



Westerton Primary School

Play Policy



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November 2021

In Westerton 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.

OUR VISION:

'We want Scotland to be the best place to grow up. A nation which values play as a life-enhancing daily experience for all our children and young people; in their homes, nurseries, schools and communities.' (The Scottish Government PLAY STRATEGY FOR SCOTLAND)

Play is vital from the early stages of brain development and bonding with parents and carers, and promotes independence and autonomy for the teenage years. (Aileen Campbell MSP Minister for Children and Young People)

Every Child's Right

Article 31 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child states that every child has the right to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts.

What is Play?

Play encompasses children's behaviour which is freely chosen, personally directed and intrinsically motivated. It is performed for no external goal or reward, and is a fundamental and integral part of healthy development – not only for individual children but also for the society in which they live.

Play comes in many forms. It can be active, passive, solitary, independent, assisted, social, exploratory, educational or just for fun. Moreover, it can happen indoors or outdoors, it can be structured, creative, and messy or entirely facilitated by the imagination. What is important is that children and young people have the freedom to choose how and when they play. From the earliest days and months play helps children learn to move, share, negotiate, take on board others' points of view and cultivate many more skills. It remains equally important throughout infancy, childhood, the teenage years and beyond into adulthood. Many people say it's a child's 'job' to play and the whole of society has a role in ensuring we can support children to behave as children, minimising the pressure on them to grow up too quickly. We consider play as the primary tool for addressing this challenge, through allowing children and young people to experience fun, joy and laughter in a way that is important to them.

Research shows that the greater the range of experiences presented by a play environment, the more children will naturally explore and learn through play. The vital ingredients for these experiences are loose parts: attractive, flexible materials that children can readily change, manipulate and control for themselves.

Why Play Matters

To a child play is about having fun. To society it's so much more. Children's play is crucial to wellbeing, socially, economically and environmentally. The importance of play in children and young people's daily lives and to healthy development has become increasingly recognised in recent years. A growing body of evidence supports the view that playing, throughout childhood, is not only an innate behaviour but also contributes to quality of life, sense of wellbeing and is a key element in effective learning, thereby developing their physical, cognitive, emotional and social skills.

'The research suggests that, from the first stages of growth through to adulthood, play has a central role in developing strong attachments. Play between caregiver and infant helps establish the neural pathways for developing wider attachments with other children and adults' (Lester and Russell, 2007).

Play2learn

We, at Westerton, are committed to embedding the play2learn approach through P1-P3 and are developing the PEBL (Pupil Enquiry Based Learning) in P4 through to P7.

Play Based Learning at Westerton Primary School aims to provide a learning programme which will:

- 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 stimulate 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.

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.

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

- Inviting and stimulating
- Carefully planned
- Monitored and evaluated
- Maintained and well stocked
- Safe

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

Environment – Outdoor Learning

All Weather Play 'There is no such thing as bad weather, just bad clothing'!

At Westerton we will:

- use the outdoor space as a natural resource for learning and playing
- include the children when planning for playing and learning outdoors
- ensure that the outdoor area offers children the opportunity to investigate and explore, problem solve, use their imagination and creativity
- encourage the children to respect the outdoor environment and care for living things
- give children the opportunity to manage, play in and use the space and freedom afforded by the outdoors
- enrich the quality of the environment to maximise variety of play types and increase play value

In order to allow for access to the whole grounds throughout the year; both pupils and staff are expected to have suitable warm and waterproof clothing in school at all times, including boots.

Role of the Adult

The 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

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 fit together". (Hurst, 1997)

Observations are a regular feature of classroom practice. Observations can be planned or spontaneous. Most observations in the classroom at Westerton 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 recorded along with the use of Seesaw to evidence children's progress.

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

Some self assessment approaches are also encouraged

- Traffic lights
- Thumbs up/Thumbs down
- Explanation of strategies

Review Date: Nov 2023