



Play for Learning Policy

Article 28,29,31

Fordbank Primary

Policy Statement

‘Investing in children’s play is one of the most important things we can do to improve children’s health and wellbeing in Scotland.’
Sir Harry Burns, Former Chief Medical Officer Scotland.

The following policy makes clear our aspirations and approaches towards playful learning. This policy will be reviewed every 3 years to ensure it continues to align to our vision and values.

‘Playful Pedagogy puts play experience as central to 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 motivation.’ Play Scotland

Scotland’s [Curriculum for Excellence](#) (CFE) empowers staff across sectors to build on children’s capacities; developing the knowledge, skills and attributes necessary for them to adapt, think critically and flourish in today’s world. Playful learning approaches align to curricular documentation, as well as to children’s rights as stated within the UNCRC Conventions on the Rights of the Child, **‘Children have a right to play’** (UNCRC, 1989, Article 31).

In Fordbank, we value playful learning approaches and appropriate pedagogy for our children, as is supported across Scottish education policy and guidance [[Realising the Ambition: National Strategy for Play](#)] and curriculum guidance [[Curriculum for Excellence](#)], with coherence across the child’s early level experience identified as being key in ensuring our aims are met.

At Fordbank, we endeavour to provide our learners with experience of a curriculum which meets their developmental needs, encourages them to achieve and attain highly, and enables them to thrive regardless of economic status and other challenges.

‘Our play-based approach at Fordbank provides our children with long blocks of uninterrupted play. For learning to take place, our children need to be engaged. Our children are much more likely to be engaged if they are making choices about their learning. A play- based approach appeals to our children’s natural curiosity and desire to engage in experiences based on their interests and strengths. Through play, our children will begin to lay the foundations for the skills needed for lifelong learning and work.’

Cara Wadsworth Headteacher Fordbank



Rationale for Play

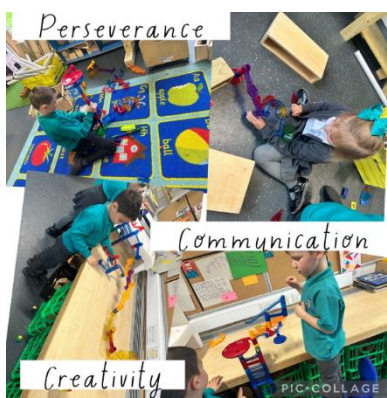
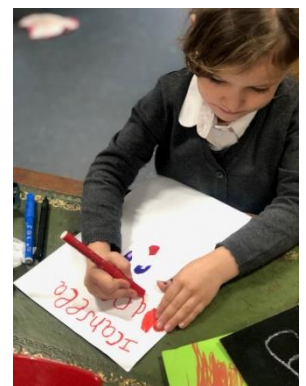
“Learning and teaching should not stand on opposite banks and just watch the river flow by; instead, they should embark together on a journey down the water. Through an active, reciprocal exchange, teaching can strengthen learning and how to learn.”
Malaguzzi (1998)

In Scotland it is recognised that play should be a “life enhancing daily experience for all of our children and young people; in their homes, nurseries, schools and communities” ([Scotland’s Play Strategy](#), 2013). Play has a crucial role in improving children’s educational achievements and supporting us to [Get it Right for Every Child](#) (2006).

‘[Curriculum for Excellence](#)’ (2007) gives **prominence to play**, particularly across the early level and in supporting the transition between ELC and primary school. Research shows that transition at this stage for the child is smoother if play continues as the main vehicle for their learning. Due to the **benefits play provides for social and emotional wellbeing**, as well as the **cognitive development** it supports, it is now expected that play continues throughout the school into the upper stages of primary. The **Scottish Government** also sets out **clear expectations** that **outdoor play should be an integral part of our approaches**. This has been strengthened by the publication of documents including Scotland’s ‘[Play Strategy](#)’ (2013), ‘[How Good is Our School 4](#)’ and more recently, ‘[Realising the Ambition](#)’ (2019).

In line with Education Scotland’s guidance for quality early level pedagogy [[Play Pedagogy Toolkit](#)], Renfrewshire Council supports us in **striving to ‘Develop high quality learning and teaching that leads to improved levels of attainment and achievement in all of our establishments’**.

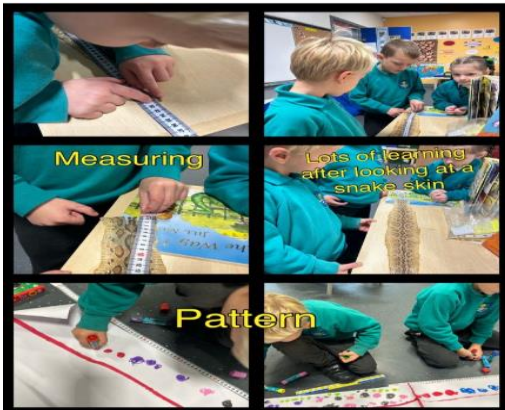
By giving children **time to play** throughout their day at school we support them in following their **own lines of enquiry** and provide time for them to follow their **own individual interests**. As the **adult interacts** sensitively with the child, with an awareness of their **individual developing needs and interests**, it becomes possible to **provide support and challenge that enhances their learning** across the curriculum.



Vision for Children's Learning within Fordbank

Primary

At Fordbank, we believe our children to be **unique, curious, and intelligent, capable of being active participants in their own learning journey.** Our vision is to provide **enabling environments indoors and out to nurture** this view of the child and **equip** them with the necessary **skills, qualities and attributes** that support them to continue their journey as **successful learners, effective contributors, responsible citizens, and confident individuals.**



At Fordbank, we believe that play is a powerful vehicle for learning in the early stages of primary. We also believe that children throughout their primary education, and indeed beyond, will benefit from a **play-based approach** which ensures that they **are motivated and engaged**, their **health and wellbeing** is attended to, and that they achieve their **full potential.**



Policy Aims

The following policy sets out our aims for Playful Learning which:

- Develops children's social, emotional and cognitive skills
- Provides opportunities for children to develop further self-esteem, critical thinking skills, imaginative and creative thinking skills, and an ability to use their initiative.
- Promotes coverage of the seven principles of our curriculum and considers a balance of adult-led, adult-initiated and child-initiated experiences which supports each individual.
- Enhances curriculum delivery in a way that develops children's inquiry skills.

At Fordbank, children will therefore experience a broad and stimulating curriculum that builds on their previous knowledge and particular interests.

At all stages there will be opportunity for:

- spontaneous play
- planned playful experiences
- investigating and exploring
- events and real -life experiences
- focussed learning and teaching

(Adapted from [Building the Curriculum Series 2](#), 2007)



How does Play look within Fordbank?

At Fordbank, we carefully consider the role of the adult, our environment indoors and out, our routines, resources and displays accessible for our children and learning community to ensure best practice.



[Realising the Ambition]

Learning Environment

The learning environment in the early stages of primary school should not look or feel starkly different from a motivating ELC environment. The level of provocation might be greater, the interaction might be more challenging, and the experiences on offer might be different, but the school environment should be conducive to learning through play.'
Realising the Ambition (p. 45 - 46)

Our Learning Environment plays a key role in **supporting** and **developing** our children's learning in Fordbank. Both our **indoor and outdoor environments** provide children with **stimulation** and **challenge** through a wide range of **open-ended resources** suited to their developing need and interest. **By observing** our children's interests, we provide **tailored** and **progressive** teaching and learning, alongside access to well considered resources which encourage our children to **explore** and **experiment**. Our environment is **flexible** to children's needs, allowing for **quiet, reflective,** and **focused learning**, as well as more **boisterous** and **physical play**.

At Fordbank, we have **three rooms** which the children from **Primary 1 & 2** Free Flow between.

These are **The Imagination Room, Creative Room and Discovery Room**.



Role of the Adult

Staff within Fordbank, play a crucial role in developing a **playful classroom environment**. The teacher's sensitive **interactions** and **observations**, alongside a range of **forward** and **responsive planning opportunities**, ensure a **coverage of the curriculum** within **contexts** which **motivate** and **engage learners**.

Each element is as important as the other.



Adult Led

(Focused learning)

Individual, pair or group work, usually differentiated by input, can be used for targeted observations. Limited time spent – According to Deirdre: no more than 8 minutes a day listening to instruction (NOT ROTATION OF ACTIVITIES)



BALANCE

Adult initiated (Intended learning)

Experiences that arise from planning, sufficiently open ended for learner agency.



Child initiated (Spontaneous)

Experiences that children control in terms of resources, time and outcome.

[Adapted from Julie Fisher's work, and the work of Deirdre Grogan]

'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.' (Realising the Ambition, p. 49)



'Kadinsky' Circles inspired a clock.

What Our Day Looks Like?

Morning routine:

- Self-registration/Admin/Organisation
- Free- Flow Play across the three rooms
- Children choose when to have snack and do this independently.
- A group of children (10 children) access the garden with our EYO.
- Children have targets to complete throughout the morning session. (independent tasks, NOT new learning)
- Teacher takes time to circulate, observe and engage.
- Plenary; revisiting learning/achievements/sharing learning/Possible lines of development.
- Time for direct teaching/group work for Literacy and Numeracy.

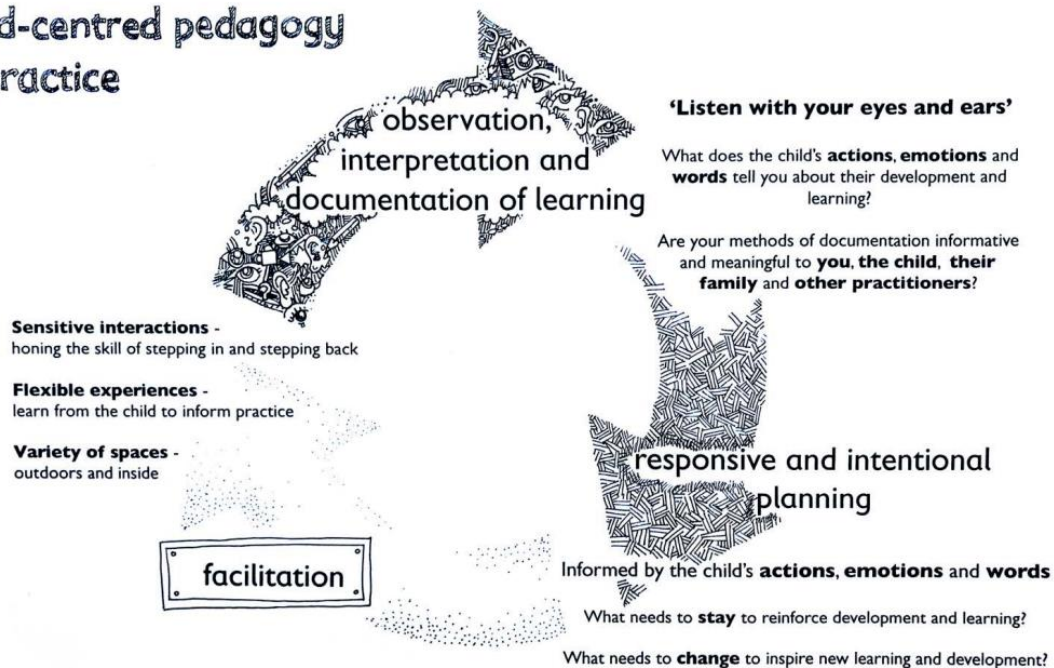
Afternoon routine:

- Toothbrushing/Relaxation
- Focused Teaching
- Continuation of play opportunities
- Free choice garden opportunities
- Whole class experiences



Observations during Playful Learning

child-centred pedagogy in practice



[Realising the Ambition]

In Fordbank, we place **high importance** on the **observation of children** as they experience learning, which is **both led by the teacher**, and led by the **child's own curiosities**. This allows us to consider best approaches for taking children's learning forward. It informs next steps for the child and ensures effective planning for future experiences.

Observing Learning at Fordbank

Children are **observed** by staff across all rooms/garden.

Colour coded sheets are used to document observations which are displayed on child's individual areas on classroom walls.

The Leuven Scale is used to measure a child's emotional well-being and involvement.

Floorbooks are used to plan, document learning and capture Pupil Voice.



Planning for Play

When we **plan** in **Fordbank** we focus on:

- Creating a **stimulating learning environment** where **pupils thrive**.
- Ensuring that **pupils are involved in the planning process**: planning with the children, taking their interests forward and following the line of enquiry.
- **Working together** to set up the **classroom/learning environment**, the zones within the class, and making changes when needed.
- Having a **mix of learning experiences**.
- **Supporting children** to build **positive identities** through **collaborative, caring relationships** with other people, **by managing and taking risks, 'having a go', experiencing success, developing resilience, and developing 'mastery' or 'can-do' attitudes.**

Target Setting

In **Fordbank** we strive to ensure all children make **continual progress** in their learning, with appropriate **support and challenge** to secure children's current knowledge and enhance their developing skills. To support this, we provide individualised learning targets throughout the week which **build on focussed teaching**, ensuring **continuity and progression through the curriculum** for all children.

Assessment

As our **playful teaching and learning approaches** encourage **child-led opportunities**, with adults who are responsive to the interests of the child, so do our approaches to assessment.

Observations, as identified above, are vital, with recognition of the importance of capturing each child's unique set of abilities and talents. **Observations in different situations** capture these first-hand. Our starting point in **Fordbank** is always with the **child, observing** what our children **choose** to do, what their **interests** are and who and what **resources** they enjoy playing with, provides staff with **reliable information** about **children as individuals**.

Assessment of children's progress will be undertaken utilising the same **robust processes** as always, with **class work, individual teacher led work with children, images created and taken during play, and teacher observations** which **capture children's developing knowledge** and understanding all captured and documented.

The observations and assessments we take:

- Are an effective use of time.
- Increase understanding of each child's learning.
- Inform future curriculum decisions.
- Enable evidence of children's learning to be shared with families.

Assessment often includes a range of approaches:

- Assessments will be ongoing through interactions and observations.
- Samples of children's work displayed on child's individual space on wall.
- 'Wow' moments captured and displayed with annotations.
- Observations shared with home via Seesaw.

Summary of intent

In order to secure the best possible outcomes for all learners, our teaching and learning must be child-centred and built upon the child's previous learning and experiences. Through the power of playing together and providing rich, engaging experiences we will not only develop our learners' mental, cognitive and motor skills, but we will also nurture their social and emotional development too. Our Play Based Approach makes use of our environment that provide meaningful learning opportunities and they utilise sensitive interactions to ensure progression and continuity of learning. By doing this, we create learners who are motivated leaders of their own learning who can make choices, progress, and find success within the Four Capacities.

Cara Wadsworth

Head Teacher



My favourite pictures are pictures like this one. Not one person smiling at the camera. Why? Because they are all highly engaged in their learning.