



Currie Primary School

Play-Based Learning Policy



...a fun place to
play and learn!

Rationale

This policy sets out why and how we deliver a Play-Based Learning approach in Currie Primary School. We know through research that play is fundamental to the learning process. Children learn from being active through exploration of the world and learning alongside and with others in social and cultural contexts. The design of a learning environment shapes learning, and play is powerful if the educators encourage children to learn through as well as offer adult led experiences that extend and enrich skills and understanding.

How do Children Learn?

Through:

- Real life experiences
- Watching others
- Playing
- Practising / repeating
- Learning from mistakes
- Questioning

According to Julie Fisher (2013), in ‘Starting with the Child’ children learn by:

- Being active
- Exploring and investigating
- Playing
- Using language
- Interacting

It is also important to remember that children come to our Early Learning and Childcare settings with a wealth of prior learning from home. Each child will of course start with different experiences.

What is Play?

“Play in all its rich variety is one of the highest achievements of the human species, alongside language, culture and technology. Indeed, without play, none of these other achievements would be possible. The value of play is increasingly recognised, by researchers and within the policy arena, for adults as well as children, as the evidence mounts of its relationship with intellectual achievement and emotional well-being” (Whitebread 2019)

Play is an intrinsic part of human nature and development. The essential role of play beyond the ELC or school environment is well documented. We know how important it is for children to be given time to play throughout the day to follow their own line of enquiry or individual interest.

Play is sometimes thought of as children's work (Isaacs, 1930). Through play, children learn to answer their own questions, learn new skills and learn to work collaboratively with other children or adults.

Some theorists emphasise that when playing, the child tries out ideas and comes to a better understanding of thoughts and concepts; others see play as a means of the child coping with reality through using their imagination; and, others see play as a means to practise new skills.

'Play, like creativity helps children to make connections in their learning...play orchestrates learning – it helps children to bring together what they know in a connected and whole way.

Play helps children to be led forward actively in their learning. Extending learning means leading children forward as well as broadening the learning.

However, helping children to play requires the most sophisticated teaching strategies of all. Although the adult leads the child forward, the child must also have the opportunity to reflect on what they have already learned. Children who are encouraged to do this are easier to lead forward. They are easier to teach because, through their play, they have been able to understand and bring meaning to their learning.' (Bruce 2001)

Play Strategy for Scotland, Scottish Government:

Executive Summary: Children's play is crucial to Scotland's well-being; socially, economically and environmentally. Our people are our greatest resource and the early years of life set the pattern for children's future development.

'The experiences children have in early life – and the environments in which they have them – shape their developing brain architecture and strongly affect whether they grow up to be healthy, productive members of society' (Harvard University, 2007).

'Play is an essential part of a happy, healthy childhood and 'when children play their brains do two things: they grow and the become organised and usable' (Hughes, 2013).

By investing in all our children and young people now we can strengthen their ability to achieve their full potential.

Why Play Pedagogy?

Pedagogy' is what we know about children and how they learn, together with the experiences and responses we provide. It describes our methodology and our understanding and beliefs of what is right for young children.

In determining the nature of our pedagogy, we need to consider the child, the experiences we provide, our interactions, the environment, the family and their community and how these factors influence each child's holistic development and progress in learning.

Key features of effectiveness:

- *high quality, child-centred staff-child interactions*
- *joint creation of pedagogical transitions practices*
- *a balanced curriculum-values play, offers self-regulation and provides suitably challenging learning activities*
- *structural similarities between ELC and P1, 'hybrid pedagogy'*

(OECD, 2017: 153)

Curriculum for Excellence has established clear values, purposes and principles for education from 3 to 18 in Scotland. It aims to enable children and young people to develop their capacities as successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors.

As part of their learner journey, all children and young people in Scotland are entitled to experience a coherent curriculum from 3 to 18, in order that they have opportunities to develop the knowledge, skills and attributes they need to adapt, think critically and flourish in today's world.

Early Learning and Childcare settings and schools have the **freedom** and **responsibility** to meet the needs of children and young people in their local communities. The curriculum must be designed, managed and delivered to take full account of each learner's individual needs and stage of development.

In Scotland we benefit from a curriculum model that spans the ELC and the early years of Primary School. The Early Level of Curriculum for Excellence is intended to support the implementation of a **responsive, continuous, play-based** curriculum for children aged 3 – 6. It describes experiences and outcomes for children's learning in ways which have supported a more active, play-based approach to learning and teaching in early primary school and encouraged better continuity and progression for all children across all settings.

Fundamental to Scotland's Curriculum are the **four capacities**. A play-based curriculum offers rich opportunities to equip our young learners with the skills, attributes and dispositions necessary for them to thrive in an ever-changing world.



‘... play at this time is not trivial, it is highly serious and of deep significance’
(Froebel, 1826)

It can be fun and joyful or difficult and complicated. This is a challenge for practitioners as the act can be misinterpreted as being ‘just play’. The intrinsic value of what a child is actually doing, and learning can be missed or ignored and therefore seen as less valuable. Adults may consciously or unconsciously place more value on tasks they plan and lead with pre-determined outcomes.

- Play should be child centred focusing on interactions focusing on interactions, experiences and spaces.
- Play is important for children’s well-being and development
- When planning and providing play opportunities, the goal is not to eliminate risk, but to weigh up the risks and benefits

Transitions

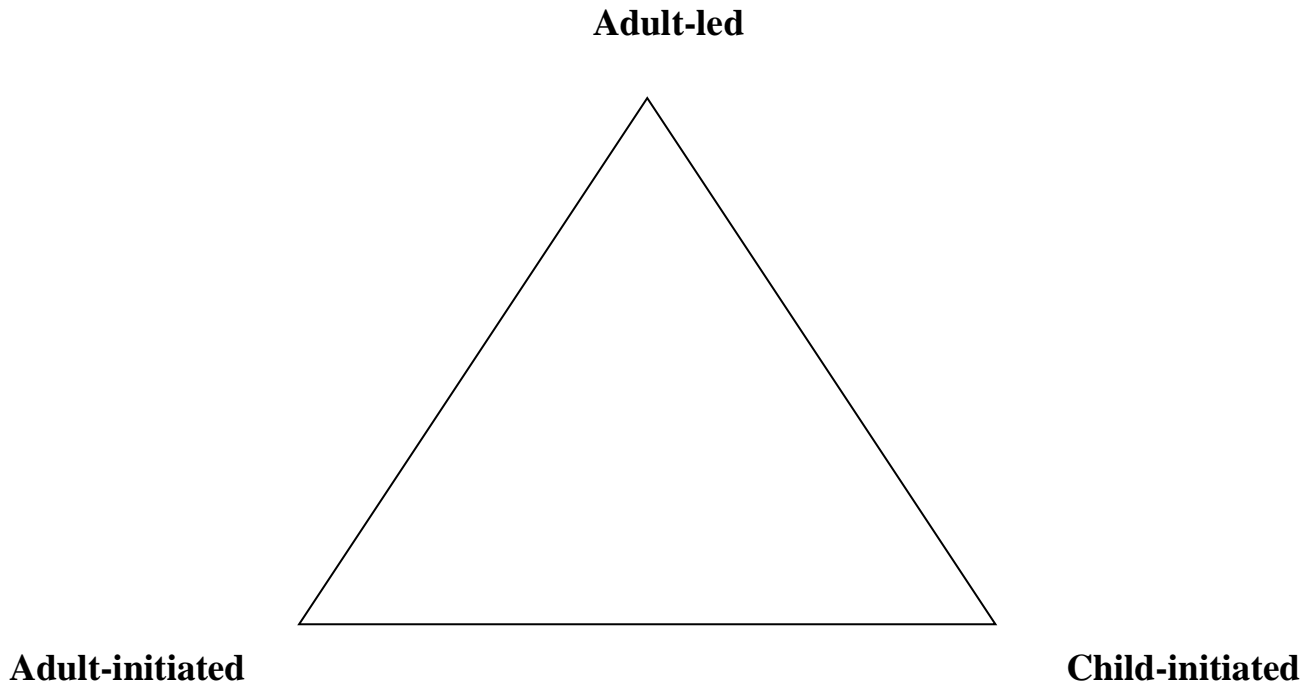
Curriculum for Excellence (2007) gives prominence to play, particularly across the early level and the transition between Early Learning and Childcare and Primary School. This transition will be smoother for children if play remains and continues as the main vehicle for their early learning in Primary 1. Practitioners Early Learning and Childcare settings and schools need to work together to plan for progression in learning and for continuity across a child-centred play pedagogy and curriculum.

In the early years of primary school there may be some difficulty with the word ‘play’ itself. Parents/carers often need reassurance that their children will learn effectively through play because of its association with leisure. What is important is that all staff with responsibility for planning the early years learning recognise that play has a central role in that process and when necessary can demonstrate this to parents/carers.

(Building the Curriculum 2 – Scottish Government 2007)

Principles of Implementation for Play:

According to Julie Fisher in 'Starting with the Child' (2013) there should be a balance of the following:



Child-initiated: activity that the children can control in terms of experience, time and resources

Adult-initiated: activities that arise from adult planning; sufficiently open-ended for children to work on independently until the adult is ready to interact

Adult-led: individual, pair or group work, usually differentiated by the input; the focus of adult time

- Children learn from other children
- Children need to be read to
- There needs to be opportunities for creativity - all the best entrepreneurs are creative
- Children need to take risks
- Children are both capable and competent and they require challenge throughout the day

Quality teacher-led:

- Providing high quality learning experiences that are relevant to interests
- Provide creative opportunities
- Encourage curiosity
- Give regular feedback to the children
- Observe learning to have well timed interventions

Quality child-led:

- Self-initiated
- Challenging
- Stimulating
- Accessible

Child initiated

- These are experiences children control
- They must be meaningful

The Role of the Adult

Teachers....

Watch:

- What are the children are doing?
- What are they trying to achieve?

Wait:

- Is the child getting on alright on their own?
- Are they stuck or frustrated?
- Can I be of help?

Wonder:

- What they are thinking now?

The Learning Environment

Five criteria for an affective learning environment:

1. Children involved in decision and planning of classroom
2. Encourage and support children's independence
3. Responsive interactions between teacher and child
4. An environment that BELONGS to the child (points of interest)
5. A balance of learning with others

In order to have an effective learning environment:

- Time needs to be spent planning the learning environment
- Intelligent resources need to be put in place to allow learning to take place
- Space
- Flexible
- Child level accessible
- Changes and evolves
- Quiet and noisy areas
- Indoor and outdoor
- Visuals
- Set out so children know where things are
- Literacy Rich
- Numeracy Rich

'Tables and chairs restrict the amount of space that is available for children to learn.....and also restrict the flexibility of space' (Moyles 2014)

Sample organisation of a morning in an Early Years classroom at Currie Primary School:

- Self-registration / Lunches
- Child initiated learning (Free Play)
- Direct teaching session 1
- Target time
- Direct teaching session 2
- Observation time

Break

- Direct teaching 3
- Observation
- Direct teaching 4
- Tidy up
- All together to review

Lunch

Setting up a play environment:

- Design and organise the learning environment
- Displays neutral and outline prices of learning
- Learning journey wall
- Blocks of time
- Targets linked to curricular areas or zones
- Reflection time
- Observe and interact with the children when they are playing

Connecting Teaching to Learning through Play at Currie Primary

HGIOS?4 Challenge Questions:

- ✓ How well are learners enabled to *select and make use of high-quality resources and equipment including digital technologies?*
- ✓ How well do we use our *community and spaces to deliver high-quality outdoor learning?*
- ✓ How well are we *enabling learners to become independent learners and develop the four capacities?*
- ✓ How confident are we that all learners experience *activities which are varied, differentiated, active, and provide effective support and challenge?*
- ✓ How well are children and young people involved in planning and identifying opportunities for personalisation and choice?
- ✓ How well do we apply the principles of planning, observation, assessment, recording and reporting as an integral feature of learning and teaching?

Stage/Level	Organisation of Continuous Learning Provision currently *Creative learning continues in absence of an adult	Learning environment
Nursery (Early)	Fully play based learning – responsive planning to pupils’ interests. Free flow indoor/outdoor. Minimal interruption to flow of learning (gather)	No individual set seat, few tables, less chairs. Free selection resources.
Primary 1 (Early)	Home group system for direct teaching in small groups – free flow – indoor. Teachers take children outdoors (when possible) for experiences. Planned focus Teaching gather times.	No individual set seat – slight increase in chairs – more tables – use of low tables & floor tasks
Primary 2 (First)	Home group system for direct teaching in small groups – free flow – indoor. Teachers take children outdoors (when possible) for experiences. Planned focus Teaching gather times.	No individual set seat – slight increase in chairs – more tables – use of low tables & floor tasks

Appendix 1:

Provision Area	Skills Development Focus	Resources Required	Organisation and Storage
Construction: Large loose parts, block play / dens. Small – Lego, straws, wooden blocks, craft, junk modelling			
Small World: Cars, animals, figures, airport, trains, fairy house			
Book Area: Relax and read space – inviting, comfortable, stories & puppets			
Science: Magnifying glasses, gather/sort, research, magnets, pulleys, funnels, measure – volume/ time /speed / distance			
Water: Pouring, freezing, mixing consistency, measure, power			
Sand: Wet /dry – as water – sensory – imaginative e.g. adding small world, water beads etc			
Malleables:			

Dough, clay, pastry etc – finger painting, foam, ripping			
Fine Motor: Cutting, patterns, tracing, sewing, pegs, bands			
Creative: Craft and art different media – paint, pastel, printing, techniques			
Stem Skills: Joining, making, designing – also develops fine motor & imagination.			
Tinkering Table: Extends above – may include tools, techniques, taking things apart			
Mark Making: Writing/pre-writing – patterns, shaving foam, sand tray, chalk etc			
Role Play: Imagination – dress up or let's pretend, puppets & small world. Dens			
Gross motor: PE skills, games, obstacle course (loose parts) balance, climb, jump, dance			

Music and Dance: Use loose parts to create or at STEM tinker, music to evoke creative response			
Digital Technologies: I-pads, Mart Board, coding, robotics etc			
Co-operation: games, paired puzzles			

What else do we do?

- Observations of play in Primary 1 (only magic moments)
- Clearly stating what the children are learning and use these observations to inform planning
- Logging lap - one minute to take photos
- Learning walks around the classroom
- Learning walls changed regularly
- Documentation – Big Floor planning books
- Allowing children to record their own learning - children need to see themselves as learners
- Planning, implementing and learning daily (What we need to teach we teach well through targeted group time)
- Consultations with children ensuring all children are spoken to (EAL, quiet children are spoken to)
- Reflection time
- Impact of change - photographs and annotation for anyone to see to show we are being reflective
- Interact with children as well as direct teaching
- Provision of a wide range and balance of experiences

Appendix 2:

Outdoor Play:

The use of trolleys to take resources outdoors:

Provision Area	Resources
Water	channelling & water butt with tap for rain water, pouring & measuring in play, mud kitchen
Malleables	Included in play equipment e.g. tongs, tweezers, rollers
Sand	Tray (with cover) plus mud space. Equipment for use in sand/water/mud kitchen. Natural resources wildlife
Art & Mark Making	Chalks, charcoal, pens, brushes, rollers, paper – colouring/puzzles/ paper for Lunch
Reading	Cushion set, tarpaulin, den making kits, fabrics for cosy corner, book trolley & own books
Construction	Loose parts & resources, den making, open ended materials, block play, bricks & tools
Small World	Fairy houses, stacking pebbles, wooden boulders, animals, cars, people etc
Gross Motor	Large playground equipment – trim trail, slide etc
Imagination	Den building, deconstructed role play, wildlife garden, mud kitchen etc.
Science & Nature	Magnifying glasses, information books, gardening & growing spaces, tools if required.

Appendix 3:

Learning Provision Planning:

<u>Construction</u>	<u>Small World</u>	<u>Book Area</u>	<u>Role Play</u>
<u>Science & Nature</u>	<u>STEM</u>	<u>Tinkering</u>	<u>Arts & Crafts</u>
<u>Mark Making</u>	<u>Malleables</u>	<u>Sand</u>	<u>Fine Motor</u>
<u>Water</u>	<u>Games & Puzzles</u>	<u>Life Skills e.g. scissor skills</u>	<u>Digital Technologies</u>

Appendix 4:

Primary 1 Structure of Day

General

- Each classroom has a weekly target task to complete. These tasks vary based on the individual classes.
- The children move their photograph from red to green Velcro boards to show they have completed it.
- Self-register each morning.
- Teachers group committed until lunch time each day.
- In the afternoons, Monday and Wednesday have PE slots. However, Tuesday and Thursday are protected play observation time slots/ mini Topic lessons.
- Classes are timetabled for atrium on Thursday afternoons.

Reading

- All teams read daily for 20 minutes with an adult or P6 (rotational)
- New books on Tuesday and Thursday of each week

Literacy – Phonics

- 3 phonics sessions per week.
- 2 new sounds currently.
- 2 new tricky words.
- Whole class input (share new sound, revise previous sounds and share/ revise tricky words).
- During input we also complete whole class word building and reading sentences in talk partners.
- 3 teams in each class.
- Over the course of the week, each team has 2 sessions with teacher, 2 target task and 2 play sessions.
- Target tasks consist of games which revise or support learning new sounds, Literacy worksheets, ICT and letter formation.
- See below.

★ Literacy Learning Team Time ★

Monday

Red team:



Yellow team:



Blue team:



- 4 Maths sessions per week.
- 1 out of 4 of the Maths sessions takes place outdoors with the focus rotating across the columns (weather dependent).
- Whole class mental Maths for 10-15 minutes (range of columns covered).
- 3 or 4 teams in each class.
- Over the course of the week each team has 2 teacher slots, 2 target tasks and play sessions.

Writing

- 1 main session using colourful semantics (in teams).
- 1 other Foundation of Writing session either weekly or fortnightly (whole class).

PE

- One main hall session
- One gym hall session
- Rotational slots on a monthly basis (before lunch, after lunch x 2)

Library

- 2 classes visit on a weekly basis.

- Class with final PE slot of day can't go.

Play

- Each classroom has: library, role play, construction, sand/water tray, writing table, small world, creative area, iPads.
- All areas have the basic resources that stay the same.
- Areas are added to based on children's interests (where possible).

Appendix 5:

Primary Two Structure of Day

General

- Each group has a written Literacy daily target task to complete
- Target activities are completed in Science and Technology, Fine Motor Skills, Creative, Maths, Literacy and Outdoor Learning and these tasks are changed on a Monday and a Wednesday. The children collect a coloured lollypop stick on completion of these activities

- we also set up activities to follow the interests in individual classes. This could be developing some of the previous activities or introducing other activities.
- Teachers group committed almost all day due to large number of groups and needs with limited PSA support
- Tuesdays and Thursdays are gym days. We find it difficult mainly due to hall allocation to hit the recommended two hours a week but try our best.

Reading

- All reading groups read on a Monday with P7. They also read with teacher twice in the week. New books are issued regularly depending on the pace of the group. We have children working on ORT and Dandelion readers
- All groups do comprehension activities

Literacy – Phonics

- 2 phonics sessions per week.
- Whole class input (share new sound, revise previous sounds and share/revise tricky words).
- During input we also complete whole class word building and reading sentences in talk partners.
- 4 groups in each class plus individual learners.

Maths

- We do Maths on a Monday following the circle plan. We have a number of follow up activities on offer through play each week.
- Each week we do numeracy and mental maths work 4 times with each group
- We use SEAL but supplement it with SHM and TeeJay workbooks

Writing

- 1 main session using VCOP (in groups plus individuals)

PE

- One main hall session, one gym hall session (P2a and b)
- Two main hall sessions. P2c

We have tried to rotate this to allow P2c into the gym hall but due to substantial needs in each class and PSA time it has not been possible.

Library

- visit on a weekly basis for children who have books to return.

Play

- Each classroom has: library, role play, construction, sand/water tray (P2b and c there is no sink or lino in P2a), writing table, small world, creative area, limited iPads due to age of iPads and lack of wifi
- All areas have the basic resources that stay the same.
- Areas are added to based on children's interests (where possible).