

Cardonald Primary Play Policy

June 2018

Most recent update June 2024



Children need the freedom and time to play. Play is not a luxury; play is a necessity.

Kay Redfield Jamison
(professor of psychiatry)

It is through play that children understand each other and make sense of the world around them.

Play Scotland

Rationale

The data gathered from staff, pupils and parents in 2016/17 session highlighted that many of our pupils need support to improve their emotional health and wellbeing.

From the wider school community 120 pupils have also been identified by staff as having some difficulties with regards to their building of positive relationships, behaviour and social and emotional aspects of their learning and development.

“Investing in children’s play is one of the most important things we can do to improve children’s health and wellbeing in Scotland”

Harry Burns, Chief Medical Officer for Scotland.

Aim

Regular free play opportunities will:

- Increase happiness
- Reduce anxiety
- Help to develop an ability to control emotions
- Stimulate creative thinking
- Develop problem solving skills
- Develop relationships
- Lead to greater self-efficacy
- Lead to greater self-knowledge

Why free play?

“Play is what children and young people do when they follow their own ideas and interests in their own way and for their own reasons”

(DCMS, 2004)

Free play is an activity that is spontaneous, freely-chosen and directed by children. It is child-led and child-managed. It is an activity chosen for its own self, not for the sake of other outcomes or ends and it requires the minimum of adult intervention to support it.

The majority of contemporary definitions focus on a number of key criteria:

- Play is pleasurable – children must enjoy it or it is not play.
- It is intrinsically motivated – children engage in play simply for the satisfaction of the behaviour itself.
- It is process oriented – when children play, the means is more important than the ends. What they do or produce may not make sense or seem worthwhile and/or valuable to an adult, but it is inherently so for the children.
- It is freely chosen – it is spontaneous and voluntary. If children are pressured by adults, they will not think of the activity as play, but as something more akin to work.
- It engages actively – children must be physically and or mentally involved in the activity for it to be real play.
- Play is non-literal. It involves make-believe.

The teacher's role in free play is mainly to observe; they may interact in an encouraging way without giving direction and can intervene sensitively when necessary.

Teachers should encourage pupils through dialogue linked to PATHS and rights of the child to respect the space and play of others.

Time should be taken at the end of each play session to reflect on the play as a class.

Time allocation

Class teachers will ensure all pupils have a minimum of half an hour of free play no less than:

P1	Playful Pedagogy being introduced Session 21/22. Play woven throughout curriculum
P2	3 times per week – playroom / outdoor
P3 and P4/3	twice weekly
P4 ~ 7	once per week outdoor

Atmosphere

It is important that we think critically about the atmosphere we create during free play. A nurturing and supportive environment should be clearly felt by children and should be identifiable by other adults who come into the area.

In order to create this the adults need to:

- Attend and not direct.
- Do the least amount of talking – any comments should communicate empathy and understanding. Time and time again, children should know from what you say that you are there to encourage and support them in their development.
- Ensure all children are included – play is a right and no child should be excluded for poor behaviour in another setting. Those children experiencing the greatest difficulties with behaviour are those who most need the benefits of free play.
- Value the work of playing – no child should be extracted to complete other work, as this sends a message that there is a hierarchy of work and that play is dispensable. Equally, teachers must not mark or prepare classwork, as this sends a message that the playroom experience is not valued by the teacher.
- Be wary of lecturing and issuing reprimands, as these will negate the calm and nurturing environment and raise stress levels for everyone.

Current Theory – Local and National Policy

Play is essential to children's and young people's quality of life. It is now recognised by the United Nations Article 31 as a fundamental right of the child. As part of the Scottish Government's responsibility for implementing Article 31, the current recommendation is that children should play on a daily basis, and that education workers must demonstrate their commitment to increasing and developing play opportunities and that workers to defend and support every child's right to play.

Play is relevant to:

- CfE sustainability agenda
- GIRFEC
- SHANARRI indicators
- HWB curriculum
- Growth Mindset
- Outdoor Learning
- Personalisation and Choice
- The Nurturing City

Play types



Responding

Guerney's Dos and Don'ts when responding to children

- | | |
|---|-----------------------------|
| ◊ verbally track children's play | ◊ criticise behaviour |
| ◊ reflect the children's feelings | ◊ praise |
| ◊ acknowledge children's power and encourage effort | ◊ ask leading questions |
| ◊ encourage responsibility | ◊ give information or teach |
| ◊ be verbally active and physically engaged | ◊ preach |
| | ◊ initiate new activities |
| | ◊ be passive |

Monitoring and Evaluating

Pupil Voice

Observations

Professional dialogue at planning, stage and staff meetings