



Strathdon Primary School

Play Based Learning

Policy and Guidance

Introduction

“Play and movement are essential for brain development as it is often through play that babies and young children learn about themselves, others and the world around them.” *Learning and Teaching Scotland (2010)*

Play is a fundamental aspect of childhood that contributes to the holistic development of children. Recognising the importance of play in a child's physical, emotional, social, and cognitive development, this policy outlines guidelines and principles for incorporating play into the educational framework of Strathdon school. This policy aligns with the principles outlined in the Curriculum for Excellence (CfE). At Strathdon School we recognise the importance of play as part of the school day and that it is a right of a child to be able to play.



Article 31 of the UNICEF Children's version of the UNCRC says simply: “Every child has the right to rest, relax, play and to take part in cultural and creative activities.”

Play is in place for all learners regularly through the school day as part of their learning journey. We recognise the importance of play as part of early child

development, meta skills development, a part of Developing the Young Workforce (DYW) and of a child's emotional, social and mental wellbeing. It is also a part of our work as an Eco-School, developing skills for living sustainably through, for example, gardening, wildlife management, observing and monitoring. This also links with work done as part of the children gaining John Muir Awards, again working sustainably and learning about our local environment in Strathdon.

We recognise that play can be fun or serious and helps learners to develop as individuals, within their learning community. It is part of a happy, healthy childhood and helps to develop key skills.

Links to the UNCRC and Sustainable Development Goals

This policy links to Articles 13, 15, 23, 29, 31.

<https://www.unicef.org/sop/convention><https://www.unicef.org/sop/convention-rights-child-child-friendly-version>

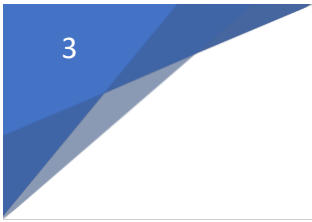
Article 13 - You have the right to find out things and say what you think, through making art, speaking and writing, unless it breaks the rights of others.

Article 15 - You have the right to be with friends and join or set up clubs, unless this breaks the rights of others

Article 23 - If you are disabled, either mentally or physically, you have the right to special care and education to help you develop and lead a full life.

Article 29 – Education must develop every child's personality, talents and abilities to the full. Encourage respect for human rights, parents, cultures and the environment.

Article 31 - You have the right to play and relax by doing things like sports, music and drama



This policy links with Sustainable Goals 3, 4, 11 <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>

Goal 3 – Good health and well-being

Goal 4 – Quality education

Goal 11 – Sustainable cities and communities.

Aims

Through play we aim to help pupils develop:

- Problem solving skills.
- Social skills.
- Language and communication skills.
- Self-regulation.
- Confidence and self-esteem.
- Independence
- Curiosity
- Resilience.

Play Opportunities

Opportunities for play should be available for all learners and in a variety of contexts. Children require time to develop key skills listed above. They should have regular play opportunities throughout the day and should have the opportunity to contribute their own ideas for provision.

Play Environments

Children should have places available to play both indoors and out. We have developed a loose parts area outdoor for children to engage in their natural environment and learn sustainably. Children should also be well resourced to foster their play through the use of loose parts, natural



materials, puzzles, costumes etc.

Opportunities for play allow for problem solving and trial and error. It allows for collaboration and gives learners the opportunity to try things out for themselves.

Risk

It is important that pupils feel they can take acceptable risks and challenge themselves beyond their capabilities. Allowing children to take acceptable risks develops their ability to independently judge risks and learn new skills. Where necessary, comprehensive risk assessments are in place relating

to the provision of play. Children will be involved in writing risk assessments and will talk about the benefits of taking risks.

[Risk Assessment Templates for Schools \(sharepoint.com\)](https://sharepoint.com)

What Does Play Look Like at Strathdon School

Play comes in lots of forms at Strathdon School. Our learners have the opportunity of a soft start in a dedicated 'Crew Challenges' room with support from a PSA or school volunteer. The pupils have the opportunity to engage with planned areas built around experiences and outcomes presently being worked on. They are designed to foster creativity, imagination and social interaction.

Our older pupils also use this room to give them themselves opportunities to enquire, solve problems, experiment and collaborate. There are further whole school, group based and individual opportunities to play as an integrated part of the school day.

Outdoor Play

Time spent in outside spaces brings a wealth of health and well-being benefits in addition to providing opportunities for children to learn how to evaluate and manage risks. The outdoors provides excellent opportunities to use a wide range of skills and abilities not always relevant in the classroom. Children participate in planned outdoor activities every week as part of Woodland Wednesday.

We have worked with local parents and partners to develop an outdoor area within the forested hillside adjacent to the school playground. This area has been agreed through a legal process between ECS and Candacraig Estate. Children can visit this area in all weathers for a range of activities when accompanied by school staff.

Assessment

Assessment incorporates observations of the children at play (by all staff and volunteers) which evaluates their engagement, social interactions and acknowledging the value of play in demonstrating learning and development.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Regularly monitor the effectiveness of play-based approaches in Strathdon School and adjust as necessary to meet the needs of children.

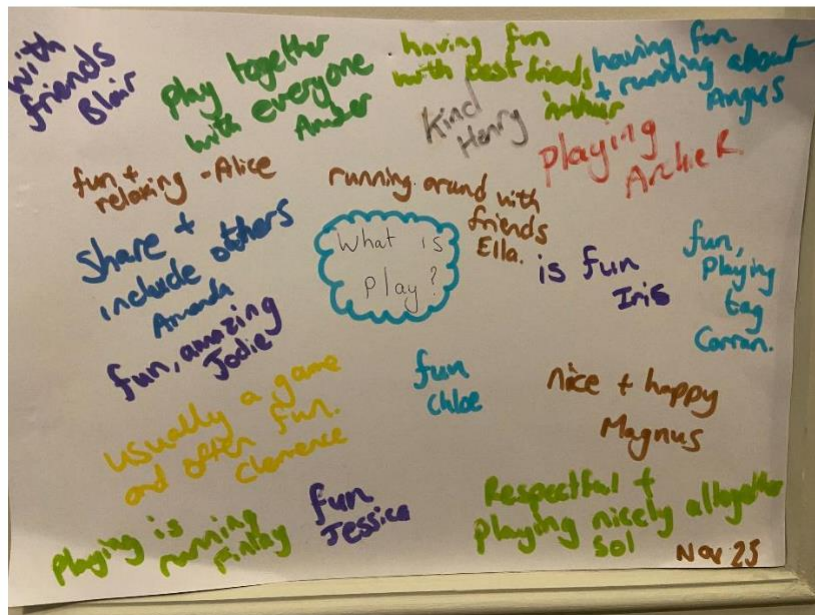
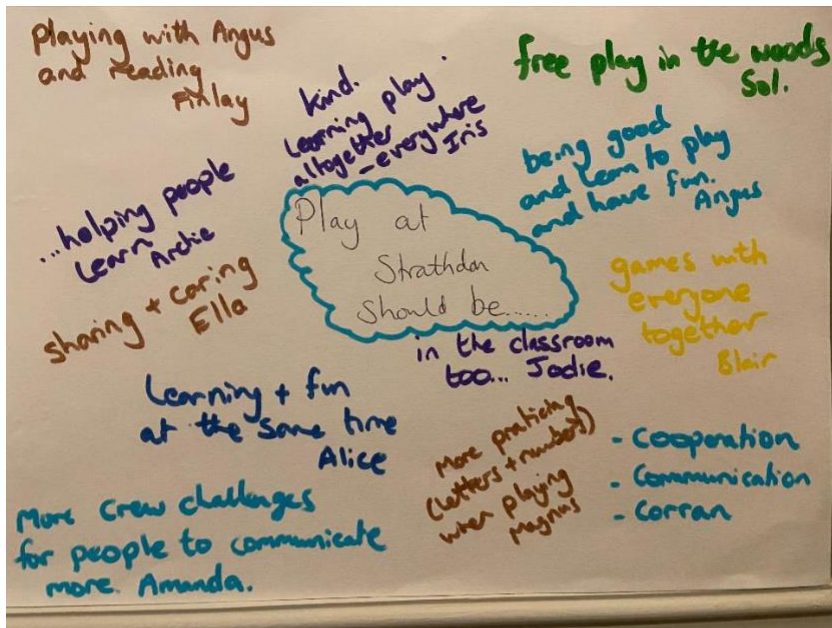
Professional Development

Staff (teachers and PSAs) should receive training and professional development opportunities to understand the importance of play in child development and to develop effective play-based teaching methods.

Parent and Community Engagement

Strathdon School should actively involve parents in understanding the importance of play and engage them in their child's play experiences. Additionally, collaboration with the community to create play-rich environments, including partnerships with groups such as the Silver Circle, Strathdon Development Trust etc.

The Pupils View



References

[Risk Assessment Templates for Schools \(sharepoint.com\)](https://sharepoint.com)

[Play Pedagogy - Play Scotland](#)

[Play Types Toolkit - Play Scotland](#)

[Early Level Play Pedagogy Toolkit | Learning resources | National Improvement Hub \(edscot-web-test.azurewebsites.net\)](#)

[Toward a Pedagogy of Play | Project Zero \(harvard.edu\)](#)

[Curriculum for Excellence documents | Curriculum for Excellence | Education Scotland](#)

[Getting It Right For Every Child | Education Policy and Legislation | Policies and information](#)

[| About Education Scotland | Education Scotland](#)

[UN Convention on the Rights of the Child - UNICEF UK](#)

Reviewed by	Details	Date
Head Teacher		June 2023
Head Teacher Lilian Field	Reviewed	August 2025

Revision	Details	Date
Head Teacher	Reformatting of document	September 2023
	Additional Links added	September 2023
Principal Teacher	Inclusion of monitoring and evaluations, parental engagement, introduction to include link to CFE, professional development.	November 2023
	Additional links added	