



PLAY AND ACTIVITY BASED LEARNING POLICY

Play is a central part of young children's learning. Through play, children explore ideas, feelings and relationships. They take risks, make mistakes and try things without fear of failure. Play can push out the limits of what is possible and help children to be creative, flexible and imaginative for sustained periods. Rich play promotes control, mastery, confidence and well being.

Learning for life: Early Education 2002

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Policy Statement

In Holy Trinity Primary School, we believe that play based activities or activity based learning is essential to the development of the whole child.

One of the most important aims of Education is to help each child fulfil his/her potential in all areas of life, not just academically. Learning Through Play can be a useful tool in the fulfilment of this aim. Through play activities, children are encouraged to use their initiative, develop self-esteem and confidence, explore, be imaginative and creative, socialise with peers and other adults and through experiencing success develop positive attitudes towards school and learning.

In Holy Trinity Primary School, opportunities will be provided for both free and teacher directed play, taking account of the requirements of N.I. Curriculum and developing good practice.

Rationale

- Children learn and develop through Play.
- Play is a motivating factor for learning.
- Adult help and participation are necessary for learning to progress.

Play provides an opportunity for children to come to terms with themselves, their culture and language, with other people and the world, and to make sense of real life situations. Play provides opportunities for exploration, investigation and problem solving and for children to practice their developing skills. It also provides opportunities for them to represent their experiences and use what they have learned in different ways – through music, language, imaginative and creative activities.

The role of the adult is crucial in supporting and extending children's play.

Well planned and well resourced play activities which allow for progression in a child's thinking and understanding can provide the context in which these principles become the reality for all our children.

Progression in play reflects the observation and assessment of children's knowledge, skills and attitudes. Through our observations, assessment and professional judgement we gain valuable insights into how each child learns best. This information informs our planning to meet the needs of each individual. Progression comes as a result of understanding the interests, needs and experiences of the child. As Practitioners we must provide progression in the activities to meet the developmental needs of children.

“Childhood play is the context for children's development and is fundamental to their growth and learning from infancy through adolescence, contributing to their physical, cognitive, social and emotional development.”

(Isenberg & Quisenberry, 2002)

Janet Moyles states that:

“Anyone who has observed play for any length of time will recognise that, for young children, play is a tool for learning and practitioners who acknowledge and appreciate this can, through provision, interaction and intervention in children's play ensure progression, differentiation and relevance in the curriculum. The sense of children actively seeking to construct this own view of the world and the contribution of quality interactions with other, both adults and children, is now widely accepted as a suitable approach to early years' curriculum.”

10 Common Principles 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 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.

Tina Bruce
'Early Childhood Education'

Aims In The Foundation Stage

At Holy Trinity Primary School, we recognise the importance of Play Based Learning as a fundamental process of learning in the Foundation Stage. Therefore we aim to:-

- Provide quality Play in a stimulating environment, which allows the children to develop and learn.
- To develop self-esteem, self-confidence, independence and a positive attitude to learning.
- Provide adequate planning, time and space for Play.
- To encourage creativity, self-expression and imaginative thinking.
- To foster social and emotional skills necessary for integration within the classroom and beyond.
- To stimulate curiosity and foster skills of observation, investigation and problem solving in all areas of the curriculum.
- To promote children's thinking skills and personal capabilities.
- Help children accept the teacher can take an active role in furthering the learning situation and promote physical, social and emotional development.
- Provide a holistic learning experience, covering a variety of skills giving first hand experiences and setting new challenges.
- Allow time for careful observation of children's Play to facilitate assessment and planning for progression and continuity, recognising differing needs and attitudes.

AIMS AT KEY STAGE ONE

Activity Based Learning at Key Stage One builds on the practical, hands on learning which has taken place in the Foundation Stage. Primary Four place a greater emphasis on focused activities which are closely linked to topics. Activity Based Learning allows the children to be engaged in a range of teacher and child initiated activities, for example, role play, table top activities, art and design and Maths investigations.

The aims for play in the Foundation Stage still remain, but in addition to these, for Activity Based Learning we aim to :-

- Encourage children to learn in the company of others and provide opportunities for adults and children to plan and learn together.
- To encourage independence by giving children a degree of control over their learning and create opportunities for children to make choices and decisions.
- To enable children to develop their own ideas and interests.
- To develop thinking skills and personal capabilities.
- To provide opportunities for sharing and demonstrating learning.
- To encourage children to be inquisitive about their learning and be involved in the planning, performance and evaluation of an activity.

Thinking Skills and Personal Capabilities

“At the heart of the NI Curriculum lies an explicit emphasis on the development of pupils’ skills and capabilities for lifelong learning and for operating effectively in society. By engaging pupils in active learning contexts across all areas of the Curriculum, your teachers can develop pupils’ personal and interpersonal skills, capabilities and dispositions, and their ability to think both creatively and critically.”

(Thinking Skills and Personal Capabilities in Key Stages 1 and 2 – CCEA 2007)

Play provides a wide variety of experiences which help to develop the children’s knowledge, skills and understanding. During Play children will be given opportunities to:

- Think, solve problems and make decisions
- Be creative
- Work with others
- Manage information
- Be independent

At Holy Trinity Primary School, through play, we aim to provide opportunities for:

- Language development through experiences.
- Transfer learning to real-life situations
- Social skills
- Making informed and responsible decisions
- Involvement in group play or observation
- Developing curiosity and creativity
- Emotional development
- Promotion of self esteem and confidence
- Self motivation
- Developing the dispositions to learn
- Dealing with feelings
- Imaginative and imitative play
- Learning to listen to others and follow direction
- Reflection and self evaluation of work
- Innovation using equipment

To enhance proper progression in learning we will promote the acquisition and development of skills, concepts and attitudes associated with all areas of the curriculum. Regular monitoring and evaluation of these areas is essential as it enables the teacher to discover the children’s level of knowledge and understanding, ways of thinking, attitudes, language and communication skills and ability to play in a group.

Roles of Responsibility

The role of the School Governors

To ensure the Play policy is fully implemented throughout Foundation Stage and Key Stage One.

The role of the Principal

To provide the funding for adequate resources and to ensure all staff are provided with suitable training.

The role of the Play Co-ordinator

To ensure all members of the teaching staff have a copy of the Play policy, and understand its purpose. To provide adequate monitoring of Play and to report findings to the principal and staff. The co-ordinator also has direct responsibility to report to the Principal when resources need replacing and updating.

The role of the Year Leader

To ensure sufficient time is given in planning to provide activities and experiences which are appropriate.

The role of the Teacher/Classroom Assistant

The quality of adult intervention is crucial to the quality of learning which is experienced by the child. Therefore Foundation and Key Stage One staff strive to:-

- Support children's learning through planned play activities and spontaneous play.
- To plan and resource a challenging and stimulating environment which facilitates high quality play and to be aware of potential learning.
- To ensure that play provision and practice reflect the differing needs, interests and cultural backgrounds of individuals.
- To extend and develop children's language and communication in their play.
- To be a participant who initiates, encourages, models, joins in, stimulates and extends learning.
- To observe children carefully, assess their progress, evaluate the learning taking place and use information to inform future planning.

Planning

Planning is key to effective learning and teaching and takes account of the developmental stage of the children as well as previous experiences. Our planners are flexible and can be adapted as children's learning is observed. Planners are evaluated to ensure progression throughout Foundation and Key Stage One.

As children progress through the school they are involved in the planning process. Their ideas are recorded and contribute to the teachers 6 week planner.

Foundation Stage

Teachers use a topic based 6 week planner which indicates learning intentions and activities for areas of learning. Teachers also consider resources which are required, any opportunities which arise for outdoor learning, and an evaluation of previous learning.

Key Stage One

Teachers use a topic based 6 week planner with activities and learning intentions explained. Suggested resources are listed, any key questions are outlined and tasks which require differentiation.

Management of Play and Activity Based Learning

Foundation Stage

- Whole class introduction and planning time with adults.
- Mix of activities – freedom of choice where children choose where to go, and focus activities the teacher will ask every child to complete.
- Children may change places during play time.
- Children are informed when they have 5 minutes left.
- Before or after play, children are brought together to review play.
- Records are kept of play activities, e.g. photographs, wall displays, etc.
- Children tidy up the play areas with adult assistance when required.

Key Stage One

- Whole class introduction to plan, explain activities and potential learning.
- Teachers will have focus activities for the children and a selection of independent tasks.
- Children will be involved setting up activities.
- Children will be informed when they have 5 minutes left.
- Children tidy up the play areas with adult assistance when required.
- Children will demonstrate or discuss the learning (plenary).
- Children display their learning.

Time Allocated to Play/Activity Based Learning

Foundation Stage – Primary One are engaged in a sustained period of play every day.
Primary Two dedicate four times a week to play.

Key Stage One – Primary Three dedicate two sessions a week to play.
Primary Four have one session.

Observation, Assessment, Evaluation and Recording

Foundation Stage

Observations are a regular feature of classroom practice. They provide information about the children and help teachers to review the play provided. Observations help the teachers to:-

- Assess the development of the children's physical, social and cognitive skills.
- Monitor the child's progress.
- Plan to meet the needs, interests and abilities of the children.
- Assess the appropriateness of the activities provided and ensure that learning is taking place.
- Ensure that the children have experience at a wide variety of activities.
- Know when extra materials are required to extend or supplement play.

Observations are used to inform planning and should include information on:-

- The social, emotional and cognitive development of the child.
- Thinking skills and personal capabilities.
- The child's use of language.
- The level of concentration and involvement.

Key Stage 1

Learning is assessed during play in a variety of ways:-

- The teacher and classroom assistant.
- Peers
- Self-assessment
- Observation
- Discussion and reflection

Assessment is an integral part of the learning process. Through on-going integrated assessment, teachers build up a comprehensive picture of the progress as well as the learning needs of each child. This knowledge assists the teacher to ultimately improve learning. It enables teachers to:-

- Monitor progress
- Plan future work
- Give the children tasks which require them to use certain skills
- Assess if the tasks provided are appropriate and if learning is taking place
- Know what materials are required

Observation at Key Stage One

Observations in Key Stage One should take account of the emotional, social and cognitive ability of the child. Assessment in Key Stage One is based upon :-

- The Learning Intentions
- The success criteria

- Thinking skills and personal capabilities.

Teaching strategies

Staff intervenes when:-

- Children have a problem they cannot solve
- He/She can lead them to reaching a logical conclusion
- Children are disrupting the play
- Children are at risk because materials or equipment are being abused
- The play is interfering with the activities of other children

Staff does not intervene:-

- Until children have been given time to work out the solution to their problem or resolved their disagreement
- Unless he/she knows they are not capable of comprehending the logical conclusion
- Where the repetitive play is serving a purpose

Recording Play

By taking photographs to illustrate play.

By continuous assessment.

By spot checks, e.g. during a set period of time while continuing with other classroom activities, the staff observe what is happening in the play.

By planning for a specific time to assess children's language/involvement/leadership, etc in play.

By concentrating on each area of play in turn and, if possible, covering all of these during the course of a term.

Dramatic Play

Personal, emotional and social development

- Co-operate, take turns and initiate role-play
- Develop confidence, self-esteem and self-control
- Learn to work independently and access resources they need
- Learn to work as part of a group
- Express individuality through imaginative play
- Use language of social interaction
- Learn to have respect for others' ideas and accommodate these
- Help to tidy up at the end of the play session
- Show initiative when developing ideas in the role play area
- Reflect on feelings as part of role play

Creative/Aesthetic Development

- Use imagination to develop stories in the role play area
- Introduce the language of colour and texture
- Encourage children to create and design their own menus, posters, leaflets, cards
- Make items for role-play

Physical Development

- Develop fine motor skills and co-ordination through manipulating real tools
- Develop co-ordination through fastenings on clothes
- Develop awareness of space and how to share it with others

Knowledge and appreciation of the environment

- Create role-play areas based on their knowledge of their local environment, homes and cultures
- Talk about their families in relation to events
- Re-enact special occasions
- Re-enact the work of people in the local community to role-play

Early experiences in science and technology

- Explore and recognise features of living things
- Explore and recognise features of how things work
- Explore and select materials and equipment appropriate to the role-play
- Develop scientific skills, knowledge and concepts through role-play
- Use technology
- Select appropriate materials to make models
- Develop skills of cutting, folding and joining

Early mathematical experiences

- Explore various mathematical concepts
- Use mathematical language
- Problem solve through imaginative play

- Develop concepts of time
- Order, sort and match in role-play area

Language Development

- Talk about what different people do in role-play situations
- Use language to plan and create real life or imaginary situations
- Develop the language of dialogue
- Extend vocabulary associated with imaginary play
- Have access to books
- Develop writing skills
- Develop ICT skills

Sand Play

Children seem to be instinctively attracted to sand and water. These materials offer rich learning opportunities for children but the learning would not take place without the children's own delight in the substances themselves – it is the pleasure which provides the motivation for their play.

Personal, emotional and social development

- Learn how to work independently and select equipment
- Co-operate, take turns and share equipment as part of a group
- Learn to respect others' ideas
- Extend imagination when developing ideas in the sand
- Learn to use the sand safely and with consideration for others
- Talk about what they have done in the sand with confidence and a sense of achievement
- Develop self esteem through their achievements
- Experience the therapeutic value of working with wet/dry sand

Physical development

- Develop fine motor skills through manipulating tools
- Develop hand/eye co-ordination
- Use a range of equipment with increasing skill
- Be aware of the space at the sand tray and share it with others

Creative/Aesthetic Development

- Explore 3D forms using a range of moulds
- Explore shapes and textures associated with wet/dry sand
- Experience different colours and textures of wet/dry sand
- Use sand for line drawing and pattern making
- Create and explore sound using shakers of sand. Gravel, pasta

Knowledge and appreciation of the environment

- Talk about their local environment
- Relate features of their play environment to their own environment
- Make physical features
- Change the sensory nature of sand

Early experiences in science and technology

- Explore the properties of wet/dry sand and compare
- Look at similarities, differences and patterns in dry/wet sand
- Use their senses to observe changes in the sand
- Select appropriate equipment for different types of sand play
- Use building skills

Early mathematical experiences

- Explore various mathematical concepts
- Understand and use mathematical language

- Make shapes and patterns in the sand
- Solve problems associated with sand

Language Development

- Describe the properties of sand
- Extend vocabulary associated with sand play
- Describe their actions and the actions of others
- Ask and answer questions
- Recall and report back to the group
- Make up stories using additional props
- Talk about their experiences in the sand from displays of photographs
- Have access to a variety of books

Water Play

Personal, emotional and social development

- Work independently
- Co-operate, take turns and share equipment
- Respect the ideas of others
- Experience the therapeutic value of water play
- Learn how to use water safely
- Enjoy the sensory nature of adding colours and other items to water
- Learn how to work as part of a group
- Extend imagination through the addition of other resources
- Become confident at carrying out a range of activities in the water – blowing bubbles, pouring
- Explore personal hygiene

Physical development

- Develop fine motor skills
- Developing hand-eye co-ordination
- Be aware of the space at the water tray and share it with others
- Use tools, water and objects with increasing safety

Creative/Aesthetic Development

- Observe colour change through adding paint or food dye
- Introduce marbling techniques
- Explore the effects on water by adding natural and man-made materials
- Create underwater world to encourage imaginative play
- Create sounds in the water
- Make musical instruments – fill bottles to different levels

Knowledge and appreciation of the environment

- Talk about water in the local environment
- Add beach objects to stimulate imaginative water play
- Talk about occupations where water plays a significant role
- Talk about animals and creatures that live in the water
- Understand the importance of hygiene using the water tray

Early experiences in science and technology

- Explore the properties of water
- Ask questions about how things work and why they happen
- Use their senses to investigate water
- Recognise the importance of water in personal hygiene
- Observe how objects behave in the water
- Make predictions
- Explore ice in the water
- Make boats for water play using cutting, folding, joining and building skills

Early mathematical experiences

- Compare the amount in different containers by pouring from one to another
- Understand and use mathematical language
- Compare the size of containers
- Understand and use positional words

Language Development

- Describe the properties of water
- Describe their actions and the actions of others
- Extend vocabulary associated with water play
- Describe similarities, differences and changes
- Engage in role play as a fireman, plumber
- Have access to books and rhymes connected to water

Table Top Play

Personal, emotional and social development

- Learn to work independently
- Learn to work as part of a group
- Learn to work collaboratively
- Develop concentration and perseverance
- Enjoy the satisfaction of completing a puzzle or winning a game

Physical development

- Develop fine motor skills and co-ordination through manipulating a range of materials
- Develop hand-eye co-ordination

Creative/Aesthetic Development

- Create designs using peg boards, pattern block tiles, geometrix

Knowledge and appreciation of the environment

- Develop an understanding of the jobs people do, seasonal change and their local environment through appropriate puzzles and games

Early experiences in science and technology

- Learn how things join
- Explore materials
- Explore physical processes

Early mathematical experiences

- Explore mathematical concepts
- Understand and use language related to ordinal number
- Describe the position of people and objects

Language Development

- Extend vocabulary as they engage in table top play
- Develop visual discrimination
- Describe the rules of a game

Small World Play

Small world play is a type of imaginative/role play, which enables children to be creative and spontaneous in dramatic as well as mundane life situations which interest them

Importance of small world play

- It encourages talking and listening
- It allows children to create stories around things they know
- It also allows children to imagine experiences they haven't had
- It allows children to communicate feelings in a safe way
- Children can communicate their observations, findings and knowledge about life
- It gives children control, allowing them to enter and leave a fictional world at will
- It encourages children to play together, to self-regulate and to exchange ideas
- It develops an awareness of the feelings and needs of others, as well as the consequences of their actions.

Construction

Personal, emotional and social development

- Co-operate, take turns and share equipment as part of a group
- Respect and value others ideas
- Take care of equipment
- Use the language of negotiation
- Develop confidence in using a variety of construction materials
- Develop independence in constructing with different materials
- Extend imagination
- Talk about what they have done with confidence and a sense of achievement
- Take responsibility for their own play

Physical development

- Develop fine motor skills through manipulating a range of construction equipment
- Develop gross motor skills
- Learn to fit together and take apart construction materials with increasing confidence
- Develop hand-eye co-ordination
- Develop spatial awareness

Creative/Aesthetic Development

- Explore the shapes, forms, colours and patterns of a variety of construction material
- Encourage children to talk about rough and smooth textures
- Make simple models
- Encourage creative ideas through mixing/combining different construction kits
- Value their own work and the work of others

Knowledge and appreciation of the environment

- Talk about the features of their local environment
- Talk about the work of a builder, architect, plumber, etc
- Talk about their own experiences with construction
- Become aware of the purpose of some features of their environment
- Explore objects on interest table related to construction

Early experiences in science and technology

- Select appropriate equipment for different types of construction play - natural/man-made
- Compare different materials and their properties
- Ask questions about how things work and why
- Use variety of tools to make models
- Explore joining materials together with glue, tape, blu tac
- Build for a variety of purposes
- Use playmates to represent some environments

Early mathematical experiences

- Explore mathematical concepts
- Recognise and name shapes in objects
- Understand and use positional words
- Solve problems
- Order blocks by size
- Compare the height, width and length of objects
- Estimate and predict

Language Development

- Talk and listen with peers and adults about their work with construction materials
- Listen to instructions
- Explain the process of construction
- Follow plans
- Describe their actions and the actions of others
- Extend their vocabulary associated with construction
- Use books as a source of ideas
- Explain cause and effect
- Talk in detail about what they have made
- Label models

Creative Play

Art and Design

In creating, designing and making, opportunities should be provided for children to investigate and use a variety of materials and techniques. They should have a chance to explore colour, line, shape, form, texture and pattern in two and three dimensions. This leads to the development of visual, spatial and tactile awareness. They should be encouraged to use marks, picture drawings, paintings and constructions to create their personal view in response to what they see and experience.

Music

Through music children experience pleasure, joy and creative expression. Music is one of the acceptable avenues for the release and expression of feelings and moods and emotions. Children should have opportunities to enjoy music in all its forms, playing instruments, singing, moving rhythmically and expressively. Opportunities should be provided for them to listen to sounds, rhythms and nursery rhymes.

Movement, dance and drama

Drama gives children opportunities to express themselves imaginatively and to recreate roles and experiences.

Personal, emotional and social development

- Learn how to work independently
- Learn how to work as part of a group
- Learn to share resources and equipment
- Express emotions, ideas and values through art and design, dance and music
- Learn to have respect for others ideas
- Enhance self-esteem and confidence by valuing child's own work
- Develop co-ordination by using a variety of tools and equipment
- Use tools safely and with consideration for others
- Develop creativity through using a range of materials
- Persevere with the task at hand
- Talk about what they have done with confidence and a sense of achievement

Physical development

- Develop fine motor skills through using a wide range of tools and materials
- Develop hand-eye co-ordination
- Become increasingly accurate in making patterns, pictures and models
- Develop co-ordination and skill in using a variety of instruments – plucking, hitting, shaking, blowing
- Begin to move in the rhythm of the music
- Move confidently with increasing control and co-ordination

Creative/Aesthetic Development

- Experience working with a range of materials and objects
- Explore colour, shape and texture
- Make simple representations and pictures

- Create and design 3D models using a range of materials and equipment
- Experience the sensory nature of different materials
- Explore the properties of malleable materials
- Participate in simple musical activities
- Draw to fast/slow music
- Respond freely to music through movement and mime

Knowledge and appreciation of the environment

- Make representations of their own environment
- Make pictures and talk about their own family
- Learn the names of materials and equipment
- Tidy equipment and resources
- Talk and work in the style of artists, designers and crafts people
- Use equipment from local environment to stimulate creativity

Early experiences in science and technology

- Explore the properties of different materials
- Use their senses to explore textures and sounds
- Look at similarities, differences, patterns and change
- Select appropriate materials for the task
- Ask questions about how and why things work
- Explore and select materials and equipment to make different sounds
- Use painting, drawing and modelling to record their observations

Early mathematical experiences

- Develop various mathematical concepts related to painting, drawing, cutting, joining and modelling
- Understand and use language related to pattern, shape, area, number and size
- Compare size and quantity
- Solve problems
- Develop mathematical skills – sorting, matching, comparing and ordering

Language Development

- Describe their experiences and actions and those of others
- Develop descriptive language to talk about their work
- Evaluate their work and discuss how to improve it
- Use stories, rhymes and books as a stimulus
- Listen to and follow instructions
- Develop pre-writing skills through manipulating tools, drawing and modelling
- Recall and report back at group time
- Describe the properties of materials
- Listen attentively to a variety of music

Dough Play

Children love dough. Playing with dough is relaxing and creative and there is no right answer. It encourages the development of fine motor skills, concentration, and creativity. It offers opportunity for the development of language and social skills.

Notes for use of dough

- Give children a large piece of dough, plenty of time and space
- Check if the children are allergic to additives used
- Make material accessible so they can choose what they want to explore and add to the dough
- Remove accessories at times and allow the dough to be 'natural'
- Introduce tools sensitively following careful observation

Clay can be used to provide similar learning experiences as dough. It also promotes sensory experiences, imagination, gross motor control, emotional and language development.

Allow children to handle clay and explore its properties and compare and contrast it with dough. Talk about its properties – how it sticks to your hands, how it dries out and leaves a colouring on your hands.

Make marks on the clay using tools, rolling pins, sponges or finger prints.