

VICTORIA PARK PRIMARY SCHOOL



Activity Based Learning Policy

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Activity Based Learning Policy

Rationale for Play

In Victoria Park Primary School, we recognise the importance of Activity and Play Based Learning as a fundamental part of the process of learning in Foundation Stage, Key Stage One and Key Stage 2.

One of the most important aims of Education is to help each child to achieve his/her full potential in all areas of life both academically and personally. Activity Based Learning can be a very useful tool in the fulfilment of this aim.

The principles below underpin our Early Years Curriculum and guide our planning. Well planned and well-resourced play activities which allow for progression in a child's thinking and understanding can provide the context in which these principles become the reality for all of our children.

Learning through Play CEA

Play is a central part of young children's learning. Through play children explore ideas, feelings and relationships. Play can push out the limits of what is possible and help children to be creative, flexible and imaginative. Rich play promotes control, mastery, confidence and well-being.

Learning for life: Early Education, 2002

Aims of Learning Through Play

The Northern Ireland Curriculum states that '*children learn best when learning is interactive, practical and enjoyable for both children and teachers*'. It also maintains that children should '*have opportunities to be actively involved in practical, open-ended and challenging learning experiences that encourage creativity*'.

With this in mind, the aims of Activity Based Learning in Victoria Park Primary are as follows.

Children will have opportunities to-

-  Participate in quality practical, interactive and enjoyable play experiences.
-  Develop their self-esteem, self-confidence and independence.
-  Express their thoughts and feelings.
-  Satisfy their natural curiosity.
-  Explore, experiment and develop skills to come to terms with the real world.
-  Develop their own ideas and interests.
-  Plan, do and review for themselves and evaluate their own and others work.
-  Make choices and decisions.
-  Develop their fine and gross motor skills.
-  Enhance their language ability and develop a language for learning.
-  Stimulate their imagination.
-  Develop their Literacy and Numeracy.
-  Encourage social interactions with their peers.
-  Promote their thinking skills and personal capabilities.

Thinking Skills and Personal Capabilities

'At the heart of the NI Curriculum lies an explicit emphasis on the development of pupils' skills and capabilities for lifelong learning and for operating effectively in society. By engaging pupils in active learning contexts across all areas of the Curriculum, your teachers can develop pupils' personal and interpersonal skills, capabilities and dispositions, and their ability to think both creatively and critically.'

(ref: Thinking skills and Personal Capabilities in Key Stages 1 and 2 - CCEA 2007)

During Activity Based Learning the children will be given opportunities to-

-  Manage Information
-  Think, solve and make decisions
-  Be Creative
-  Work with others
-  Self Manage

Through participating in Activity Based Learning in Victoria Park Primary School, we provide opportunities for children to-

-  Develop their social skills
-  Work together, share and co-operate
-  Develop their imagination and creativity
-  Enhance their language and communication skills
-  Show initiative
-  Deal with feelings and emotions
-  Problem solve independently or collaboratively
-  Transfer learning to real life situations.

Links with Areas of Learning

At Victoria Park Primary School we recognise that children learn best when learning is connected. The children will experience all areas of learning during Activity Based Learning-

- ✚ Language and Literacy
- ✚ Mathematics and Numeracy
- ✚ Personal Development & Mutual Understanding
- ✚ The World Around Us
- ✚ The Arts
- ✚ ICT

Our Activity Based Learning is planned around the topics for each year group as this provides opportunities to develop learning across the curriculum. We recognise the need for continuity and progression across the year groups and ensure all topics meet Curriculum requirements.



The Learning Environment

In Victoria Park Primary we believe a well organised, stimulating and secure environment enables children to become confident, active learners. We take account of individual needs and the interests of the children and we aim to provide activities which are appropriate but also challenging. Everyone's efforts are valued and children's successes are valued and shared both within the classroom and over Seesaw to enable parents to be part of the learning process. We ensure our classrooms are a bright and pleasant environment for the children. Each Key Stage has access to a shared resource area and this provides additional space and room for play resources.

Our whole school Outdoor Play is an area which is currently being developed. The children in the Foundation Stage have access to a Learning Garden which provides opportunities for children to satisfy their natural curiosity, improve their fine and gross motor skills and develop their imagination.



Planning

Planning underpins effective learning and teaching and takes account of the developmental stage of the children as well as their previous experiences. Planning documents are regarded as flexible and are altered or added to as the children's responses and the outcomes of activities are observed. As with all learning and teaching, planning is evaluated and reflected upon - good planning and effective assessment are closely related.

At Victoria Park Primary school, we endeavour to help children make appropriate connections between the areas of learning by planning our play in a topic based approach, providing opportunities to learn across the curriculum.

Through our Activity Based Learning, we aim to ensure that:

-  Teaching builds on where the children are
-  Children's needs and knowledge lead the learning
-  Appropriate support is given to those who require it
-  Children are motivated
-  Children have high expectations of themselves

Foundation stage

Teachers in Year 1 and Year 2 use a topic-based approach to plan on a six-weekly basis. Activities and experiences are changed fortnightly unless dictated to by children's interests and progress. Weekly/fortnightly planners are also completed to provide a more detailed approach for each activity and to ensure all adults within the room are aware of the learning intentions for each play area.

Areas of Play in Foundation Stage

-  Dramatic Play
-  Sand Play
-  Water Play
-  Dough
-  Table Top
-  Small World Play
-  Construction Play
-  Creative Play
-  ICT

Key Stage 1

Teachers in Year 3 and Year 4 also use a topic-based approach to plan on a six-weekly basis.

Areas of Play in Key Stage 1

-  Personal Development & Mutual Understanding
-  World Around Us
-  ICT
-  Art
-  Numeracy
-  Literacy
-  Physical Education

Key Stage 2

Teachers in Key Stage 2 integrate Activity Based Learning into their six weekly planning. For some topics and areas of the curriculum in Key Stage 2, a more practical approach is needed to enhance the children's learning and broaden their experiences.

The Role of the Adult

Our aim in Victoria Park Primary school is connecting and building nurturing relationships with children. The Northern Ireland Curriculum states that the adults should be '*committed, sensitive, enthusiastic and interact effectively to challenge children's thinking and learning*'.

Our belief is that warm, consistent relationships with knowledgeable adults, support children's learning more effectively than any amount of resources.

How do we develop these warm, trusting relationships?

- + By taking the time to getting to know children exceptionally well
- + By being fully present, in the moment for the children we are working with
- + By helping children to understand and regulate their emotions
- + Trying to understand what their behaviour is telling us

The role of the adult is that of a provider, facilitator, participant, observer and evaluator.

In Victoria Park Primary we believe the role of the adults is to:

- + extend children's learning through quality interactions which scaffold and inspire
- + to provide environments that support learners to challenge themselves
- + to fathom children's thinking - Adult initiated learning
- + follow children's thinking - Child led learning
- + to engage
- + to model

- + to listen
- + to discuss
- + to inspire
- + to observe
- + to extend and challenge thinking
- + to encourage children to feel children happy, supported, relaxed, encouraged, confident, resilient, independent, motivated, proud, empowered, valued, challenged and determined.

Foundation stage teachers and classroom assistants therefore strive to:

- + Plan for and provide a wide range of developmentally appropriate resources that reflect the interests and experiences of the children.
- + Plan activities which reflect the children's interests
- + Actively encourage pupils to use their initiative, acquire concepts, develop confidence in handling materials and communicate with peers and adults to make decisions.
- + Be a participant who initiates, encourages, questions, models, joins in, stimulates and extends the learning
- + Observe children carefully, assess their progress, evaluate the learning taking place and use the information gained to inform future planning
- + Be consistent and have a positive approach to behaviour management
- + Be sensitive to the uniqueness of each child

Key Stage 1 and 2

As the pupils engage in Activity Based Learning, the adult's role is often that of facilitator, supporting pupils as they learn and develop skills. We seek to:

- ✚ Be active and reflective learners
- ✚ Ask questions
- ✚ Work collaboratively
- ✚ Connect their learning

Management of Play Based Learning

- ✚ Whole class introduction and planning time with adults.
- ✚ Children chose freely where they would like to play in Foundation Stage although all children are required to participate in some activities throughout the week.
- ✚ Restrictions on how many children can play at an activity are in place.
- ✚ In Key Stage 1 and 2 children are required to participate in the activities provided.
- ✚ The children are encouraged to self-manage and access resources independently (area for development)
- ✚ Photographs are taken independently by children or by adults of finished work to use during the plenary sessions
- ✚ Bell and 'Time to tidy' song are used to signal tidy up time in Foundation Stage.
- ✚ All children are encouraged to be independent and tidy up play areas themselves
- ✚ After tidy up children gather for a review of their play, often using photographs taken during their play session.

The children in Year 1 play for approximately 1 hour a day, four times a week. Year 1 also participate in five 30 minutes sessions of Outdoor Play per week.

Year 2 play for approximately 1 hour, three times a week including one Outdoor Play session.

Year 3 play have two sessions of Activity Based Learning a week.

Year 4 have one session of Activity Based Learning once a week.

In Key Stage 2 although there is not a dedicated time set aside each week for Activity Based Learning, the children will take part in various practical activities to enhance their learning.

As far as possible active learning is an integral part of all learning and teaching.

Managing Space and Resources

To ensure the children engage in quality play we will-

-  Use both the classroom and resource area for maximum space.
-  Use the Outdoor Play areas on a regular basis.
-  Have clearly defined areas for different play activities.
-  Inform children of how many can play at each activity.
-  Ensure the play area is safe for the children to use and remove any unnecessary equipment.
-  Encourage adults and children keep play areas tidy and ready for others to use.
-  Label all resources clearly.
-  Audit resources regularly.

Observation, Assessment, Evaluation and Recording

The Northern Ireland Curriculum states that '*assessment is ongoing, formative and integral to learning and teaching. It is observation based, informs planning and is carried out in an unobtrusive way*'.

In Victoria Park Primary we believe by observing and assessing the children we will understand more about their ability and attainment and ensure individual needs are met. Children's responses and teacher's evaluations will inform future planning. This will ensure that the children are experiencing a wide range of activities and advise when extra materials are needed or resources need changing.

We use a flexible approach towards observations, either planned or spontaneous. Children may be observed individually or as part of a group. Information gathered from these observations will be shared with other adults in the room and will also be used to inform target setting for individual children.

A plenary is used at the end of Activity Based Learning to evaluate the session. Photographs taken throughout the session are displayed on the Interactive Board and children are encouraged to evaluate using the phrases-

-  What have I learned?
-  What helped me?
-  What is important to remember?