

**ST JOHN’S PRIMARY SCHOOL**

**Play Policy**

**Reviewed Sept 2023**

**Next review 2026**

**PLAY POLICY STATEMENT**

The staff of St John’s P.S. believe the majority of children’s learning in The Foundation Stage/KS1 will be provided through a range of well planned challenging play experiences.

Our aim is to provide a stimulating, relaxing and creative environment through well planned opportunities for interactive, practical and multi-sensory, fun experiences and using the outdoors as much as possible. We believe that this will promote the child’s physical, emotional, social, intellectual and spiritual development.

Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 staff accept that quality play involves:

* Planning an adequate amount of time for play so that children can engage in worthwhile activities
* Planning activities with the children that draw on their prior knowledge and experiences.
* Planning activities which will foster the children’s own interests, encourage them to use their own initiative, acquire concepts, develop confidence in handling materials, in communication and decision making
* Both adults and children collecting resources for play and the children will be encouraged to utilise these creatively and imaginatively during play sessions
* Providing choice and opportunities to take risks during play, also to encourage the children to use their own initiative, acquire concepts, develop confidence in handling materials, in communication and decision making.
* Observing children at play and using these observations to inform future planning and activities provided
* Incorporating all areas of the curriculum to enable children to connect the learning and transfer developing skills and concepts
* Positive home-school links with parents/carers/outside agencies to optimise the learning potential of play based learning

**Inclusion**

Staff aim to give every pupil the opportunity to experience success in learning and to achieve as high a standard as possible. Planning takes into account the prior knowledge and experiences that pupils bring with them to school and the school curriculum is planned to meet the specific learning needs of individuals.

In attempting to include all pupils and remove barriers to learning, opportunities for improving the classroom experience of all students are created.

Staff, governors, students and parents/carers share a philosophy of inclusion. All children in the Foundation Stage and Key Stage One are fully included and supported through play based learning to enable full

access to the curriculum and equal opportunities for learning.

Planning will endeavour at all times to meet the needs of both boys and girls, children with special educational needs, children with disabilities, children from all social and cultural backgrounds, children from different ethnic groups including Travellers, refugees and asylum seekers and children from diverse linguistic backgrounds.

**1. Play in The Foundation Stage and KS1**

Our staff recognise play as an effective and valuable approach to teaching and learning.

We believe that children learn in many different ways.

Children learn to express their thoughts and feelings through play. They satisfy their natural curiosity. They explore, experiment and develop skills which will help them make sense of the “real world”

Play is a tool for finding out about the world around them and for acquiring the many skills which are expected from the child when s/he becomes an adult.

Through meaningful play, children can increase their opportunities for language acquisition and the appropriate cognitive and social behaviours.

Play promotes children’s learning by providing opportunities for the children to:

* *listen, observe and talk*
* *explore and investigate*
* *experiment and to draw and test their conclusions*
* *express their ideas and feelings in many different ways*
* *inhabit imagined situations*
* *act out and come to terms with experiences at home or with their friends*
* *be solitary or play with others and develop their relationships*
* *relax*
* *be intensely involved and challenged in a wide variety of activities*
* *build on their existing knowledge and experiences*

**2 . AIMS FOR PLAY (INDOOR AND OUTDOOR)**

General aims which permeate all areas of the curriculum.

* *To promote play as a pleasurable activity*
* *To create an enjoyable learning environment*
* *To develop positive attitudes to learning*
* *To develop enquiring, questioning, creative minds*
* *To improve concentration and develop problem solving skills and processes*
* *To promote the skills of observation and investigation in all other areas of the curriculum*
* *To develop thinking skills and make children aware of their personal capabilities and set high expectations*

However, there are more specific aims which can be categorised into the following areas ~

**PDMU (Personal Development and Mutual Understanding)**

* To *develop self-esteem, self-confidence, independence and a positive attitude towards learning*
* *To foster social and emotional development*
* *To foster social growth and sensitivity in interpersonal relationships*
* *To help the child to relate to adults and other children, to encourage co-operation, taking turns, sharing and self-control*
* *To encourage children to challenge common stereotypes*
* *To help develop positive relationships with adults and peers*
* *To encourage children to become independent and take responsibility for their own actions*
* *To develop communication skills*
* *To encourage children to respect and care for classroom materials and equipment and play safely*
* *To develop an awareness for the need for safety in all activities*

**The World Around Us**

* *To encourage the child to observe, appreciate and care for the world*
* *To stimulate curiosity and foster skills of observation, investigation, and problem solving in all areas of the curriculum*
* *To encourage children to respond positively and creatively to problems*
* *To encourage children to investigate further using observation and discussion*

**Language and Literacy**

* *To provide opportunities to develop and use the skills necessary for talking, listening, reading and writing*
* *To enable children to communicate clearly their thoughts, needs, feelings, and experiences*
* *To enable children to develop and participate as speakers, listeners, readers and writers*

**Mathematics and Numeracy**

* *To develop and reinforce mathematical, scientific concepts and skills in keeping with the NI Curriculum*
* *To encourage children to investigate further using observation and discussion*
* *To encourage children to respond positively and creatively to problems*
* *To encourage children to think clearly and logically, to appreciate pattern and identify relationships*

**The Arts**

* *To encourage creativity, self-expression and imaginative thinking*
* *To allow children to explore and develop their imagination and observational skills*

**Physical Development and Movement**

* *To promote co-ordination and develop fine motor skills*
* *To help develop physical development and co-ordination*
* *To promote positive attitudes to a healthy way of life*
* *To encourage children to respect and care for classroom materials and equipment and play safely*
* *To develop an awareness for the need for safety in all activities*

**3 PLANNING FOR PLAY**

1. **The Effective Learning Environment**

*At Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 we will create an environment which promotes:*

* *enjoyment*
* *variety and balance*
* *freedom of movement and choice*
* *periods of uninterrupted play*
* *opportunities for repetitive play*
* *opportunities for developing imagination and concentration*
* *a secure, non-competitive, non-threatening atmosphere which takes account of each child’s developmental needs (including Special Educational Needs) and their own interest and experiences*

***Our long term and short term planning aims to:***

* *increase children’s self-confidence and familiarity with routines and rules*
* *enable children to work individually, in small and larger groups and share ideas with others during play*
* *increase children’s concentration through periods of uninterrupted play to make sure that learning experiences are allowed to develop*
* *encourage children to take responsibility for making their own decisions and tidying away their play activities*

1. **Role of Adult**

*The adults are the facilitators of learning. They need to be receptive to the children’s needs and respond accordingly. Their role includes:*

* *Managing the learning environment*
* *Co-ordinating others who may be working with the children*
* *Providing materials and resources to allow children to achieve their potential*
* *Thinking about the content of what is provided*
* *Observing, planning, evaluating, interacting and record keeping.*
* *Providing a stimulating environment and interacting with child during play. Children need to see the adults as teachers, learners and playmates as well as supervisors and carers*
* *Being sensitive to transitional needs of children and to be patient as the children are adjusting to their new environment*

**The adults can stimulate and motivate by:**

* *Providing outdoor opportunities as much as possible.*
* *Providing materials/time/space*
* *Making suggestions*
* *Tapes, rhymes, stories, poems and visits*
* *Encouraging discussion and questioning*

**The adult can observe and intervene by:**

*Being aware of children’s progress*

*Being aware of difficulties/special needs*

*Establishing simple and useful rules and routines*

**(c) Observation and Assessment**

1 Through our observation and record keeping we will aim to build on each child’s progress during play. Staff will use their observation and record keeping to evaluate, review and shape future planning, taking into consideration resources available, teachers’ approach and organisation, children’s response to and the suitability of activities. Staff will observe children working in groups and as individuals.

2 Through interaction, observation and record keeping we will have a concise overall picture of individual children. This will provide information about their currant levels of emotional, social, physical and intellectual development- making staff aware of any children experiencing difficulties.

3 Our records will also be used to inform parents, other staff and other professionals. Children’s progress will be recorded on skills recording sheets with mention made of other significant information all of which will be stored in an Observation record file.

4 Our records will provide us with opportunities:

* to plan for coherence and progression in FS and K.S.1
* to assess the level of physical, social and cognitive skills
* to inform future planning
* to monitor the children’s progress
* to assess individual needs
* to promote the holistic development of individual children
* to inform other members of staff, parents and other agencies
* plan for coherence and progression in FS
* to motivate and challenge the children’s learning

**(d) Staff development and discussion**

1 We as a Key Stage 1 staff intend to have regular staff meetings, both planned and informal including all adults involved in the children’s play. Play based Learning Co-ordinator will liaise with Senior Leadership Group to gain support where necessary. Staff will be informed of relevant courses and encouraged to attend when appropriate. Current literature and information will be accumulated and made available. (eg cluster meeting, FS Revised Curriculum Training etc, Principal’s Conferences etc).

2 We as a school believe in the importance of staff development and discussion concerning play. We will work together to ensure all staff are provided with adequate opportunities to establish a common understanding of all aspects of play. We will encourage and support training days, dissemination of good practice (within school and with other schools) liaison with CASS Early Years Support Staff and other departments within CASS and contact with other relevant organisations . We recognise that awareness and feedback are vital to progression and staff development.

**4. Procedures**

**a.** Key areas of play in our curriculum are:

* Outdoors
* Sand and water play
* Imaginative/ Role play
* Construction play
* Small world play
* ICT/ technology play
* Writing table/ Library
* Clay and dough
* Art and Craft- Junk building table
* Table top play
* Any other significant play activities
* Topic led activity based learning in Year 4.

Resources in the Foundation Stage.

Years 1 and 2

These resources should be made available regularly.

* Varied experiences of Water Play
* Varied Sand experiences and other sensory materials
* Many different creative media
* Malleable Materials
* Construction material
* A variety of recyclable materials
* Opportunities for imaginative/role play
* ICT including listening centre, use of computer, use of digital camera, talking books, Beebot etc

Years 3 and 4

Children should have access to materials determined by the topic or theme undertaken by the class eg maths games, jigsaws etc.

Teachers need to ensure that all children experience the skills of the planned activities.

**b. Key Experiences**

Children through structured activities will have opportunities to:

Collaborate and co-operate

Explore and investigate

Communicate –explain

- negotiate

- discuss

- challenge

- investigate

Record – practically

- written

- graphically

Interpret

Observe

Classify

Solve problems- make choices

- make decisions

Move and manipulate

Develop and use imagination (c) **Planning and Organisation of play in F.S. and K.S.1**

We at St John’s PS regard planning documents of play as flexible. We agree that teachers may alter them as they observe children’s individual responses and outcomes of the play experiences.

Topic grid

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Terms | First half term topic | Second half term topic |
| Year 1 term 1 | Starting school/  Halloween | Toys /Christmas |
| Year 1 term 2 | Cold countries/  The Antarctic | Fairytales/ Spring |
|  | The zoo | The Jungle |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Year 2 term 1 | Myself/ Autumn | Christmas |
| Year 2 term 2 | Spring | Water |
| Year 2 term 3 | Mini-beasts | Summer |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Year 3 term 1 | The weather | Toys |
| Year 3 term 2 | Pirates | Protection |
| Year 3 term 3 | Farm | Transport |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Year 4 term 1 | Celebrations | Life in recent times |
| Year 4 term 2 | W.W.2 / Post office | Once upon a time |
| Year 4 term 3 | Famous People | Houses and homes |

\*See appendix one for planning formats

Timing of Play

Time allocation for each year group will be as follows:-

Year 1 ~ five 45 minute sessions of practical play activities

Year 2 ~ four 45 minute sessions of practical play activities

Year 3 ~ two one hour sessions of structured activity based learning

Year 4 ~ one hour long session of activity based learning each week.

Planning with the children

The adults will plan play with the children and will work closely with parents on topics/themes.

(d) Conclusion of the play

This involves not only finishing the play, but:

- tidying up the play material and

- the follow-up experiences.

We at St John’s PS feel it is important to allow adequate time for tidying up so that the children have the opportunity to:

- take responsibility for the care and storage of materials

- co-operate with others

- help the adults

- use related skills eg counting, classifying, sorting when tidying away.

-take pride of their learning environment

(f) Follow up activities

To reinforce some of the learning the children have had through play the teacher could:

* invite a child/group of children to talk about their play
* label and display their work
* photograph children’s activities
* involve children in making class books - drawing, writing and photographs
* compile a play journal
* devise a series of photographs of children at play to run on a loop for parents and children

**How to observe/ assess/ record:**

Observations during play should be:

* regular
* time allocated
* routine and part of daily practice

Observations should be varied including:

* participant observations-while practitioner playing and working with the children
* spontaneous observations-capturing significant moments as they happen
* planned observations- considering the whole child, focus on some aspect of a child’s progress

Observe the child in a range of interactions:

* playing alone
* playing alongside
* playing with others in pairs or small groups
* participating in larger groups

Observe the child in a range of play situations:

* Imaginative
* Small world
* Construction
* Creative
* Physical

Observe the child at different times of the day:

* On arrival
* Morning
* Mealtimes
* Afternoon

When observing it is important for the observer to:

* Be objective- describe briefly what you see and hear.
* Look- tune into each child- be attentive- watch the children as they play
* Listen- pay attention to interactions- the words and the level of language produce: one, two word, three word sentences.
* Judge significance- key person knowledge of the child and child development will lead to recognition of important moments demonstrating progress and surprising of unexpected behaviour.
* Note levels of involvement- whether activity is interrupted, continuous or intense- motivation.
* Be sensitive- respectful- positive- personalised.
* Discuss the observation with the child to check accuracy of what is recorded and to hear more about the story.

**Monitoring, Evaluation and Review Procedures**

Class teachers will evaluate play based learning ( daily informally) and on a monthly basis in writing using agreed format ( included in appendix one).

Co-ordinator will monitor planning for play termly and provide feedback to class teachers. Observations of play will take place and again feedback will be given.

Continuing support and advice will be provided for teachers and classroom assistants.

All Foundation Stage and K.S.1 staff will meet in June to Review current practise and policy.

Appendix One

Planner formats

And reflection format

Appendix Two

Useful numbers

Appendix three

Useful numbers, references and websites.

Appendix four Observation records