

# Lochnorris Primary School Play Policy (2023)



*"Play is the universal language of childhood; it is an activity which exists for its own sake but also has a fundamental role. Children's play is crucial to Scotland's wellbeing; socially, economically and environmentally. Our people are our greatest resource and the early years of life set the pattern for children's future development."* (Scotland's Play Strategy, 2013)

## Introduction

At Lochnorris Primary, we believe firmly in ensuring that all children achieve their full potential, to be the best they can be. We are committed to ensuring that all young children are provided with a nurturing environment which promotes creativity and curiosity, encouraging children to lead their own learning. Children will be provided with opportunities to become co-constructors of the curriculum, enabling practitioners to adopt enquiry-based learning approaches, which are responsive to the children's needs and interests.

We are committed to promoting the principles of children being co-constructors of their own learning, working with others, being listened to and their thoughts and opinions valued. Children learn through interactions and by using their environment to help them learn.



## What do we mean by 'play'?

Article 31 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) -:  
"States Parties recognise the right of the child to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the children and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts."

## The Value of Play

Play is the essence of childhood. It is a key part of children's enjoyment and development. Through play children create their own culture, develop their

abilities, explore their creativity, challenge their limitations and assumptions and learn about the people and places around them.

At Lochnorris Primary School we recognise the value of play in the following ways:

- Play promotes children's development, learning, imagination, creativity and independence.
- Play contributes to keeping children healthy and active.
- Play allows children to experience and encounter boundaries, and learn to assess and manage risk.
- Play allows children to develop a sense of community and by learning about different people, places and environments.
- Play helps children learn about themselves; their abilities, interests and preferences and how that can contribute to a larger group.
- Play is therapeutic and can help children deal with stress, difficulties and emotional concerns.
- Play is an important way of initiating, building and maintaining important relationships.

## Our Aims for Early to First Level

- To create a more coherent, flexible and child-focused curriculum which gives teachers professional autonomy over how they teach and sets higher standards for achievement for all children.
- Provide high-quality play experiences
- Provide appropriate learning environments to play and learn in with a range of possibilities for children to develop their present and future potential.
- Be child-centred, acknowledge children's views and actively involve children in meaningful ways in everyday decisions within the classroom and school setting.

- Encourage children to contribute their own ideas and be involved in decision making about their learning
- Provide a range of events and exciting experiences which encourage children to share their thinking, talk about their interests and help them imagine their theories.
- Encourage children to play with rhyme and rhythm, songs and silly words to have fun and enjoy the patterns of language.
- Create a wealth of interesting situations, both inside and out of doors, questions for a child to ask and consider possibilities.

## Implementation

Staff will commit to providing high quality learning experiences with play at the heart. The approach used is very much influenced by the work of Julie Fisher. 'Starting From the Child.' The model used involves 3 types of learning throughout our school day-

Teacher-Focused activities- We use observation, consultation with the children and also EAC progression schemes as our starting point. This learning takes place at our teaching table. We prefer to teach small groups at our teaching table. We use this table to introduce a new skill or concept or reinforce a concept.

Teacher-Initiated activities - These activities are planned and introduced by us but are completed independently by the children. They can rehearse skills or be more open-ended.

Free Play - Child-centred activities (spontaneous learning)- Learning initiated by the child. Children make own choices and decisions about what they will do. They learn through play. This type of learning is differentiated by outcome and driven by the children.



### Class/Learning Environments -

The classrooms and open area will be organised into the following possible areas (although we believe these areas are very flexible in line with Alistair Bryce Clegg's idea of continuous provision) set out in his book 'Continuous Provision: The Skills' (2015)

- Home corner/role play
- Book corner
- Loose parts
- Creative area with pens, pencils, paint for drawing, writing, number work
- Construction
- Maths/number play area
- Water/sand play area
- Outdoor area



## Role of the teacher/adult

Teacher interventions can vary a great deal, depending on the nature of the activities or on the responses and initiatives of the children. The adult's role involves:

- Engaging children's curiosity and questions
- Helping children reflect and extend their thinking
- Supporting children to solve their own problems
- Suggesting activities to children that are not engaged
- Offering materials that fit in an ongoing activity
- Inviting children to communicate
- Challenging them with thought-provoking questions

- Try allowing children more time to solve their own problems. You might be surprised at the solutions they come up with!

## Assessment



As play is child led and responsive to the interests of the child, so must be approaches to assessment. Assessment and observations of children are vital. Some more formal assessments are carried out at the 'teaching table' and some through observations of play. Because each child has a unique set of abilities and talents, observations in different play situations capture these first hand. The starting point is always with the child. Observing what children choose to do, what their interests are and who and what resources they enjoy playing with, provides adults with reliable information about children as individuals.

*Assessment can include:*

- ***Formal assessments such as Phonic Checks, ELLAT, Spelling tests and other formal assessment. Usually carried out at the teaching table.***
- ***Using jottings and notes of incidental events- 'post its' - observation notes do not always have to be formatted. These are often displayed next to photos and other evidence on our classroom display board- our 'Learning Journey'***
- ***Collecting samples or copies of children's work—writing, drawing, painting or photos of sculptures or constructions. These samples also***

need annotations about the context and the important factors in the experience, such as how the work was completed, challenges the children experienced, how they negotiated or solved problems and how the work demonstrates their interests and knowledge. These are often displayed on our class wall- 'Our Learning Journey Wall' - where each child has their own square for their annotated work. These are also regular included in class IDL floor books evidencing learning in each class.

- **Observing children's social play and keeping notes on friendships, roles and challenges.**

These notes and records help to focus on particular aspects of a child's experience. They can also be useful if there are concerns about a child's development and learning or when they are experiencing challenges.

Across the term, staff will make time to observe individuals and small groups. The information from these observations will be used to inform planning across all curricular areas.

- **Shiny Sharing-** Children themselves feeding back on their learning. **Vitally children play a part in sharing their learning daily as 'Shiny Sharers.'** This encourages them to think about what they have learned, find their own evidence of learning- photos which they have taken on our class iPad or the work itself and they share it with the others and receive their feedback. **'Children's voice'** is so important to us. What they are thinking and talking about as they play and learn.



## Outdoor Learning

Through access to a range of outdoor activities we expect that children will:

- participate in a wide range of activities that will support a healthy lifestyle
- develop the skills to access and manage risk



- experience personal achievement and build confidence
- explore and make choices
- develop physical skills through movement and energetic play



## References

Scotland's Play Strategy, 2013

Julie Fisher. 'Starting From the Child' (1996).

Alistair Bryce-Clegg 'Continuous Provision: The Skills (2015)

Best Play <https://www.playscotland.org/resources/best-play-what-play-provision-shoulddo-for-children>

Free to Play <https://www.playscotland.org/play/playful-communities/free-play-guide>

Getting it Right for Play

<https://www.playscotland.org/play/playfulcommunities/getting-it-right-for-play>

UNCRC <https://www.unicef.org.uk/what-we-do/unconvention-child-rights>