



Learning Through Play Policy

Aim

To ensure children receive age and stage appropriate, play-based learning opportunities and experiences, based on Curriculum for Excellence Early Level, Realising the Ambition and How Good is our Early Learning and Childcare Setting. Children will be given their right to play and this will be respected by all staff in accordance with The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (**UNCRC**) Article 31. Children will engage in free-flow play as much as possible during every ELC session. This means they will be free to choose where, indoors or outdoors, and with what they play, with minimal interruption. Children will be allowed as much time as they need to engage in a deep level of play. Staff will observe and play alongside children, interacting when necessary to extend the play and learning which is happening.

Stow ELC indoor and outdoor play spaces will be organised in such a way to promote independence and free choice by the children. Resources and materials will be easily recognisable when children need and want them.

Staff will plan play opportunities which meet the needs of and extend the learning of all the children attending Stow ELC. Staff will ensure play opportunities are available for children to engage in a variety of different play types, as detailed below:

Schematic play

"A schema is a pattern of repeated actions. Clusters of schemas develop into later concepts" (Athey, 2007). Schemas are often described as children's fascinations. There are many different types. Each child is different, and some may display more than one schema while others show none at all.

Rotation: children with a strong rotation schema love anything circular, especially anything that rotates. They might love the wheels on buggies or watching the washing in the machine spin around. They might beg to be spun around in circles or always head for the roundabout in the playground.

Trajectory: trajectory schema is all about how things move. Babies who love to drop food from their highchairs are exploring their trajectory schema. Toddlers who like to push and pull things along or run backwards and forwards or also enjoying their trajectory schema.

Enclosing: enclosures love creating cosy spaces that they can hide their toys or themselves in. They might love tucking toy mice into matchboxes or packing a den under the table with cushions and getting cosy with their teddies.

Enveloping: similar but slightly different to enclosing. Envelopers love to wrap things up in blankets and to wrap presents. They might also like to paint things, including themselves, and might enjoy being in a fancy-dress outfit that covers them completely.

Positioning: children exploring a positioning schema tend to position objects or themselves in lines, patterns or sequences.

Connecting: A child with a connection schema is interested in joining things together. Magnets and anything magnetic are very popular - especially wooden trains. Construction toys are also popular with connectors.

Transporting: the transporter moves everything from one place to another. If you have a transporter nothing will ever be in its place. You may find they enjoy delivering things and can be helpful in the garden when things need moving.

Orientation: with orientation schemas children love to look at things from different angles. You'll often find them in a tree or hanging upside down from the monkey bars.

Symbolic Play

Using objects, actions or ideas to represent other objects, actions, or ideas, e.g., using a cardboard tube as a telescope.

Physical Play

Close encounter play which encourages development of physical proximity and special awareness. Discovering physical flexibility and what their bodies can do i.e. balance, jump, climb, run etc. As well as developing coordination and gross motor movements. This form of play and exhilaration is friendly and positive. This type of play can burn up a lot of energy.

Socio-Dramatic Play

When children act out experiences, e.g., playing house, going to the shops or going to a restaurant.

Social Play

Any social or interactive situation where the expectation is that everyone will follow the set rules – for example during a game or while making something together.

Creative Play

Allows children to explore, try out new ideas and use their imagination. Children can use lots of different items, altering something and making something new.

Dramatic Play

Play where children figure out roles to play, assign them and then act them out.

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Locomotor Play

Movement for movement's sake, just because it's fun. Things like chase, tag, hide and seek and tree climbing fall into this category.

Deep Play

Play which allows the child to encounter risky experiences and conquer fears, like heights, snakes and creepy crawlies.

Exploratory Play

Using senses of smell, touch and even taste to explore and discover the texture and function of things around them. An example of this would be a baby mouthing an object.

Fantasy/ Imaginative Play

This is the make-believe world of children. This type of play is where the child's imagination gets to run wild, and they get to play out things that are that are unlikely to occur or to re-create/ create a new scenario, like being a pilot or driving a car as well as exploring ways of being, although not normally of an intensely personal, social, domestic or interpersonal nature. For example, brushing with a broom, dialing with a telephone.

Mastery Play

Control of the physical and affective ingredients of the environments, like digging holes or constructing shelters.

Object Play

Play which uses sequences of hand-eye manipulations and movements and the development of fine motor skills for example, using a paintbrush, and holding small objects in their hands.

Recapitulative Play

Play that allows the child to explore ancestry, history, rituals, stories, rhymes, fire and darkness.

Play opportunities will be responsive to the children's interests. Staff will take care to develop and extend children's own interests, as well as 'chance happenings' which occur in ELC or in the local area and are of interest to the children.

Resources and materials will always be available so that the children have opportunities to explore, investigate, experiment, problem solve and learn about cause and effect. Children will be encouraged and supported to offer suggestions, ideas and make decisions about what they think should be available to play with.

Literacy and Numeracy development will be key within each of the various play areas within the playroom and outdoors. Opportunities for children to develop talking, listening, early reading, writing and counting skills will be plentiful.

Staff will spend time talking to, listening to and watching children in their play. These observations will support staff to extend children's learning through changes to the play environment and through simple interactions and questions.

Observations made will help staff to identify what each individual child has achieved; these achievements will be recorded in their individual Showbie which parents can see instantly. Parents will be encouraged to share learning and achievements at home in the Showbie Group.

Stow ELC follows Curriculum for Excellence Early Level. Children will experience opportunities to learn through play and routine ELC activities in the following curricular areas:

- Literacy and English
- Numeracy and Mathematics
- Health and Wellbeing
- Technologies
- Science
- Social Studies
- Expressive Arts
- Religious and Moral Education.

Staff will plan where appropriate a range of play-based learning opportunities across the curricular areas based on children's interests. Activities and play opportunities available will often cover more than one curricular area at a time. Our Learning wall shows how staff observe, plan, learn, and review and are captured and placed on the wall and in the group Showbie where Staff, Parents and children can revisit, comment and share experiences.

Risk Taking

At Stow ELC we endeavour to create an environment where children can learn to take risks. Risky play is encouraged at Stow ELC as children who take risks learn negotiating skills, understanding and can make judgements about their own capabilities.

Practitioners will ensure children are safe by:

- Discussing with the children about how to keep themselves safe.
- Establishing and displaying expectations for behaviour.
- Talking to the children and supporting decisions.
- Carrying out health and safety checks.
- Distinguishing between acceptable and unacceptable risks and removing any hazards.
- Supporting children to carry out their own risk assessments.

