

Torrance Primary School



Play and Enquiry Policy

November 2024



Learning Through Play Policy 2024-2025

Article 31 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) states: “Every child has the right to rest, relax, play and to take part in cultural and creative activities.”

What is play?

The Playwork Principles state that: “Play is a process that is freely chosen, personally directed and intrinsically motivated. That is, children and young people determine and control the content and intent of their play, by following their own instincts, ideas and interests, in their own way, for their own reasons.”

German educationalist Friedrich Froebel suggests that: “Play is the highest expression of human development in childhood, for it alone is the free expression of what is in a child’s soul.”

What are the benefits of play?

‘Investing in children’s play is one of the most important things we can do to improve children’s health and wellbeing in Scotland.’

(Sir Harry Burns, Former Chief Medical Officer Scotland)

‘Play is key to raising attainment’ *(Scottish Government)*

Recognition of the importance of a play based approach in the early years of Primary School education was highlighted in *Realising the Ambition 2019*. It is recognised that the transition from Nursery to school will likely be smoother for the child if play pedagogy continues as the main vehicle for learning in Primary 1 and beyond (*Building the Curriculum 2*).

In 2023, The West Partnership’s Principles of Effective Learning through Play and Enquiry states that:

Children should experience high quality learning through play and enquiry at all stages of their education. Adults should understand the importance of learning through play and enquiry and share this with their families and community. Adopting a whole school approach ensures that all children benefit from effective pedagogy.

The West Partnership Principles promotes a balance of Direct Instruction, Guided and Self-Directed learning. The link to the West Partnership Principles of Effective Learning through Play and Enquiry is below, and [Appendix A](#) provides a summary of the expectations regarding a clear shared vision, enabling environments and skilled and knowledgeable practitioners.

[Effective Learning – The West Partnership](#)

Play opportunities at Torrance Primary School

As part of our play journey at Torrance Primary School, we have been fully committed to building capacity in staff by ensuring that we have a 'Play Champion' each session and that class teachers are supported to attend relevant CLPL. Staff regularly seek opportunities to share good practice within our establishment and across the authority as part of the PLC programme. Currently, learning through play is firmly embedded within our Primary 1 and 2 classes. As pupils move into P3 and beyond, we are exploring opportunities to develop enquiring minds through interdisciplinary learning and project based approaches.

Aims

By utilising a play based approach to learning, we hope that all pupils will;

- Experience 'a joy and love of learning' *The National Discussion on Education (All learners in Scotland Matter, 2023)*
- Achieve high levels of engagement in learning
- Be able to explore their own interests
- Develop a curiosity about the world around them (Global Citizenship)
- Have opportunities to develop skills for life, learning and work (Meta-skills)

Classroom environment

The physical environment is our platform for play. Currently, our Primary 1 and Primary 2 classes share large open spaces in which staff work collegiately to plan provocations and carry out observations. Staff understand the importance of planning provocations that encourage pupils to play in a variety of ways. (*Play Types Toolkit*). The play types are described as learning about

- the physical world
- myself and how to be in the world
- my body and limits
- what it is to be human

Time dedicated for play

Pupils will have a direct teaching slot three/four times throughout the day. This may be as part of a whole class lesson, group or individual teaching. Teaching sessions are short, lasting no more than 15/20 minutes.

Pupils play daily throughout the day, for short bursts or extended periods. Staff recognise that a minimum of 45 minutes is required for children to immerse themselves in high quality, meaningful play.

Areas for play are generally offered in the following areas;

Creative, STEM, Physical Play, Loose parts, Outdoors, Literacy and numeracy throughout areas.

Within the environment, resources are very much 'open ended' – meaning that the children are able to manipulate them in any way that suits their play and learning. The environment is set up and resources are allocated carefully to allow for 'adult-led', 'adult-initiated' or 'child-led' play/learning.

'*Child-led*' play is where pupils have the opportunity to freely choose what they play with, and how. This is unstructured play and should not be interrupted; instead, close observations are made which then inform future play and other learning opportunities.

'*Adult-led*' refers to times where staff work with either a small group or individuals on a focused, curriculum-based task. Tasks may be led by class teacher or member of support staff.

Adult-Initiated Learning

The adult provides a starting point/stimulus/provocation/invitation and observes what the children do with this. Adult-initiated tasks and experiences can be used to consolidate prior learning or to introduce new resources/materials. Adult-initiated tasks are not formally led by an adult; children complete them independently. In the Primary School context adult-initiated tasks, often known as 'Target tasks,' rely on children having a high degree of autonomy. Children will record the completion of these activities using a task or target board. Time should be taken early in the academic session to support children in using these task/target boards independently. Pupils in P1 should be introduced to target tasks in Term 3, aiming for two tasks per day. Primary 2 should be aiming for two/three tasks per day. These are generally in literacy and numeracy but can be extended to other curricular areas.

How we listen to and respect children's voices at TPS

Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) states that: 'children have the right to be listened to and taken seriously'.

- Pupils at our school have to opportunity to participate in a termly 'Play Committee'. As part of this, pupils have the opportunity to reflect on the experiences offered and contribute to planning for the future.
- Digital technologies are used daily to record pupil views during play.
- During observations, adults are able to record 'in the moment' comments on a visible play journey whiteboard. This helps staff to plan future provocations.

Adults and play at TPS

Planning, assessment and observations

Literacy, Numeracy, Health and Wellbeing and focus Interdisciplinary Learning (IDL) Experiences and Outcomes will be forward planned each term. Other curricular experiences and outcomes are highlighted retrospectively at the end of each term.

Planning for play will be undertaken termly and weekly as appropriate. This will be in response to levels of learner engagement and staff should be mindful of what is manageable for them. For example, an area may only need a slight adaptation or relocated to increase engagement. Class teachers will work collegiately to do this. Support staff should be asked to take responsibility for an area or provocation as guided by the class teacher.

Class teachers have overall responsibility for *observing* and *assessing children*. The purpose of this is to ensure progress, challenge and clear next steps. It is recommended that other adults working with children should have opportunities to complete the initial part of an observation too. At the start of a term, support staff should observe with the class teacher with a view to completing their own observations in the future. Depending on class size, two/three observations per week would allow all pupils to have three observations completed over the year. Observation paperwork should be kept for each individual within the class filing cabinet and can be referred to as part of parents evening or in a report card.

Termly floor books are used to capture ‘in the moment learning’, generally through IDL and curricular areas out with literacy and numeracy. This process helps to record learning and track coverage of the curriculum. Floor books are submitted with termly forward plans.

Our Promises for Play

Torrance staff (Class teachers, SLT and members of support staff) are fully committed to;

- Playing with our pupils when invited
- Recognising when we should step in to extend the play but also when we should be quiet observers
- Respecting the play process even if we don't fully understand why a pupil is playing in a certain way
- Allowing children to make mistakes and learn from these during play
- Balancing the risk of harm against the benefits of how children are playing, to promote their health and wellbeing
- Ensuring all our pupils have the opportunity to SHINE



We aim to SHINE!

We are:

STRIVING: for high standards in learning and teaching to enable pupils to achieve their full potential. (Article 28)

HAPPY AND HEALTHY: Promoting positive health and wellbeing of the whole school community through a caring, respectful ethos. (Article 24, 31)

INSPIRING: Fostering a love of learning and curiosity about the world around us. (Article 29)

NURTURING: Building confidence and resilience in a supportive environment ensuring the needs of everyone are met. (Article 12, 23)

ENGAGING: Providing rich experiences that challenge thinking, encourage ambition and promote success. (Article 28)



Appendix A: The West Partnership's Principles of Effective Learning through Play and Enquiry (2023)

Principles of effective learning through play and enquiry



A clear shared vision

As a child...

- I experience high quality learning through play and enquiry at all stages of my education.
- I learn by collaborating with others; including adults in my setting, my family and other children.

As adults...

- we understand the importance of learning through play and enquiry and share this with our families and community.
- we adopt a whole school approach that ensures all children benefit from effective pedagogy.

Enabling environments

- I experience joy and delight in my learning.
- I can make choices and be independent in my learning.
- I have opportunities to learn in lots of interesting spaces in my school and community, indoors and out.

- we have autonomy to develop our learning spaces to meet the needs of our particular learners.
- we share the ownership of our learning space with our learners.
- we ensure that our continuous provision supports children's learning and provides increasing complexity and challenge.

Skilled and knowledgeable practitioners

- My learning experiences build on my interests, skills and talents and help me to make progress.
- My teacher knows me well as a learner and values my ideas.
- I have lots of opportunities to try things out, take risks and solve problems.
- I know that making mistakes is an important part of learning.
- I am encouraged to be curious and creative and explore new ideas.

- we are **reflective** and open to new ways of thinking about learning.
- we consider and plan for children's needs and **transitions** at each stage of their development.
- we try things out, **evaluating** our practice and learning from our mistakes.
- we use a mix of **responsive** and **intentional** planning to ensure learning experiences are relevant and meaningful to our learners.
- we understand the power of **observation** and prioritise time for this.
- we use skilful **interactions**, to extend children's thinking.
- we use effective formative **assessment** strategies and use the data to provide **challenge** and support our learners.



1 image source: <https://learningthroughplay.com/explore-the-research/the-neuroscience-of-learning-through-play/>

version 2.0

