**Play/Activity Based Learning Policy**



In Lisnadill Primary School we recognise the importance of play and activity based learning as a fundamental part of the learning process in the early years of a child’s education.

***The playing child is coming to terms with the world around him. Play is the business and work of childhood. The Rumbold Report, 1990.***

Young children come to school from a variety of different backgrounds, having had a range of diverse learning experiences at home and for most, some form of pre-school education. The Foundation Stage aims to build on these learning experiences by providing children with an appropriate learning programme to develop their dispositions to learn and to provide them with the skills and competencies they will need to succeed in school and future life. The Foundation Stage also endorses good early years practice where teachers have more flexibility in terms of what they teach. This flexibility allows teachers to follow the interests of the children, encouraging them to see links in their learning and to appreciate that the skills they learn in one area can be applied elsewhere.

Aims of Foundation Stage

Play Based Learning in Foundation Stage at Lisnadill Primary School aims to provide a learning programme which will:

* promote children’s personal development;
* promote positive attitudes and dispositions to learning;
* promote children’s Thinking Skills & Personal Capabilities;
* encourage creativity and imagination;
* enable children to develop physical confidence and competence;
* develop children’s curiosity and interest in the world around them;
* enable children to communicate in a variety of ways;
* motivate children to develop literacy and numeracy skills in meaningful contexts.

*(Understanding the Foundation Stage CCEA)*

Aims of Key Stage 1

Activity based learning at Key Stage 1 in Lisnadill Primary School builds on the hands on learning which has taken place in the Foundation Stage. It is usually, although not exclusively, linked to topics and allows children to engage in a variety of focused activities as well as independent play based activities. Activity based learning at Key Stage 1 aims to:

* Develop the fundamental skills of literacy, numeracy and oral communication
* Provide rich and varied contexts for developing skills such as observing, organising, recording, interpreting and predicting
* Promote positive attitudes to school and to learning
* Provide opportunities to learn in a practical way
* Provide opportunities for developing movement and manipulative skills
* Develop natural curiosity and stimulates imagination
* Provide opportunities for exploration, investigation, problem solving and decision-making
* Provide opportunities to develop knowledge, understanding and skills through a range of contexts spanning all subjects in the curriculum.

*Northern Ireland Curriculum, Key Stages 1 and 2 Programmes of Study and Attainment Targets. Characteristics of the Curriculum at Key Stage 1, 1996*

Thinking Skills and Personal Capabilities

The curriculum emphasises the development of pupils’ skills and capabilities for lifelong learning and participating in society. By engaging pupils in active learning contexts across all areas of the curriculum, teachers can develop pupils’:

◾personal and interpersonal skills;

◾capabilities and dispositions; and

◾ability to think both creatively and critically.

*(Thinking Skills and Personal Capabilities, CCEA,2007.)*

Connected Learning

Children learn best when learning is connected. The experiences provided for our children during play/activity based learning encompasses the six areas of learning.

* The Arts
* Language and Literacy
* Mathematics and Numeracy
* Personal Development and Mutual Understanding
* Physical Education
* The World Around Us

Emphasis is placed on the development of skills and capabilities for lifelong learning and for operating effectively in society.

The Learning Environment

Children have opportunities to experience much of their learning through well-planned and

challenging play. Self-initiated play helps children to understand and learn about themselves and

their surroundings.

***“Play that is well-planned and pleasurable helps children to think, to increase their understanding***

***and to improve their language competence. It allows children to be creative, to explore and***

***investigate materials, to experiment and to draw and test their conclusions . . . such experience is***

***important in catching and sustaining children’s interests and motivating their learning as***

***individuals and in co-operation with others.”***

*The Rumbold Report: Starting with Quality (HMSO:1990)*

At Lisnadill Primary School we try to ensure all areas of provision are:

* Inviting and stimulating
* Carefully planned
* Monitored and evaluated
* Maintained and well stocked
* Safe
* Clean and tidy

Resources are clearly labelled and stored so that children can access and return them independently.

Areas of Play for Foundation Stage

Children have access to the following areas of learning during play sessions:

* Role play
* Creative
* Construction
* Sand
* Water
* Writing Area
* Small World
* Table top
* Dough
* Library Area/Book corner
* ICT

Areas of Play for Key Stage 1

In order to promote independence and support active learning the following areas of learning are accessed during activity based learning sessions:

* ICT
* Library Area
* Construction area
* Table top games - Literacy & Numeracy
* Water/sand as required
* Modelling area
* Creative area

**Role of the Adult at Foundation Stage**

The adults, teachers and classroom assistants, strive to facilitate, participate, observe and evaluate the progression in learning in order to promote quality play.

They:

• Support children in their play

• Provide good quality resources

• Be aware of the potential learning in all areas of the curriculum

• Model skills involved in play

• Interact with the children, asking questions and making suggestions to support their learning

• Be familiar with key vocabulary – model and support children in their use of key words

• Work alongside children, modelling skills and attitudes

• Read with children from fiction/non-fiction books, plans, instruction cards etc.

• Scribe children’s ideas and thoughts, and display their work

• Observe children’s learning and use of the provision

• Assess children’s development/progress to inform planning for future learning

**Role of the Adult at Key Stage 1**

The Key Stage 1 teacher:

• Plans for and provides appropriate activities/experiences

• Organises and provides a stimulating learning environment

• Facilitates learning

• Is aware of the potential learning in all areas of the curriculum

• Works alongside children, modelling skills and attitudes

• Evaluates and extends the provision

• Poses exciting challenges

• Interacts with children

• Asks open-ended questions, make suggestions

• Enjoys the experience

**Observation, Assessment and recording of Play or Activity Based Learning**

*“Observation is the foundation of education in the Early Years. It is through recording and reflecting on children’s activities and interests that we can gather the information necessary for the construction of an appropriate curriculum from them. Observation is also the way in which we can gather the material from which to make informed, professional judgements about children’s progress and about how to help them best. Observation, assessment and the development of an appropriate curriculum all fi t together”*

*Hurst, 1997*

Observations are a regular feature of classroom practice in the Foundation Stage. Observations can be planned or spontaneous. Most observations in the Foundation Stage classroom at Lisnadill Primary School are spontaneous observations. They are generally short, concise, factual records. They often document unexpected changes and achievements and can be in the form of post-it notes or sticky labels. These observations are kept in a Learning Journey which contains observations, photographs and some samples of children’s work collected during play based learning sessions.

Through regular observations adults:

• Monitor enjoyment

• Identify the learning taking place

• Provide evidence on language development

• Measure understanding

• Monitor attitudes to learning

• Gauge appropriateness of task and resources

• Identify any difficulties children may be experiencing

• Assess Thinking Skills and Personal Capabilities

• Inform future planning

• Gain a more accurate picture of the child as a whole

**Assessment**

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 in order to plan future work and ultimately improve learning

How do we assess play at Lisnadill?

* Through individual, group or whole class discussion
* Through on going observations
* By observing behaviour e.g perseverance and concentration
* By setting tasks which require children to use certain skills or apply ideas

Some self assessment approaches are also encouraged

* Traffic lights
* Thumbs up/Thumbs down
* Play Time Report

**Planning for Play/Activity Based Learning**

*“The process of being consulted, having one’s opinions seriously considered, feeling that one’s contributions are valued and that they may well result in change for the better are all powerful builders of morale, confidence and commitment.”*

HMI, Effective Primary Schools 1989

Children learn best when learning is connected. We at Lisnadill Primary School seek to build on children’s earlier learning. Through our play/ activity based learning we aim to ensure that:

* Teaching builds upon the children’s previous knowledge
* Children’s needs and interests lead the learning
* Appropriate support is given to children who require it
* Children are motivated
* Children’s learning is challenged
* Children have high expectations of themselves.

Planning in Foundation Stage

Foundation children in Lisnadill Primary School contribute to the planning of their topics which is displayed in the classroom on a planning board. This planning board is a working document owned by both the teacher and the children in the class. This board is referred to frequently as the topic progresses.

Half termly or monthly planners present learning intentions, activities, resources required and opportunities for progression between Primary 1 & 2. Planners are evaluated to inform future planning and areas for development. Literacy and numeracy activities are highlighted on the planners.

Planning in Key Stage 1

At present planning for activity based learning in indicated on Literacy and Numeracy planners. It is intended that that planning formats will be developed to accommodate activity based learning more fully.

Management of Activity/Play Based Learning

**Time allocated in Foundation Stage**

Foundation stage children are engaged in a sustained period of play each day. Practical or play based activities also take place during Literacy or Numeracy sessions where children will be given a task to complete related to specific Literacy or Numeracy targets.

**Time allocated in Key Stage 1**

Key Stage one classes are timetabled to have approximately 2 hours dedicated to activity based learning.

Foundation Stage

* Whole class introduction and planning time with teacher. At the beginning of the week the teacher explains the activities at each station.
* Children choose where they want to play and teacher record where children have started each play session to ensure that children experience a wide range of activities.
* Children are free to change places during the play session although they are encouraged to complete tasks.
* Tidy up music is played to indicate that the play session is over and that children are to tidy up their activities.
* After tidy up time, children review their play during a Play Time Reporter session.
* Records are kept in each child’s individual Learning Journey. Photos are taken by teacher and classroom assistants.

Key Stage 1

* A range of topic related activities are planned and the teacher may set tasks for the children to complete.
* Children choose where they wish to play. They play in groups, pairs or individually.
* After tidy up time children discuss their play session.

Providing Equality of Opportunity and Access for All Children

We at Lisnadill Primary School are aware that pupils have different experiences, interests and strengths which will influence the way in which they learn. We are aware of the requirements of the equal opportunities legislation and the Special Educational Needs and Disability Order. We endeavour to have high expectations for all pupils and will aim to provide suitably challenging opportunities for them to participate in activities fully and effectively.

This policy for Play/Activity Based Learning has been agreed by the Foundation and Key Stage 1 staff. February 2015