

Structured Play/Activity Based Learning **Policy**



November 2017

Rationale

In Killowen Primary School we value the importance of Structured Play and Activity Based Learning as an essential method in delivery the Foundation Stage and KS1 curriculum. Through play our learners make connections, build on ideas, concepts and skills. As well as making new discoveries, children will use the skills they have already mastered to extend their knowledge and understanding of the world around them.

The Importance of Play

‘I hear, I forget. I see, I remember. I do, I understand.’

Play allows children to use their creativity while developing their imagination, dexterity, and physical, cognitive, and emotional strength. Play is important to healthy brain development. It is through play that children at a very early age engage and interact in the world around them. Play allows children to create and explore a world they can master, conquering their fears while practising adult roles, sometimes in conjunction with other children or teachers. As they master their world, play helps children develop new competencies that lead to enhanced confidence and the resiliency they will need to face future challenges.

Planning

The '10 Common Principles of Early Years Education,' act as a guide to our planning to ensure we offer the children a varied and balanced curriculum through play.

10 Common Principals of Early Years Education

- 1.The best way to prepare children for their adult life is to give them what they need as children
- 2.Children are whole people who have feelings, ideas and relationships with others, and who need to be physically, mentally, morally and spiritually healthy.
- 3.Subjects such as mathematics and art cannot be separated; young children learn in an integrated way and not in neat, tidy compartments.
- 4.Children learn best when they are given appropriate responsibility, allowed to make errors, decisions and choices, and respected as autonomous learners.
- 5.Self-discipline is emphasised. Indeed, this is the only kind of discipline worth having. Reward systems are very short-term and do not work in the long-term. Children need their efforts to be valued.
- 6.There are times when children are especially able to learn particular things.
- 7.What children can do (rather than what they cannot do) is the starting point of a child's education.
- 8.Imagination, creativity and all kinds of symbolic behaviour (reading, writing, drawing, dancing, music, mathematical numbers, algebra, role play and talking) develop and emerge when conditions are favourable.
- 9.Relationships with other people (both adults and children) are of central importance in a child's life.
- 10.Quality education is about three things: the child, the context in which learning takes place, and the knowledge and understanding which the child develops and learns.

Planning for play is vital to ensure all children have equal access to quality learning experiences. When planning for play we provide an appropriate combination of child-initiated and adult-led activities. Progression in play comes from a good planning, observation and assessment cycle.

Foundation Stage

Teachers use a 4-6 week topic planner outlining structured play activities. A short term planner is created weekly, acting as a working document. This outlines areas of play, key language and questioning and expected outcomes.

KS1

Teachers use a 4-6 week topic planner outlining activity based learning.

A working document is created for each topic, outlining expected learning outcomes, rotations to ensure all children are given equal opportunities and an area for evaluations of each activity.

Observations and assessment

The Northern Ireland Foundation Stage Curriculum states ‘Observations are a natural and essential part of good practise for teachers and classroom assistants. Without the regular observations and written records on each child’s development, the teacher is left with an incomplete picture of the child.’

Teachers and teaching assistants will record observations in a range of ways, such as; taking photographs, photocopying work, post-it notes and filling in observation templates.

Observations allow practitioners to:

- Assess the development of the child’s skills.
- Monitor the child’s progress.

- Meet the needs, interests and ability of the children.
- Ensure that children are experiencing a wide variety of experiences and not confining their play to a limited number of areas.
- Indicate when extra materials are required to supplement or extend the play.

Observations will inform assessment as well as planning. Observations made will provide the teacher with a better understanding of each child's interests, skills and capabilities. The teacher will use this evidence as a guide to help further the child's learning.

Role of the Adult

The adult plays a significant role in moving a child's learning along. This can be done in a range of ways.

Use effective questioning to:

- Clarify or extend children's thinking
- Interact sensitively with children to support their learning
- Engage children in reflective discussion about their learning
- Make judgements on what they understand
- Encourage higher level thinking

Provide additional resources - by observing a child's play the adults can enhance the provision in a way that encourages that child to have a deeper understanding. For example, providing magnifying glasses/microscopes/bug catchers during exploration play.

Observe and provide feedback - in many instances just observing is best practise rather than interrupting play.

Model good social skills - by playing alongside a child the adult is working on establishing a secure relationship with that child. They are acting as a role

model, demonstrating how to share and take turns, how to have a conversation and how to calmly solve issues that may arise.

Management of Play Based Learning

Foundation Stage

Primary 1 - one hour every day

Primary 2 - one hour four times a week

Key Stage 1

Primary 3 and 4 - one hour a week

The Learning Environment

We aim for the learning environments to be welcoming and child-friendly. Resources and equipment are clearly labelled and readily available so that children can select what is needed in their activity.

The children have access to the following areas:

Foundation Stage

- Role Play
- Creative
- Construction
- Sand
- Water
- Mark making

- Small world
- Table top
- Malleable
- Reading area
- ICT
- Outdoor classroom and poly tunnel
- Outdoor climbing frame

Key Stage 1

- ICT
- Library area
- Writing materials
- Construction
- Table top games supporting literacy/numeracy
- Art and design materials
- Small world
- Outdoor classroom and poly tunnel
- Outdoor climbing frame