

Sandwood Primary School &LCR



Learning through Play **Policy**



getting
it right
for every child





Sandwood Primary School

LEARNING THROUGH PLAY POLICY

National Context

Curriculum for Excellence, for the first time ever, brings together as one level, the curriculum for the early years' sector and the early stages of primary. Approaches that are used with children in nursery such as active learning are now being further extended into the early years of primary school.

Play and Active Learning Thematic Review - GCC 2010

At Sandwood Primary School we are developing a 'learning through play' approach at P1, this incorporates 'play' and active learning'. As a basis for our learning and teaching we are using the following definitions for play and active learning as outlined in the 'Play and Active Learning Thematic Review' carried out by Glasgow City Council in 2010

PLAY

Play is freely chosen, personally directed, intrinsically motivated behaviour that actively engages the child... Play can be fun or serious. Through play children explore social, material and imaginary worlds and their relationship with them, elaborating all the while a flexible range of responses to the challenges they encounter.

Adapted from Bonwell, C.; Eison, J. (1991). Active Learning: Creating Excitement in the Classroom AEHE-ERIC Higher Education Report No.1. Washington, D.C.: Jossey-Bass.

ACTIVE LEARNING

We have chosen to use the term 'Active learning' as an umbrella term referring to several models of instruction. These focus the responsibility of learning on the learners themselves and actively involve learners in cooperative learning tasks.

Adapted from Bonwell, C.; Eison, J. (1991). Active Learning: Creating Excitement in the Classroom AEHE-ERIC Higher Education Report No.1. Washington, D.C.: Jossey-Bass.

The Scottish Government published 'Play Strategy for Scotland: Our Vision' in 2013. In this document the many benefits of play are identified:-

Play creates a brain that has increased flexibility and improved potential for learning later in life.

(Lester & Russell, 2008)

'Children's play provides a primary behaviour for developing resilience, thereby making a significant contribution to children's well-being'

(Lester and Russell, 2007) which is a key concept in our Getting It Right For Every Child approach.

Scotland's Chief Medical Officer is very clear about the importance of play, stating that investing in children's play is one of the most important things we can do to improve children's health and wellbeing in Scotland.

'There is a body of evidence which demonstrates the effectiveness of play in promoting problem-solving abilities (Bergen, 2002), furthermore, the right to play is enshrined in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)'.

Rationale

In our context at Sandwood we have many pupils who start school not developmentally ready to learn and unable to self – regulate and interact socially with their peers. This can lead to barriers later in their school life with progress in their learning and the gap not closing sufficiently with their learning to be on track by the end of their P7 year.

Many of our pupils have experienced Adverse Childhood Experiences and this has also been highlighted as impacting on their readiness to learn. The existence of trauma from these experiences and the impact on developmental milestones ensures that many children are not developmentally ready to start Primary 1 in relation to their peers from other schools.

Research has shown that play based approaches support the development of the individual capacities, resilience, creativity, communication and skills for learning, ensuring that all children are able to successfully engage with learning. The suggestion is that this type of approach can support addressing the poverty related attainment gap and children are ready to learn, ensuring that development gaps are reduced.

As a school we are continuing to develop play across the early level as a tool for facilitating learning which is relevant to all our learners including those in SIMD 1 and 2, in relation to their development needs. Using play based learning supports meeting all their needs, both academically and their wellbeing.

We have noted a significant increase in our P2 cohorts for the last 2 years in their increased ability to self-regulate and socialize appropriately within the playground context. In addition we have noted an increase in attainment by the end of the P2 year in attainment in literacy and numeracy, particularly those pupils not on track by the end of P1 had closed the gap more quickly with deepened learning by the end of P2.

In addition within our context many of our pupils do not cope with change and this becomes a huge barrier to their development, the adoption of the learning through play approaches will improve transition for our P1 pupils from nursery to primary school.

Our Approach

Our approaches at Sandwood take into consideration those outlined in 'Building the Curriculum 2 – active learning in the early years' 2007:

Active learning is learning which engages and challenges children's thinking using real-life and imaginary situations. It takes full advantage of the opportunities for learning presented by:

- ✓ spontaneous play
- ✓ planned, purposeful play
- ✓ investigating and exploring
- ✓ events and life experiences
- ✓ focused learning and teaching supported when necessary through sensitive intervention to support or extend learning. All areas of the curriculum can be enriched and developed through play.

Developing a more active approach to learning requires attention to:

- ✓ progression in children's development and learning
- ✓ supporting continuity in learning and development
- ✓ the environment for learning, staff and resources
- ✓ the involvement of parents
- ✓ continuing professional development.

There will be wide-ranging possibilities for breadth, depth and progression in learning within each outcome. These will depend upon children's needs and interests and the creativity of staff.

The more varied and imaginative the opportunities given to children to use newly acquired skills, the more likely will be the increased motivation and sense of self-confidence that are essential to real and lasting learning.

More structured learning should move ahead at a good, enjoyable pace as children's needs dictate.

New skills can be introduced as appropriate with continuing opportunities to practise them in play and interesting planned situations throughout the curricular areas. Children will develop a range of skills including literacy and numeracy which are built on in preschool education from their experiences at home. However, a more formal approach, for example to reading and writing, should be introduced only when staff feel that children are developmentally ready to benefit from this. Each child, each group of children and indeed each day might demand fresh thinking. Different curriculum areas offer different opportunities for a variety of methodology, but the emphasis on active learning applies to them all.

Creating an environment for Active Learning

Young children learn best when they have scope for active involvement in a wide range of learning experiences. The learning environment – both indoors and outdoors – needs to provide challenge and opportunity to explore exciting learning possibilities. Our Primary cohort will learn in 3 different spaces- outdoors, large GP space and a classroom context.

Learning is arranged to provide opportunities for children to learn through social, sensory, creative, constructive and dramatic activities. Children's responses to these different contexts will depend upon their interests and stage of development. With the active learning approach, space is created for children to work alone, for children to work together in pairs or groups and for them to rest and be quiet.

Planning & Assessment

For effective active learning, children need sufficient time to engage with ideas, resources, peers and adults. This requires staff to plan routines as far as possible to create time slots that are uninterrupted. Children consolidate their learning when they have time to engage in activities in depth. It can be good practice for children to revisit a piece of work again and again to learn more deeply.

The child's day should provide a suitable mix of opportunities for work with the class, in a group or individually. Staff can plan their time to interact with identified children, support learning through sensitive intervention, work with smaller groups and also have whole class activities as and when appropriate. Staff also need time to observe children, in order to learn about their understanding and approach to learning. They can then plan appropriate next steps and gauge the level of support or challenge required.

At our P1 stage the planning will not follow that of p2- P7 stages but will be a more responsive and child led approach.

Assessment of children's learning will be integral to the planned learning and will take a variety of formats – summative, formative, self, peer assessment with evidence being gathered using a variety of methods – photographs, observations, written etc.

Involving Families

Parents are the first and most influential educators of their children. It is important that staff across all early years settings recognise the interests and experiences children bring from home and use these as a starting point to extend learning.

Our curriculum and methodology is shared with parents on the Induction days prior to the children starting at school to help them to play a full part in their children's learning. There is an opportunity to meet the teacher individually prior to the new sessions starting, in term 4 with a general meet the teacher with in the learning environment. Families are update termly with a class newsletter and weekly through home learning.

Family Learning courses will run throughout the year and staff speak on a daily basis to families needing more support.

We believe that adopting a learning through play approach meets the needs of our learner and will in turn enable them to achieve our aim:

Dream, Believe Achieve Together