

Play for Learning Policy

Lower Primary

Kilbarchan 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 Kilbarchan Primary School, 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 Kilbarchan Primary School, 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.

Research has shown that play based approaches support the development of the individual capacities, resilience, creativity, communication and skills for learning, ensuring that all children are able to successfully engage with learning.

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 Kilbarchan Primary School

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

From P1 to P3, there will be opportunities for all pupils to engage with all areas of the curriculum through:

- spontaneous play
- planned active/play-based 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 Kilbarchan Primary School?

At Kilbarchan Primary School, 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 Kilbarchan Primary School. Both our indoor and outdoor environments, including the creativity classroom, 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. By Primary 3, pupils are engaged in more focussed learning tasks interspersed with play.

In order to prepare our pupils for play based learning, we use an educational programme called 'Emotion Works' to teach effective communication and interaction.

In classrooms, open areas, the playground and in the creative classroom, the children will experience a mixture of child-initiated play, adult initiated tasks and adult led learning over the course of a typical week. The children can make use of a wide range of resources.

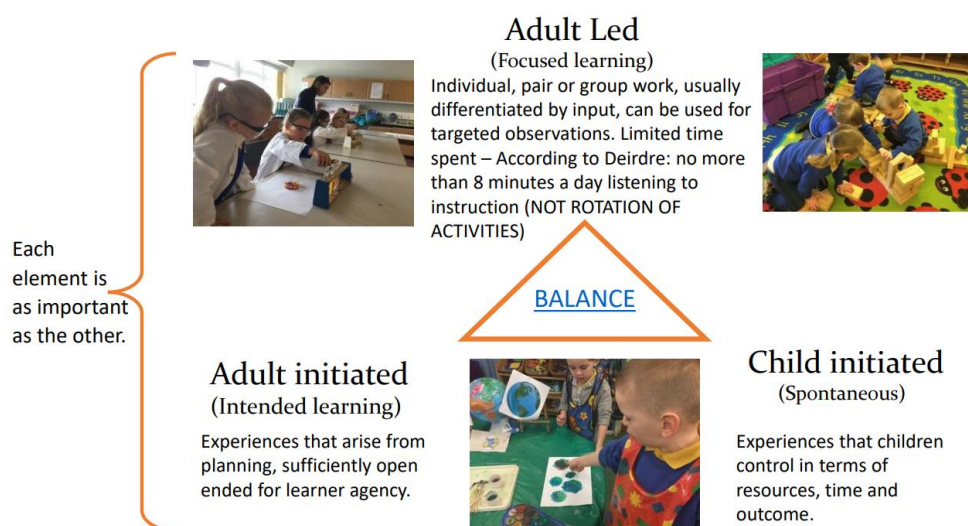
As recommended in the 'Learning Through Play in the Primary' Position Statement (April 2022), pupils will have opportunities throughout the day to use skills that they have previously learned in activities that they choose for themselves, to complete independent targets set by the teacher and to take part in group activities led by the teacher.

We operate a soft start and children can make use of free play areas, including technology, art, writing, role play and small world areas. Teachers work collaboratively with stage partners to create motivating and relevant experiences, taking into account the types of activities that the children have requested and observations of how the children are using the areas and equipment.



Role of the Adult

Our staff within Kilbarchan Primary School 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.



[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)

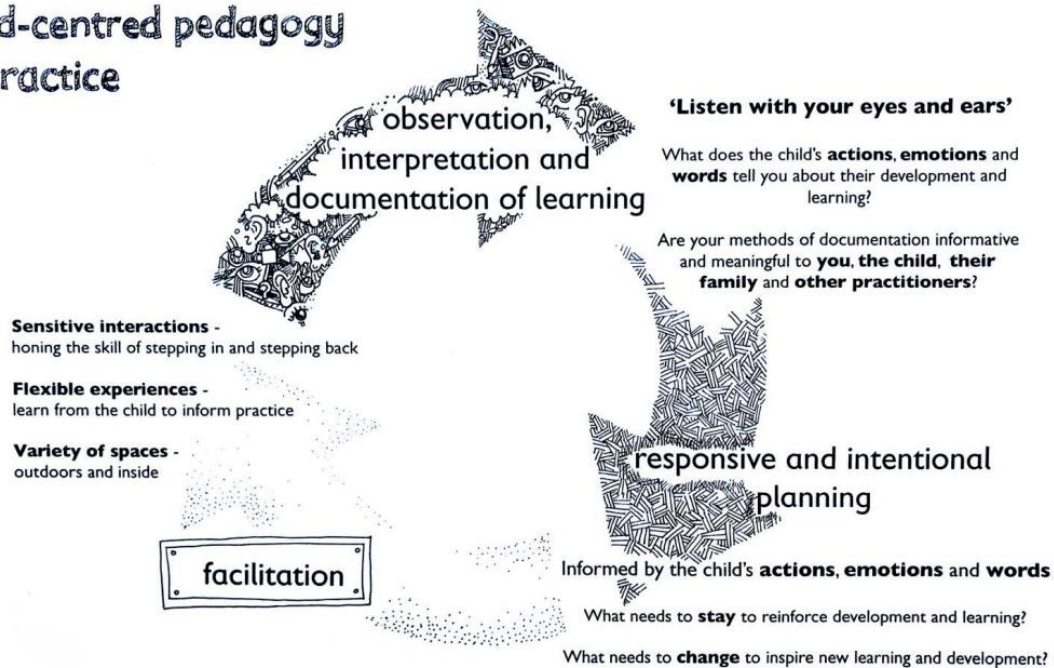
What Our Day Looks Like?

- Emotions Check-In/Making Lunch Selections/Organisation of Belongings
- Selection of Free Play Activities
- Time for direct teaching; mixed ability group work; children's play throughout in P1 and 2; teacher observation opportunities; opportunities for the children to record their work on iPads.
- In P1 and P2 children have targets to complete independently throughout the day
- Teacher takes time to circulate and engage with learners
- Children may have chilli challenges available to access freely
- Plenary; revisiting learning by showing their photos from the iPad/achievements/sharing learning/next steps

- Responsive Planning for smaller interest topics that links to real life experiences led by the children
- whole class experiences, e.g. P.E., assemblies, music, drama, circle time

Observations during Playful Learning

child-centred pedagogy in practice



[Realising the Ambition]

In Kilbarchan Primary School, 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.

Teachers at Kilbarchan Primary School observe children's learning throughout the day. Children and teachers have access to digital technologies, e.g. iPads, for recording aspects of the children's work. Some of these photos are uploaded to Seesaw for parents to view. The teachers use some of the photos as teaching aids via the smartboard.

Planning for Play

When we plan in Kilbarchan Primary School, 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 Kilbarchan Primary School, 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 differentiated learning targets throughout the week which build on focussed teaching, ensuring continuity and progression through the curriculum for all children.

Methods we use include: daily target boards for no floor, no ceiling literacy and numeracy learning targets; whole class targets, e.g. school value selected for development, displayed on walls; lesson-specific targets in subjects such as phonics.

Termly meetings between teaching staff and the senior leadership team ensure that all children are being supported and challenged.

Access to a floor book gives children a way to record significant learning.

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 Kilbarchan Primary School 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:

- *Collecting samples or copies of children's work—writing, drawing, painting or photos of sculptures or constructions. These samples may have 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.*
- *Observing children's social play and keeping notes on friendships, roles and challenges.*
- *Documentation of children's learning may include formal observations, running records or learning conversations. In-depth records help to focus on 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.*

Summary of intent

At Kilbarchan Primary School, we value play as a vehicle for high quality learning experiences. Children transitioning from nursery to primary have a more relaxed experience as the types of activity and organisation are familiar to them. Play develops children's communication and negotiation skills as well as developing their independence and decision making.

'The only people who give practitioners consistent, accurate feedback about what is relevant, meaningful and purposeful early education are the children. "Starting from the child" is not an empty mantra. If early childhood educators start from the children – their needs, interests and understandings – then they will be secure in knowing that their teaching is likely to lead to higher quality learning. If educators then observe and assess children meticulously, then they will have evidence about what works in their classrooms and for the individuals within it, and what does not. In this way, early childhood professionals will have an evidence base that is sufficiently robust to enable them to counter the worst excesses of external demands.' (Julie Fisher, 2013)

