

Saint Brendan's Nursery Class



Play Policy

Rationale

St Brendan's Nursery believe that play provides opportunities for children to experience learning in a meaningful and purposeful way. It is a means by which children can develop the skills and capabilities to be effective learners. Play provides a context to access the content of the curriculum.

We recognises the importance of the need for high quality sustainable play for children, regardless of their needs and abilities and that inclusive play is achieved by offering carefully considered spaces that offer a real choice of accessible play opportunities.

'The experiences children have in early life - and the environments in which they have them - shape their developing brain architecture and strongly affect whether they grow up to be healthy, productive members of society' (Harvard University, 2007).

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.

'Play is not wasted time, but rather time spent building new knowledge from previous experience.' (Isenberg and Quisenberry,2002)

Aim

As a nursery we aim to continually develop the way we think about, and provide opportunities for play. We believe that play is essential for physical, emotional, social, spiritual and intellectual development.

At St Brendan's we aim to provide children with opportunities to become immersed in high quality play experiences, which will:

- Nurture children's creativity and problem solving capabilities.
- Promote health and wellbeing, by building children's strength and coordination.
- Stimulate the healthy development of children's brains.
- Allow children to acquire competence and skills that help them feel good about themselves, and in turn promote future learning.
- Provide children with the opportunity to learn essential social skills: to take turns, to share and to cooperate.
- Help children develop friendships with their peers, good interpersonal skills are essential to children's lifelong success.
- Produce natural opportunities for children to learn self-respect and how to treat others with respect.
- Promote a child's development and ability to enhance their own play.
- Allow children to select their own learning activities, enabling them to lead their own learning.

What is play?

Play is recognised as any activity that a child enters into that is freely chosen, personally directed and intrinsically motivated and that actively engages the child. It has frequently been described as 'what children and young people do when not being told what to do by adults.'

Play enables children to learn through experiences that cannot be taught. Free play can also have a direct positive impact on a child's ability to meet formal educational goals.

Play meets the four components of a child's development:

Physical (direct impact on physical development, co-ordination and fitness); Intellectual (cognitive development, imagination);

Educational (the knowledge and understanding of academic outcomes); and Social (the development of values, beliefs and self-perception and the parallel communication skills, leadership and teamwork this enhances).

Developmental stages of play

Children move through the following developmental stages of play:

- Solitary Play - play where children play alone immersed in their own investigations and are not aware of others.
- Parallel Play - play where children play alongside each other observing but playing individually. Interactions may be minimal.
- Associative Play - play in which several children may loosely play together. At this stage children may work together on similar projects.
- Cooperative Play - play in which participants assist to achieve the group's goal. The participants take on roles, tasks and one or two children usually lead the group.
- Competitive Play - play can be based on games with rules and performance is rated (such as chess).

At St Brendan's we use these stages to understand and identify where, developmentally, children are within their play and how to plan accordingly. For Example additional support needs i.e. GIRFme and/ or challenging children's thinking.

Types of play

Play is recognised for the important contribution it makes to education and lifelong learning, a finding confirmed by many studies of early childhood. Research shows that play can enhance problem solving, it is also widely regarded as providing opportunities for social interaction and language development. The contribution of play to educational development is suggested through the inherent value of different play types.

Types of play include:

- **Communication Play** - play using words, nuances or gestures for example, mime, jokes, play acting, singing, debate and poetry. Communication play uses the whole body - from facial expressions, hand gestures, body demonstrating and vocally.
- **Creative Play** - play which allows a new response, the transformation of information, awareness of new connections, with an element of surprise. This play type is one of the most visual by allowing a child to access loose parts and arts and craft materials.
- **Constructive Play** - constructive play includes building with blocks, making a road for toy cars, or constructing a fort out of pillows. Constructive play teaches kids about manipulation, building, and fitting things together. Cognitive skills are used to figure out how to make something work best, whether it is a block tower that won't stand up or a sandcastle that keeps collapsing.
- **Dramatic Play/ Role Play** - play which dramatizes events in which the child is not a direct participator, allowing the child to act out real life situations in a controlled and safe environment. Children often choose to add costumes in this type of play.
- **Imaginative Play** - play where the conventional rules, which govern the physical world, do not apply, for example pretending to be an animal, or having a make-believe friend, or being an object i.e. a tree.
- **Object Play** - play which uses infinite and interesting sequences of hand-eye manipulations and movements i.e. examining an item and looking into how and why something works.
- **Social Play** - play during which the rules and criteria for social

engagement and interaction can be revealed, explored and amended. This could be playing a game together, building an item together or creating something together.

- **Symbolic Play** - play which allows control, gradual exploration and increased understanding without the risk of being out of one's depth. For example a stick could become a sword, or a flower becomes a wand. This type of play helps children learn to develop skills in expressing themselves and exploring their experiences, ideas, and emotions.
- **Cooperative play** - cooperative play uses all of the social skills the children have been working on and puts them into action. Whether they are building a puzzle together, playing a board game, or enjoying an outdoor group game, cooperative play sets the stage for future interactions as the children mature into an adults.

When setting up, planning for and facilitating play, all types of play should be considered. All types of play contribute to the holistic development of our children.

Role of the Adult

Staff at St Brendan's understand that children learn best through carefully planned, play based experiences that start with their strengths, interests and capabilities. We acknowledge that children are active learners and that they need opportunities both indoors and outdoors to make sense of the world, whilst supported by knowledgeable, interested and sensitive adults.

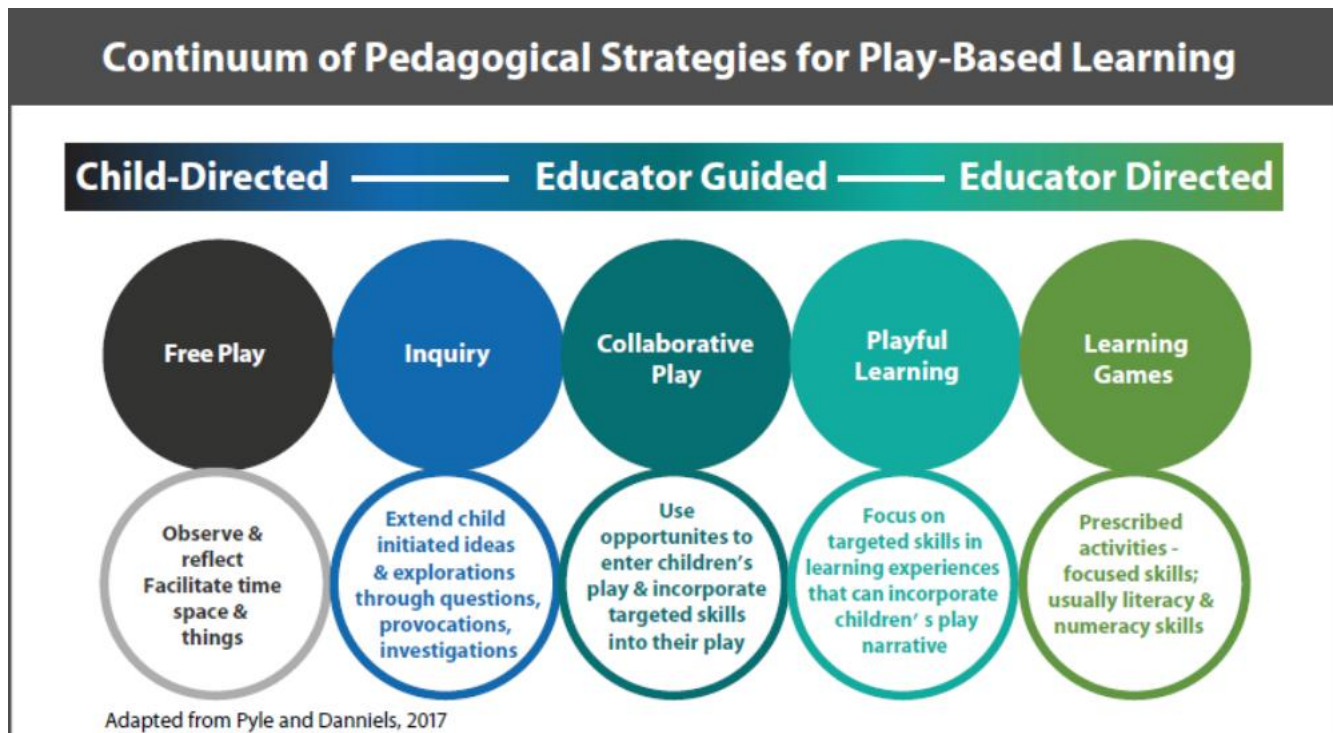
'Children need time to play, space to play, an environment that offers a range of possible play experiences and above all, adults who allow and encourage them to play.' (playscotland.org)

The role of the adult during any play session should be to set up and facilitate play, observe, monitor and support children's participation. Effective observation is used as a tool which allows teachers provide appropriate environments, activities, resources support and challenge.

Adults can participate in children's play, modelling skills and language, engaging and questioning to extend learning. When adults join in they should guide, shape, engage in and extend it, rather than dictating or dominating the play.

Adults can also provide a stimulus for children's play, planning for and implementing a direct focused activity, based on the needs and interests of the children.

Adults should ensure that throughout the day children have the opportunity to be involved in a range of play across the Continuum of pedagogical strategies. This will ensure that our children are receiving and breadth of experiences and can learn within a range of learning styles.



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