**Saint Brigid’s Primary & Nursery School**

***Play & Active Learning Policy***

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**Reviewed: Summer 2022**

**Next Review Date: Summer 2025**

**Signed: Chair of Governors**

**Signed: Principal**

 **‘Be the best that you can be’**

**Introduction**

In St. Brigid’s 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 indoor and outdoor 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. *‘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’s basic need for well-being and involvement, and there urge to explore and make sense of the world, is developed through high quality play in an outdoor environment*.’ Northern Ireland Curriculum, 2007.’

In St. Brigid’s Primary School, opportunities will be provided for both child-initiated and adult led play, taking account of the requirements of N.I Curriculum and developing good practice.

**Rationale**

Active learning is central to learning and teaching in the Northern Ireland Curriculum, ‘*Children learn best when learning is interactive, practical and enjoyable.’*

Active learning is an umbrella term that encompasses both play and activity based learning.

**Play based learning in Nursery & Foundation stage**

At St. Brigid’s 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 (indoors and outdoors), 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.
* Provide a range of kinaesthetic and sensory learning opportunities.
* Provide therapeutic play opportunities.
* 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.
* Provide a holistic learning experience, covering a variety of skills giving first hand experiences and setting new challenges.
* Allow time for careful observation of play to facilitate assessment and planning for progression and continuity, recognising differing needs and attitudes.

**Active Learning in Key Stage 1 & 2**

Active learning at Key Stage One and Key Stage Two builds on the play based learning which has taken place in the Foundation Stage. Active Learning aims 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, involvement and evaluation of an activity.
* To develop problem solving skills through open ended challenges and investigations.
* To develop teamwork skills through group activities.
* Provide a learner- centred classroom focusing on process-centred learning.
* Facilitate learning with a holistic learning focus.

**Connected Learning**

Children learn best when learning is connected. The experiences provided for our children during play/active 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 engaging effectively in society.

**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 and active learning provide a wide variety of experiences which help to develop the children’s knowledge, skills and understanding. Children will be given opportunities to:

* Think, solve problems and make decisions
* Be Creative
* Work with Others
* Manage Information
* Be Independent

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 work in a group.

**Role of the Adult**

The adult must adopt the roles of provider, facilitator, participant, observer and evaluator in order to promote quality play and active learning. Adults should:

* Provide appropriate activities from the resources and materials available to match these to the interests and experiences of the children.
* Foster the children’s own interests, encourage them to use their initiative, acquire concepts, develop confidence in handling materials, communicate and make decisions.
* Be a participant who initiates, encourages questions, models, joins in, stimulates and extends the learning whilst realising when or when not to intervene.
* Observe children carefully, assess their progress, evaluate the learning taking place and use information gained to inform future planning including posing exciting challenges.
* Be consistent and have a positive approach to behaviour management.

**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` from Nursery to Key Stage Two.

As children progress through the school they are involved in the planning process. Their ideas are recorded and contribute to the teachers’ half term planners.

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

We ensure we have the necessary resources to provide the learning experiences for all areas of play and active learning. All staff ensure toys, resources and equipment are clean, safe for use and maintained to the highest standard possible.

**Time Allocated to Play/Active learning**

Foundation Stage- engaged in a sustained period of play every day.

Key Stage One- engaged in two Activity Based learning sessions per week.

Key Stage Two- engaged in active learning weekly and using the outdoors at least once a month.

**Observation, Assessment, Evaluation and Recording**

Observations will be a regular feature of classroom practice in Foundation Stage. They provide much information about the children and the quality of play provision.

Careful observations help teachers to:

* Assess the development of the child’s physical, social and cognitive skills.
* Monitor the child’s progress.
* Plan to meet the needs, interests and ability of the child.
* Assess the appropriateness of the activities provided and the learning that is taking place.
* Ensure that the child is experiencing a wide variety of experiences and not confining his/her play to a limited number of areas.
* Know when extra materials are required to supplement or extend the play.
* Assess the suitability of the equipment and materials being used.
* Provide information for parents and other agencies involved in meeting a child’s needs.

A flexible approach will be adopted which allows for both planned and spontaneous observations. Observations are used to inform planning.

**Health and Safety**

In St. Brigid’s, we aim to ensure utmost safety during play/active learning activities.

Procedures we follow include:

* Considering the physical environment both indoor and outdoor including relevant risk assessments.
* Risk assessments for individual pupils.
* Teaching the children to take care of equipment.
* Negotiating rules and boundaries.
* Consistency in applying rules.
* Children being aware of Health and Safety rules e.g. brushing up and mopping water.
* Maintain high levels of hygiene.

**Equal Opportunities**

We at St. Brigid’s 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 2005. We endeavour to have high expectations for all pupils and we aim to provide suitably challenging opportunities for them to participate in activities fully and effectively.