out more about is...; what I found difficult was...; how would I do it differently the next time?

## **ASSESSMENT**

Through ongoing integrated assessment teachers build up a comprehensive picture of the progress and learning needs of each child which will in turn inform future planning.

### ***What is assessed during the play?***

- Enjoyment

- Appropriateness of task and resources
- The process used in the completion of the task
- Teaching strategies
- Active involvement of children
- Language dispositions
- Language
- The learning environment
- Agreed and shared learning intentions and success criteria
- Identified Thinking Skills and Personal Capabilities from planner

## **OBSERVATIONS**

Observations are based on the learning intention, the agreed success criteria and Thinking Skills and Personal Capabilities. Observations are ongoing and through these the teacher can make informed, professional judgements about children's progress and therefore leading to effective planning for each child.

## **ORGANISATION OF THE CLASSROOM**

P1 – P3 classrooms in St John's PS are new and vibrant providing a stimulating environment for play to take place. The classroom is well organised, and space provided for each station so that children can get the most out of play-based learning.

## **RESOURCES**

St John's PS acknowledges the importance of play and will continue to invest in renewing and increasing provision of play resources. All staff are encouraged to return resources appropriately. Miss McGeown and Mrs Kane are taking part in CPD for 'Play' which will have a long-term benefit to the children's opportunities for play.

## **PROVISION FOR CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS**

Activities, resources and support are modified where necessary to allow all children access to play. Differentiation will be shown in the teachers' planning.

## **ACTIVITY BASED LEARNING**

In St John's PS we recognise that children learn best when they are actively involved. It is for this reason that we have developed a programme of active learning to suit P4 – P7 so there is continuation and progression from Play in P1 – P3 and children will be more actively involved in their learning and so developing their thinking skills. These planned activities are focused on the class topics where possible with an emphasis on problem solving and other thinking skills.

## **OUTDOOR PLAY**

- Indoors and outdoors need to be viewed as one combined and integrated environment
- Outdoors is an equal player to indoors and should receive planning management, evaluation, resourcing, staffing and adult interaction on a par with indoors
- Outdoors is both a teaching and learning environment
- Outdoor design and layout need careful consideration
- Outdoor play is central to young children's learning, possibly more to some children than others
- The outdoor classroom offers children the opportunity to utilise effective modes of learning -play, movement and sensory experience
- Children need versatile equipment and environments with space to explore and learn
- Children need to be able to control, change and modify their environment
- Children need to experience weather first-hand
- Staff have to be supportive toward outdoor play

### ***Why Develop Outdoor Play?***

- It allows and encourages children to relive their experiences through their most natural channel – movement
- Movement is one of the four vehicles through which children can learn. Movement helps children to control their behaviour, to engage more and to retain information that is required through play or taught to them.
  - The others are play, talk and sensory experiences.
- It provides access to space to nurture mind-body growth.
- Physical development is the pre-requisite for the children's growth. It:
  - Enhances the development of motor skills (gross and fine)
  - Develops co-ordination, balance and body awareness
  - Keeps the body, heart and other organs healthy
  - Develops a life-long good habit of daily exercise.
- It provides the opportunity for assessed risky freedom, where children can play and socialise freely and use their own imagination and initiative.
- All the areas of learning can be achieved outside while the children's long-term social, emotional and mental health are being enhanced.
- Exercise can affect emotions allowing for relaxation and calmness and a heightened sense of well-being (Armstrong 1996). Young children's basic need for well-being and involvement, and their urge to explore and make sense of the world, is developed through high-quality play in an outdoor environment.

### ***Equipment and Safety***

- All play apparatus and equipment are installed subject to the manufacturer's instructions.
- Risk assessments are carried out on all large equipment and play spaces and regular assessment of their condition is completed.
- Apparatus is only used by children of the appropriate age, skill and physical abilities.

- Sun protection – Parents are expected to apply sun-cream and children should wear hats during the hot weather.

### ***Rules for outside***

The children will be aware of outside rules for their own health and well-being. Outside rules will be discussed with the Student Council and put on display in the playground.

### ***Planning and Organisation***

There is an expectation that children will have access to outdoor play all year round. Appropriate clothing and footwear should always be worn to school and if necessary, wellington boots left in school.

- The provision outside should show clear links to the planned indoor curriculum and build on children's' interests.
- Outdoor learning activities/experiences will be found in teachers' planning.

### ***Outdoor Resources***

St John's PS has recently upgraded our outdoor play area which has added to the opportunities for outdoor learning significantly. The school has ride on toys and various pieces of equipment – some that are kept at the back of the P1-P3 mobile and some that are stored in a locked shed shared with Apple Blossom Playgroup. Teachers can allow their class to use any of this equipment where and when appropriate to the activity, age and skill of the group.

### ***Assessment***

As in indoor play, outdoor learning experiences will be monitored and recorded to provide information for future planning.

'The best play environment for children are those, which are developed on the basis of children's natural play needs taking into account different developmental periods including the social, physical and cognitive forms of play'. (Malone and Tranter, 2003)

## **ADULT INTERACTION**

"Through keen observation, sensitive interaction, timely guidance and careful evaluation, every adult can make a positive response to children's movement, not just by setting up an environment and letting things happen, but by seeking opportunities to extend the experience of children." The Contribution of Physical Activity in the Early Years – Pauline Boorman

- A positive attitude
  - Help staff to identify the potential and learning possibilities of the activities

- The role of the staff is to model, provide, observe, interact, intervene and evaluate
- Setting Up
  - Provide starting points for the children
  - Have the storage arranged so that the children can access the equipment and set up some of the activities themselves
- Playing with the children
  - Enhances learning
  - Increases the quality of the play
  - Raises the status of the play and activity
  - Raises the self-esteem of those involved
  - Allows staff to support unsure children
  - Reduces stereotypical play
  - Gives opportunities to model new and reinforce language
- Providing opportunities, challenge, stimulation and progression
  - Provide the right environment, the right resources and the right ethos, which says “Have a Go”
  - By asking challenging questions or posing challenging situations, adults will enable children to really think
  - Stimulation increases motivation, motivation increases perseverance and perseverance increases the likelihood of understanding; activities need to be fun and involve real life
  - You need to know where you are going with the children and what it is you are expecting by the time, they leave your setting
- Observation
  - Make observations of children and make judgements about the resources and the environment that has been provided
- Adult Rota
  - Be flexible according to the number of staff available
- Tidying Up
- Children can tidy up, as long as they are shown how to, and they are given the guidelines

Children need to know that when they need an adult that they can access one. Adults should also have opportunities to work with specific children, i.e. one-one, select groups, and those with special needs.

## **EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY**

- Gender issues
  - It is important that activities and resources are not used in a sex-stereotyped way, allowing children access to all activities
- Respect for cultural issues
  - Some children may need to remain fully clothed e.g. water activities – respect cultures in resources selected