

Victoria Primary School



Play/Activity Based Learning Policy



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Rationale for Play

"Children learn best when learning is interactive, practical and enjoyable. Self-initiated play helps children to understand and learn about themselves and their surroundings. Motivation can be increased when children have opportunities to make choices and decisions about their learning, particularly when their own ideas and interests are used, either as starting points for learning activities or for pursuing a topic in more depth."

NI Curriculum Primary 2007

We as a staff believe that Activity Based Learning will help to "empower young people to achieve their potential and to make informed and responsible decisions throughout their lives."

The 'Big Picture' of the Primary Curriculum.

We 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.

Opportunities are given to the children to build on previous experiences and make connections in their learning in an enjoyable way. We as a staff provide opportunities for the children to engage in effective learning within a safe and secure environment.

Opportunities will be provided in foundation and key stage 1 for both child-initiated and teacher led play. Learning will be planned for primarily through existing topics. Teachers and children will record children's planning ideas on a planning board; this is a working document and is owned by teacher and children. Information can be added as the topic progresses and learning develops.



Aims of Play/Activity Based Learning in Victoria Primary School

- To provide opportunities for adults and children to plan learning together.
- To enable children to develop their own ideas and interests.
- To develop natural curiosity and to stimulate imagination.
- To provide practical, interactive and enjoyable play experiences
- To create opportunities for children to make choices and decisions.
- To develop Thinking Skills and Personal Capabilities, managing information, thinking and solving problems, being creative, working with others and self management.
- To develop the fundamental skills of literacy, numeracy and oral communication.
- To share and demonstrate learning - allowing children to review and evaluate their own and others work
- To provide opportunities for developing movement and manipulative skills.



Learning Environment

When planning play/activity based learning we aim to take account of each child's individual needs, interests and abilities by providing stimulating, challenging and appropriate learning environments, both in the classrooms and in our Play rooms. We are currently looking to develop our outdoor play. We have an adventure playground and a learning garden; staff will use the outdoor facilities when practical and when weather permits.

We believe that children should feel safe and secure in the knowledge that they will be given encouragement and support. They will be given appropriate responsibility and allowed to make errors. All of their efforts will be acknowledged and success praised in a variety of ways e.g. oral feedback, having their work displayed, and the opportunity to share their learning with others. The focus will be on the process rather than the end product.

The children will have the opportunity to share their learning in a variety of ways e.g. spotlight corner, microphone, and group focus, play area focus and stage backgrounds.

Rules for play

Staff and children will draw up a set of strategies and rules for the smooth running of the classroom. These will be displayed and can be added to.

Primary 1 and 2 children are given free choice during play sessions; teachers will invite children to take part in certain activities in order to fulfil learning intentions. Primary 3 and 4 work in groups to complete a number of planned activities.

Teachers use a variety of catalysts ("spark offs") to introduce new topics e.g fancy dress days, visits from people in the community, visits to places of interest in the local area, feely bags and stories. These are recorded in year group planners.



A range of practical activities will be provided for the children throughout the curriculum.

Dedicated play sessions are planned for as follows in each year group.

Primary 1 -	4 x 1 hour sessions
Primary 2 -	3 x 1 hour sessions
Primary 3 -	2 x 1 hour sessions
Primary 4 -	1 x 1 hour session

Role of the adult

"Learning is supported by adults when:

Staff are committed, sensitive, enthusiastic and interact effectively to challenge children's thinking and learning."

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Primary 1 and 2 have full time classroom assistants who will support the teacher.

The adults will use a wide range of teaching strategies and effective questioning. They will encourage children to think, do and review for themselves.

Planning - teachers will plan relevant experiences to support, extend and challenge learning appropriate to the child's abilities and experiences. Planning will be linked to the six areas of learning set

out in the curriculum. Children will also be given an opportunity to be involved in the planning process.

Interaction - adults will participate in play, modelling skills and language, engaging and questioning to extend learning.

Assessment - Where appropriate learning will be shared with the children. Adults will observe individuals and groups during sessions so as to identify needs, assess skills and knowledge, to monitor progress and to evaluate the play sessions. These observations are both planned and spontaneous and will inform future planning. Primary 1 and 2 have observation folders in the playrooms.

Observation and assessment.

Through observation and assessment we will understand more about the ability and attainment of the children and ensure that individual needs are met. Children's responses and teachers evaluations will inform future planning.

Children will be observed working individually and as part of a group. A variety of methods of recording will be used. Relevant information will be discussed with other adults as appropriate.

Planned observations will be recorded on children's forms and spontaneous observations will also be recorded if relevant. These observations will be used to inform our target setting for individual children.

Links with the curriculum

Play is the primary means of learning in all areas of the Early Years Curriculum and is a fundamental teaching methodology within the Revised Primary Curriculum at Foundation Stage and Key stage 1. Suggested benefits of play within the six curricular areas include:



Language and Literacy

Play will provide opportunities for the children to work together and cooperate in learning about literacy. Talking and listening will be promoted through activities which enable children to talk to peers, staff and in small and large groups. They will engage in dramatized stories, songs, and rhymes and follow instructions. Relevant print within the play settings will encourage children to develop reading skills. Books will be displayed in play contexts and children will be encouraged to make choices for themselves by browsing in the book area. Opportunities to write will emerge from play activities including role play. The writing area will be equipped with a wide range of tools and materials.



Mathematics and Numeracy

Children will have opportunities to develop and apply their early mathematical skills and understanding during purposeful play. This will be provided through role play opportunities, exploration of natural materials, creativity, construction and table top play such as peg boards and threading. They will be encouraged to use appropriate mathematical language during their play.



Personal Development

During play activities children will develop socially and emotionally. They will learn to appreciate other points of view, co-operating, collaborating and sharing. Staff will seek to develop children's Self-esteem, self-confidence, concentration, independence and a positive attitude towards learning. Children will be encouraged to become independent and to take responsibility for their own actions. Awareness of health, safety and hygiene issues will also be developed through rules for play, role play and other activities.

Physical Development

Physical skills including balance, co-ordination, fine, gross and loco motor skills can be enhanced and developed through play. Opportunities will be provided for the children to work with a range of equipment indoors and outdoors.



The World Around Us

Children start Primary School with different experiences of their immediate environment and of their wider world. Through varied play activities children's awareness, knowledge and understanding of their environment will be extended e.g. awareness of classroom and school environment, people who help us, positional language and direction. Exploring places - own and other lands, weather and natural environment. Children will also have opportunities to develop awareness of the past and of the ways in which it differs from the present. Children will be given opportunities through play to explore, make observations and use materials to build and construct. They will develop scientific concepts and technological skills by direct exploration using all the senses and hands-on experience.



The Arts

Children will have opportunities to experience a sense of enjoyment and to communicate/express their ideas and feelings through a range of tools/media and develop skills of observing, imagining, designing, recording, creating, communicating and appreciating. Through musical experiences children will be encouraged to explore ways of making sounds and create tunes using a variety of tuned and untuned instruments and to engage in exploration of pitch, rhythm and rhyme. Children will have the opportunity to take on a variety of roles and express their feelings and opinions in role play and small world play.



ICT

ICT will be used appropriately throughout all areas of the curriculum during play. Children will have access to computers with appropriate software as well as interactive whiteboards, printers, bee-bots, digital cameras, camcorder and listening centres.

Areas of Play

The programme of learning in any one year group and across the key stages is broad and balanced. We understand that there must be a progression in the provision of activities to meet the development needs of children.

Foundation

- Dramatic play
- Sand, water and natural materials
- Construction
- Creative play - including art, design and malleable materials
- Small world
- Table top activities such as games and jigsaws
- ICT - computer, beebot, digital camera
- Construction
- Writing area
- Other activities relating to topic

Key stage 1

Children will have access to a range of tasks and materials determined by their topics.

Our Activity Based Learning policy and practice will be evaluated on an on-going basis.