



PLAY PEDAGOGY POLICY

Heathhall School

2024/2025



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“Play is key to raising attainment.”

Scottish Government

What is Play Pedagogy?

“Play Pedagogy is a way of integrating children’s play experiences with curricular learning, giving pupils the flexibility to find their own solutions to both new and existing problems. It engages children in personally meaningful activities, learning about themselves and others, and encourages autonomy and their independent motivation to learn.” (Play Scotland, 2023).

Dumfries and Galloway Council recognises that Play Pedagogy plays a vital role in Early Childhood development, education, and learning.

Primary Schools in Dumfries and Galloway are being supported by the Play Pedagogy Team to create a high-quality learning, teaching and assessment practices that embed learning through Play, and which meets the needs of all learners within their school.



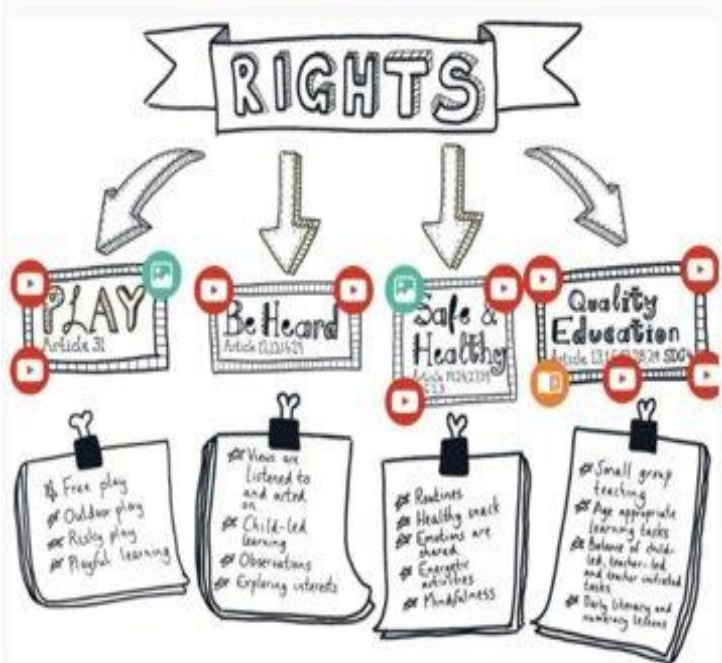
Play Pedagogy is integral to Scotland’s Curriculum for Excellence (CfE updated 2019) helps children and young people gain the knowledge, skills and attributes needed for life. The four capacities, Successful Learners, Confident Individuals, Responsible Citizens, and Effective Contributors are central to CfE. They place children at the centre of their learning and reflect the lifelong nature of education and learning. They also link with the SHANARRI wellbeing indicators within Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC, 2022). Both of which foster a coherent and meaningful approach to learning.

Getting it Right for Play,
Play Strategy for Scotland (2013)

At the heart of effective practice in Early Years lies a clear understanding of the development of young learners, 0-8 years old, and the knowledge of how best to support their social, emotional, cognitive, physical and creative development through the environments and the approach to Learning and Teaching.

“Now, perhaps more than ever, we are thinking deeply about what is right for our children, and we are critically examining the evidence about how best to meet the needs of all learners... We have a better understanding of children as learners and how best to support their early development, through our environments and our approaches.”

(Dr. Gillian Brydson, Director of Skills, Education and Learning DGC, 2023)



Rooted in educational research, Play has been repeatedly highlighted as a principal vehicle in nurturing children's learning and development and has a pivotal role in early childhood education.

Play is also a vital and fundamental right to childhood, as underpinned within **Article 31 - United Nations Conventions on the Rights of a Child.**

“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.”

Fundamental to Scotland's **Curriculum for Excellence** are the **Four Capacities:**

A Play-based curriculum offers rich opportunities to equip our young learners with the skills, attributes, and dispositions necessary for them to thrive in an ever-changing world.

“...play at this time is not trivial, it is highly serious and of deep significance” (Froebel, 1826)





Play Pedagogy is endorsed within the National Practice Guidance for Scotland, *Realising the Ambition: Being Me* (2020), which highlights the necessary requirements for Early Childhood intrapersonal, social, emotional, cognitive, and physical development from birth to eight years old. Dumfries and Galloway Council values the importance of Play in Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) and through Primary Education.

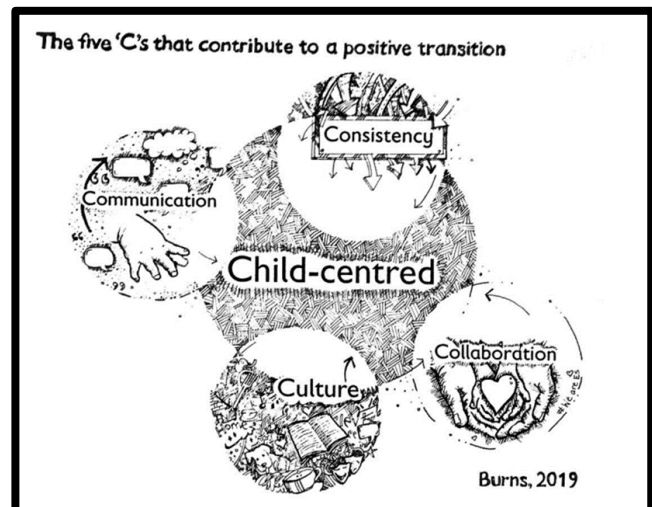
Key documentation *Building the Curriculum 2* (2007) and *Realising the Ambition: Being Me* (2020) give prominence to play, particularly across the early level and to smooth the transition between ELC and primary school.

"The use of play pedagogies to support learning across early level provides continuity in children's learning as they transition from ELC to school. In school, play pedagogies should be planned to meet the diverse range of children's needs, acknowledging that most children start school as competent learners, while still needing opportunities to discover, to investigate, and to be creative learners through play." (RTA, 2020)

Play enables our school community to provide the 'Five 'C's of a positive transition' (Burns 2019), set out in *Realising the Ambition: Being Me* (2020).

The Five 'C's are:

- **Collaboration**,
- **Communication** between ELC and school, involving parents in this process,
- **Consistency** of approach,
- A **Culture** that values previous experiences and learning,
- **Child-centred**.



"Achieving a consistent pedagogical approach across the ELC Sector and the Early Primary stages should be a key aspiration... Transition will likely be smoother for the child if play remains and continues as the main vehicle for their early learning in P1 and beyond." (BtC2, 2007:45/47)

Why Play?

Rooted in educational research, Play has been repeatedly highlighted as a principal vehicle in nurturing children's learning and development and has a pivotal role in early childhood education.

Play Pedagogy:

- places children at the centre of the learning process.
- values and enhances the unique and highly individual interests, strengths, and abilities of each child which the skilled practitioner can scaffold and extend.
- is supported by skilled practitioners who scaffold and extend learning. When children are given freedom, with guidance, to lead their play and learning this enables them to make decisions and choices which promotes independence, a sense of ownership and agency in their learning.
- supports the holistic development of every child.
- enables children to develop their intrapersonal, social, emotional, cognitive, and physical skills. Play Pedagogy supports the development of children's meta-cognition and communication skills, and their emotional intelligence, supporting a solid foundation for the skills required for life, learning and work.
- creates an environment where children actively participate, explore, and make discoveries. This approach fosters engaging and purposeful learning, leading to increased motivation, curiosity, and positive attitudes towards education.
- provides a supportive, rich context for social interaction and the development of emotional intelligence. Children are encouraged to explore and express their emotions. This enhances their development of self-awareness, self-esteem, resilience, and empathy, supporting children to negotiate, co-operate and collaborate with others, enhancing their social skills.
- is supported by research-based evidence. Play Pedagogy is an approach which can enrich children's learning and well-being.

Examples of Play Pedagogy within school]

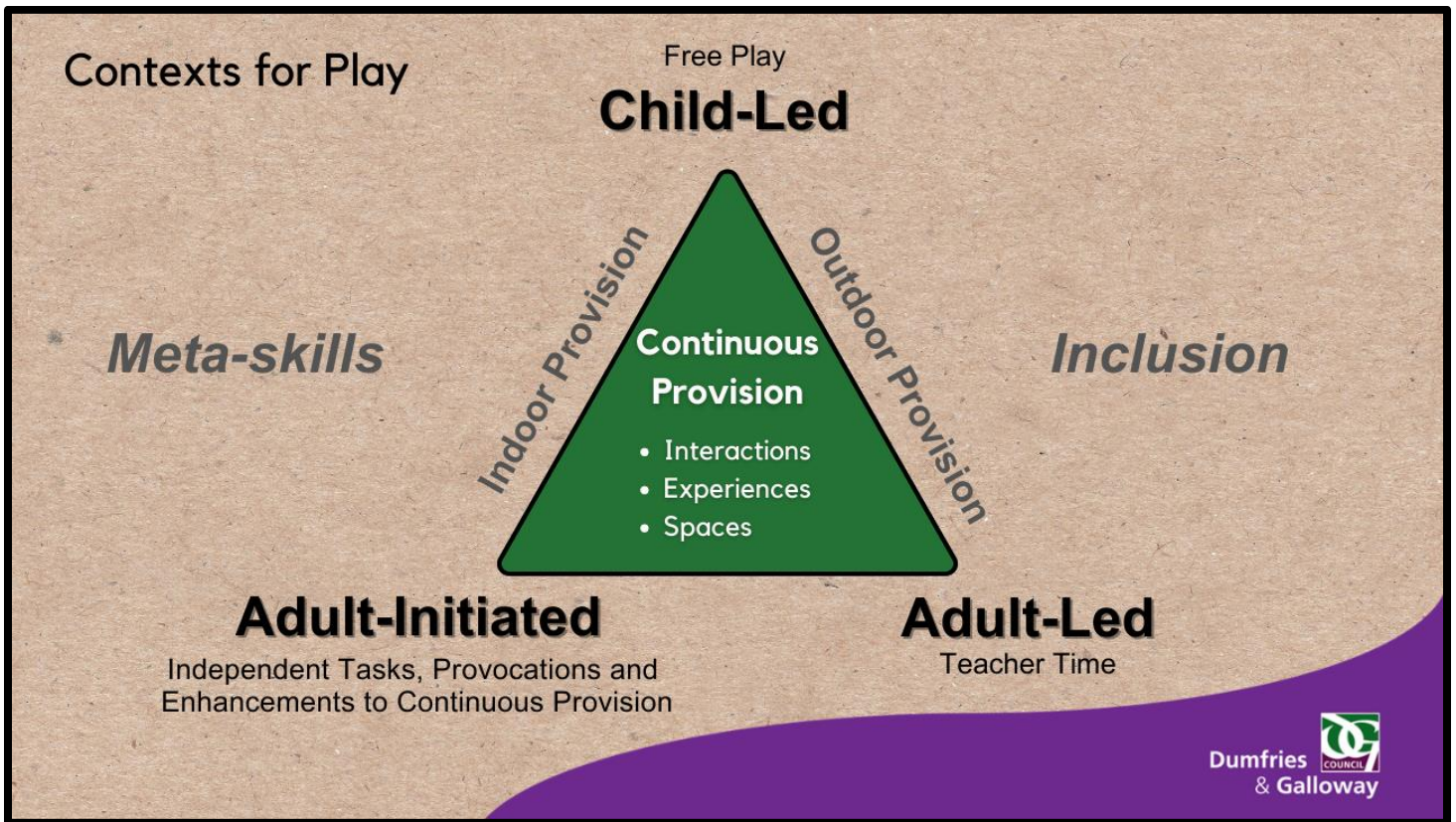


Our Play Pedagogy Classroom

Play Pedagogy is a carefully planned, well-balanced approach to learning and teaching across the curriculum, with a focus on core areas of Numeracy, Literacy and Health and Wellbeing. The Building Blocks of Play fit carefully together to create High Quality Play provision for all children.



Staff utilise the fundamental building blocks of Play Pedagogy to create a unique and careful balance Contexts for Learning and teaching approaches.



- **Adult-Led Learning** - Teacher Time for individuals, groups, or whole class learning,
- **Adult-Initiated Learning** - independent tasks and learning opportunities set by an adult to secure, embed, and revisit previous learning, and
- **Child-Led Learning** - Free Play where children lead their own learning within environments, which best meet and suit their learners' social, emotional, and cognitive needs.

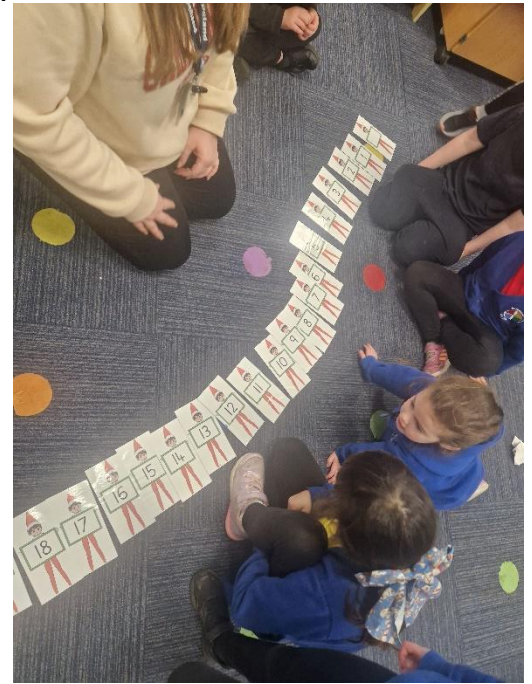
“The primary role of the adult is in providing an environment conducive to high quality play. This means facilitating the time, space, resources, experiences, and opportunities.” (Fisher 2013: 157).

Our staff create responsive zones of Continuous Provision (areas and resources which are independently accessed by pupils). While our children are engaged in Play within their environment(s), our staff will:

- **Engage** children's curiosity, creativity, and imagination.
- **Challenge** children's thinking through open-ended questioning.
- **Help** children to reflect and extend their thinking.
- **Offer** appropriate materials and activities to support individual children's needs and abilities.
- **Explore** other potential learning opportunities with children.
- **Support** children to solve their own problems.

The role of adult E.C.H.O.E.S. the experience of the child's learning.

Adult-Led



Child-Led





Adult-Initiated



Meta-skills

Meta-skills are higher-order skills that create adaptive learners and promotes success in skills for lifelong learning. Our staff make Meta-skills explicitly visible and create opportunities for children to recognise, understand and explore their Meta-skills development.

Innovation	Self-management	Social-Intelligence
<p>Curiosity</p> <p>I want to learn new things</p> 	<p>Adapting</p> <p>I can deal positively with change</p> 	<p>Collaborating</p> <p>I can work well with other people</p> 
<p>Sense-making</p> <p>I can make sense of information to help me learn</p> 	<p>Focusing</p> <p>I can concentrate on what is important</p> 	<p>Communicating</p> <p>I can express myself appropriately</p> 
<p>Creativity</p> <p>I use my imagination to create ideas and solve problems</p> 	<p>Initiative</p> <p>I can make decisions and do things on my own</p> 	<p>Feeling</p> <p>I understand how myself and others are feeling</p> 
<p>Critical thinking</p> <p>I can use information to form my own opinion, ideas and to solve problems</p> 	<p>Integrity</p> <p>I am kind, respectful and responsible</p> 	<p>Leading</p> <p>I inspire others to do their best</p> 



Learning and Teaching through Play at Heathhall

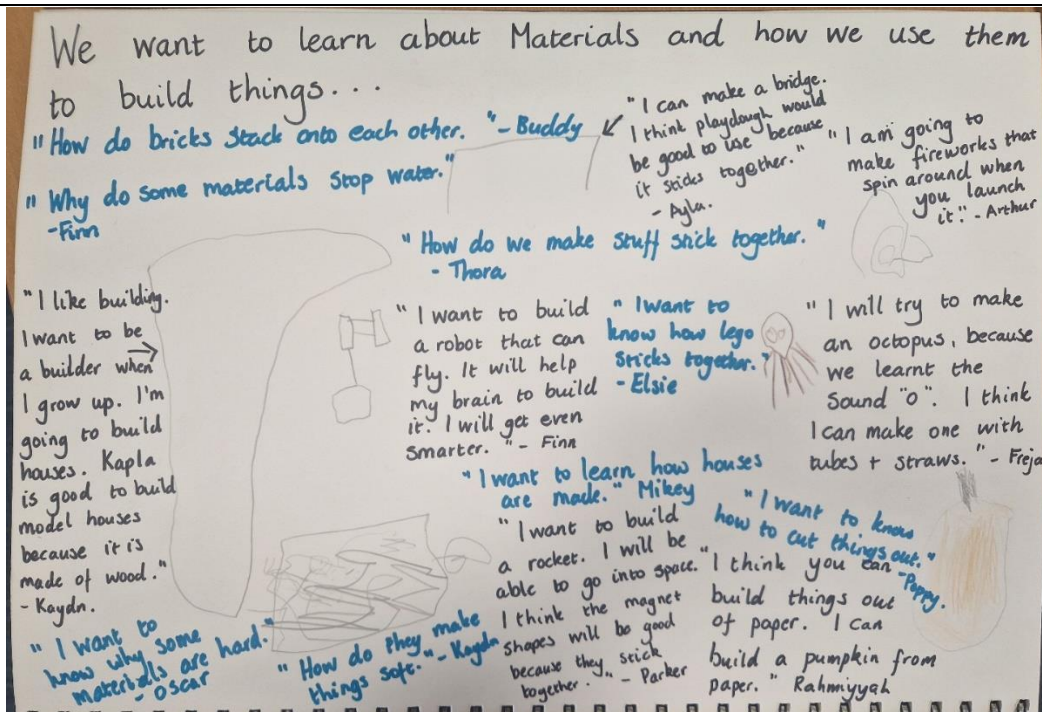
Our day will be designed around a 'Play Pedagogy' approach, which echoes and builds upon your child's familiar ELC approaches to learning and environment. There will be a wide range of age and stage appropriate resources within different zones of our classroom, this is called 'Continuous Provision.' Our setting will have a very different feel and look to a 'traditional' Primary classroom environment.

Our environment will provide opportunities for your child to develop their enquiry skills and apply their natural inquisitiveness through a mixture of child-led play, adult led 'Teacher Time' and adult-initiated Provocations (invitations to learn and enhancements) each day.

Instead of set 'topics', we will follow our pupils' interests – these will be our 'Lines of Development'. This will mean that we can create meaningful learning experiences that are relevant and interesting. Our Lines of Development will be documented in our "Big Book" throughout the term. You will be able to see this during visits to the school, so that you can see what we have been learning and experiencing together.

Our purpose as adults within our Play environment will be to observe your child closely, interact and teach 'in the moment' and enhance the learning/development with carefully planned adult-led and adult-initiated activities. Observation and questioning enables the assessment of skills, knowledge and understanding during adult and child led play opportunities. Formative and summative assessment is used to record a holistic view of pupil's progress, achievement and development.

Pupils take an active role in reflecting upon their learning and setting next steps. We will ensure that all children are happy, safe and are fully engaged in an environment that they find exciting, challenging and that nurtures and meets their own individual social, emotional, cognitive and learning needs.



Example of a day in P1 and P1/2 classroom

9-9.15am Smart Start: Self-registration and lunch order.

9.15am- 10.30am: Play, Teacher Time (Numeracy or Literacy) and Independent Tasks

10.30 -10.40am: Snack and Chat

10.40 -11.00am - Morning break

11.00am - 12.30pm: Play, Teacher Time (Numeracy or Literacy) and Independent Tasks

12.30 - 13.10:pm Lunch break

13:10 - 3:00pm Play, Teacher Time (other curricular areas) and Independent Tasks

3.00pm Home time

Parent/Carer Involvement

How does your school involve parents/carers/families?

Involving our children's parents and families in school life is very important to us. Throughout the year you will be invited to Sharing of Learning sessions, Parent, Pupil, Teacher Talk Time (PPT Talktime) and other events.

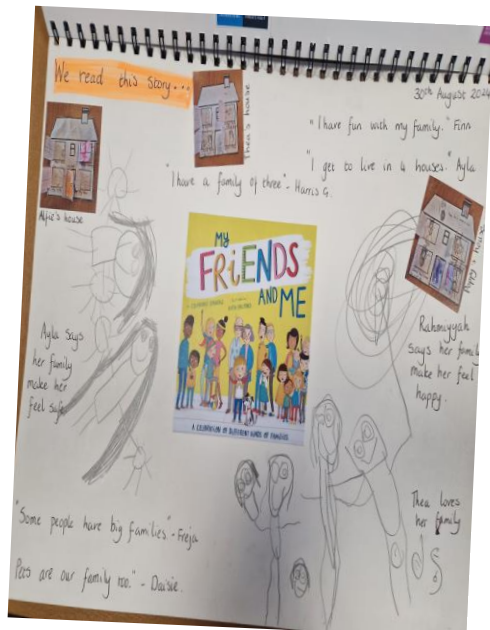
Recording, Documenting and Sharing Learning

How does your school share learning?

Example:

- School Blog
- Big/Floor books
- Display Walls
- Post-it notes/speech and thought bubbles
- Learning targets display
- Wider achievement certificates
- Pupil Learning Folders

Example:



Children's Voice at Heathhall

The following comments were collated following discussions with children, parents/carers and families within our school. The stakeholders were asked to voice their opinions about the value of Play Pedagogy.

Play from the voice of the Child:

I like creating pictures when I'm playing with my friends.

We get time to play with our friends once we are finished with the teacher.

We are playing in Mrs Claus's kitchen. We are writing on these for the customers' orders.
It is fun!

Parent/Carer/Families Voice at Heathhall

Play from the voice of the Parent/Carer and families:

PLAY is exciting and fun.

PLAY is a chance to learn without realising and the opportunity to be curious and explore.

PLAY means fun, friends, learn, focus, happy.

PLAY is a chance to do activities with different friends.