**Whole School** **Aistear Policy,**

**Scoil Cholmcille Junior, Ballybrack**

**Roll No: 19641T**

**1. Introductory Statement and Rationale**

(a) Introductory Statement

This plan forms the basis of infant teachers’ long and short term planning and so will influence teaching and learning in individual classrooms.

It also informs new or temporary teachers of our approaches and teaching

methodologies in the infant classrooms.

(b) Rationale

**What is Aistear?**

Aistear is a curriculum framework for children from birth to six years in Ireland. It

describes the types of learning that are important for children in their early years. As a curriculum framework, Aistear can work as a guide for primary schools and teachers

in planning practical learning programmes for children in infant classes. Aistear is to

be used together with the Infant Curriculum to plan fun and challenging experiences

for the children in your classroom.

**The importance of play in our school:**

Play can make a unique contribution to the development of the child. It is the child’s way of making sense of the world – a learning tool that engages, motivates, challenges and pleases. Its purposes, and the particular character of its activity, provide the means by which the child can achieve an enhanced awareness of oneself and can experience a unique mode of learning. It can:

* Give each child a rich oral language experience and afford the opportunity to experiment with different registers of language.
* Give each child the opportunity to approach new knowledge through the dimension of imaginative activity and experience.
* Give each child the opportunity to approach knowledge in the ways that are most suitable to him/her
* Create motivation and interest that can spur the child to research, and thus foster an attitude that views knowledge as essential in adapting his/her perception of the world.
* Provide the means by which the child can relate knowledge, in a special way, to previous learning and experience.
* Help the child to see pattern and unity in seemingly disparate pieces of knowledge encountered in different subjects.
* Make distant what is close and make close what is distant at both a cognitive and an affective level, so that aspects of life can be explored closely enough to afford effective examination but distant enough to provide safety for the child.
* Facilitate the child’s imaginative, intellectual, emotional and physical development in a contemporaneous and holistic way.
* Foster the child’s creativity, invention, insight, discovery and problem solving through exploring actively the intuitive and the spontaneous.
* Allow the child, through the medium of play, to experience, understand and practise the life skills needed in reality.
* Promote empathy with the ideas, attitudes and feelings of others.

**2. Vision and Aims**

(a) Vision

We seek to use the Aistear framework to provide information for teachers to help them plan for and provide enjoyable and challenging learning experiences, so that all

children can grow and develop as competent and confident learners. We seek to use the Aistear methodology as part of early intervention in the infant classes. We intend

for all children to be exposed to wide range of vocabulary in a practical setting in order to improve language fluency and comprehension.

(b) Aims

We endorse the themes and aims of the Aistear framework:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Themes | Aims |
| Well-being | Children will   * be strong psychologically and socially. * be as healthy and fit as they can be. * be creative and spiritual. * have positive outlooks on learning and on life. |
| Identity and Belonging | Children will   * have strong self-identities and will feel respected and affirmed as unique individuals with their own life stories. * have a sense of group identity where links with their family and community are acknowledged and extended. * be able to express their rights and show an understanding and regard for the identity, rights and views of others. * see themselves as capable learners. |
| Communicating | Children will   * use non-verbal communication skills. * use language (listening, speaking, signing, drawing, and writing). * broaden their understanding of the world by making sense of experiences through language (listening, speaking, signing, drawing, and writing). * express themselves creatively and imaginatively. |
| Exploring and Thinking | Children will   * learn about and make sense of the world around them. * develop and use skills and strategies for observing, questioning, investigating, understanding, negotiating, and problem-solving, and come to see themselves as explorers and thinkers. * explore ways to represent ideas, feelings, thoughts, objects, and actions through symbols. * have positive attitudes towards learning and develop dispositions like curiosity, playfulness, perseverance, confidence, resourcefulness, and risk-taking. |

**Short term Aims**

* To engage in full classroom planning for play during the academic year.
* To develop a suitable stock of resources for themed play.
* All teachers are to develop a “Play Rota” to aid planning.
* All teachers are to develop a “Playtime board” to assist children in reviewing

play. The current play theme is to be clearly identified, alongside relevant

vocabulary.

3. Types of play

Teachers will plan four types of play in each Aistear session.**\*See Appendix 4 for**

**sample themes that can be used to support these different types of play.**

**Creative play:** involves children exploring and using their bodies and materials to

make and do things and to share their feelings, ideas and thoughts. Activities can

include dancing, painting, playing with junk and recycled materials, working with

play-dough and clay, and using their imaginations.

**Language play:** involves children playing with sounds and words. It includes

unrehearsed and spontaneous manipulation of these, often with rhythmic and

repetitive elements. Activities should encourage children to play with language –

enjoy patterns, jokes, stories, sounds and nonsense words.

**Physical play:** involves children developing, practising and refining bodily

movements and control. It includes whole body and limb movements, co-ordination

and balance. *Exploratory play* involves children using physical skills and their senses

to find out what things feel like and what can be done with them. *Manipulative play*

involves practising and refining motor skills. This type of play enhances physical

dexterity and hand-eye co-ordination. This type of play includes manipulating objects

and materials. *Constructive play* involves building something using natural and

manufactured materials. This type of play can become more complex and intricate.

**Pretend play:** involves children using their imaginations. It includes pretending with

objects, actions and situations. Children use their developing language to move from

thinking in the concrete to thinking in the abstract. They make up stories and

scenarios. Children act out real events and they also take part in fantasy play about

things that are not real, such as fairies or super heroes. Children try out roles,

occupations and experiences in their pretend play. *Small world play* involves children

using small-scale representations of real things like animals, people, cars, and train

sets as play props.

**Games with Rules:** \*See Appendix 1.

**4. Children with Special Needs**

It is the policy of our school thatall children should have the opportunity to

participate in and benefit from the full range of experiences offered in play. In planning for play account should be taken of the range of differences in the school so

that all children will be given the opportunity to obtain maximum benefit from the

session.

* Teachers support and ensure the participation of children with special needs by being aware of the level and pace at which these children are learning.
* All children are enabled to make an important contribution regardless of academic achievement.
* We adapt and modify activities so that all children in the class can participate.
* Primarily the responsibilities of the class teacher in relation to play are planning, delivery, support, and assessment.
* The SET team support and compliment the work done in this area in their class.
* The role and responsibility of the special needs assistant in relation to play is to assist the special needs child to whom they are assigned and to.
* Children with exceptional ability/talent are encouraged and supported to develop their full potential in the play session.

**5. Linkage and Integration**

Linkage

Linkage within the play session will occur where a lesson based on one particular

strand may also draw on another strand. For example: a group of children reflecting

on the drama that they created in role play.

Integration

Integration across curricular areas will occur where the teacher draws on another

subject topic as a stimulus for the play session or uses play to aid consolidation of a

particular topic.

Using sight vocabulary in the themes of Aistear to link in with the DEIS plan 2017/2020.

Aistear can be used to integrate all areas of the curriculum. For example, a play

session about “The Opticians” might include:

-Socio-dramatic play where children play in role using pre-taught vocabulary

-An investigation area where children record items “near and far” using magnifying

glasses.

-A story bag where children sequence and re-tell a known story using props.

-A creative area where children design glasses and use problem solving skills when

discussing how to cut and assemble them.

**6. Assessment and Record Keeping**

Aistear provides lots of information on and examples of assessment-in-action in

different types of early childhood settings. The framework uses five assessment

methods to gather evidence of children's learning and development across Aistear's

themes. This evidence helps practitioners to build rich portraits of children as learners

in order to celebrate their achievements and to help them take the next steps in their

learning.

Records of assessment will be kept in observation notes and Senior infant Aistear copies. Where possible, learning support staff will take part in Aistear sessions and make observations alongside the mainstream teacher.

**Assessment methods:**

-Self-assessment: using samples of work.

-Conversations: one to one, paired, group and whole class.

-Observation: teacher as an observer and teacher in role.

-Setting tasks: worksheets and activities

-Testing/Questioning: reporting and reflecting on play using photos, video clips, artwork, construction (lego creations).

**What do I assess and when?**

-Dispositions: curiosity, concentration, resilience, and perseverance.

-Skills: walking, cutting, writing, and problem-solving.

-Attitudes and values: respect for themselves and others, care for the environment,

and positive attitudes to learning and to life.

-Knowledge and understanding: classifying objects using colour and size, learning

‘rules’ for interacting with others, finding out about people in their community, and

understanding that words have meaning.

-Peer relationships: social interactions during play.

-Attitudinal data will be gathered by the teacher during the review stage of Aistear as per the DEIS plan 2017/2020.

**7. Organisational Planning**

An Aistear session must include the following stages:

(Overall time: 45 minutes for Early Start & 50 minutes for Infant classes)

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Planning:** group discussion about the  Play rota. Group planning of play using future tense. | Early Start: 5 minutes  Junior Infants: 5 minutes  Senior Infants: 5 minutes |
| **Play:** engaging with activities/material  at assigned play areas. **Tidy up.** | Early Start Play: 25 minutes  Early Start Tidy Up: 10 minutes  Junior Infant Play: 30 minutes  Junior Infant Tidy Up: 10 minutes  Senior Infant Play: 35 minutes  Senior Infant Tidy Up: 5 minutes |
| **Reviewing:** can include oral reporting  (knee to knee), guided writing and free  writing (using the playtime vocabulary  board). | Early Start Review: 5 minutes  Junior Infant Review: 5 minutes  Senior Infant Review: 5 minutes |

\*See Appendix 3 for examples of questions that can be used to develop planning and reviewing.

**8. Health and Safety**

* Activities must be assigned to an appropriate area in the classroom. There must be a safe distance between play areas.
* Playtime resources/props are to be stored away on shelves or on a portable toy trolley.
* Teachers are to consider the health and safety of all children when selecting appropriate props and resources for playtime.

**9. Individual Teachers’ Planning and Reporting**

Teachers consult this Whole School Plan and the curriculum documents for

curriculum subjects being integrated in Aistear sessions when they are drawing up

their long and short term plans.

Teachers use Aistear as a framework to aid curricular integration. Where suitable,

Aistear will be used in a thematic way to integrate with the other curricular subjects.

Each teacher will have a long term plan for the year and will tailor them to the needs

of their own classes in their short term planning.

Teachers should not use the term “Aistear” on their timetable. Aistear is a framework for play. The phrase “integrated play” should be used, to be followed by a short

English slot (oral language) for reviewing play.

**\*See Appendix 2 for the role of the teacher during play.**

**10. Staff Development**

* Teachers will have access to reference books, resource materials and websites dealing with Aistear.
* Staff will be encouraged to observe Aistear sessions in infant classrooms.
* Teachers will be encouraged to upskill by completing an Aistear course.
* All teachers will be responsible for cataloguing resources.
* Access to Aistear Toolkit: http://www.ncca.ie/aisteartoolkit
* The culture in our school is one that encourages the sharing of experience and
* good practice.
* Parents have an important role to play by discussing their child’s playtime experiences with them. This gives the parent a valuable role in facilitating the
* children’s playtime experiences with them.
* Parents can also become directly involved in the organisation of projects associated with Aistear.
* Parents can also assist with the compilation of toys, props and costumes.
* Parents will be made aware of the contribution that play makes to their child’s learning and development through parent teacher meetings and sharing photos and children’s work on the school website. (Aistear leaflets are available on the NCCA website and there is a link to this on the school’s website).
* Community involvement: Parents and other community members will be invited in to talk about their jobs if they are included in a particular theme for example: a parent who is a nurse can visit the class when the children are doing ‘The Hospital’ as their Aistear theme. This is one of the targets for our DEIS plan 2017/2020.

**12. Success Criteria**

We shall review this whole school plan in the future under the following headings:

* How individual teacher preparation, planning and teaching reflects this plan.
* How the play methodology is working in the classroom
* Resources
* Progression in the use and understanding of new vocabulary, aiding fluency and comprehension skills.

Means of assessing the outcomes of the plan will include

* Revisiting the aims of this plan as a staff
* Teacher / Parent feedback
* Children’s feedback
* Inspectors reports / suggestions
* Results of class assessment

**13. Implementation**

(a) Roles and Responsibilities

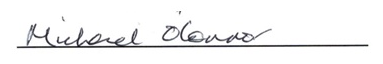
The plan will be supported, developed and implemented by all staff members. The staff members will have responsibility for the following:

* Audit and recommendation of play resources for Early Start and infant classes –
* Acquire resources for infants – all infant teachers. Some resources include: Recreate materials, Twinkl website, word wizard resources online.

**14. Review**

It will be necessary to review this plan to ensure optimum implementation of Aistear as a teaching methodology. We aim to review this plan during the 2019/2020 school year. On this date we will refer to the tasks in our action plan and check that they have been completed in accordance with the agreed time frame. Those involved in the review will be: Principal, All staff, Board of Management, Parents

This plan was ratified by the Board of Management of Scoil Cholmcille Junior, Ballybrack

Signed 

(Chairperson of Board of Management)

Signed C:\Users\Irene\Pictures\img001 (2).jpg(Principal/Secretary to the Board of Management)

**Appendix 1**

1. Games with rules.

2. Teacher’s role in Aistear.

3. Planning and reviewing objectives.

4. Aistear Themes to be covered in Early Start & infant classes

5. List of resources

**1. Games with Rules**

“Games with rules” is the fifth type of play used in the Aistear framework. It may not

always be possible to plan for this type of play during integrated play as the nature

of the activities often require constant adult supervision. It is advised that “games

with rules” are explicitly taught in the following areas:

* Maths through “Ready Set Go”, Planet maths, Operation maths, ‘Maths for fun’board games.
* Gaeilge through “Bua na cainte”,
* English through “Jolly Phonics”
* Through other games used across the curriculum.

**Appendix 2**

**2. Teacher’s role in Aistear**

Whilst the tendency to play is universally acknowledged as being innate, increasingly

it is recognised that in order for play to flourish as a truly enjoyable, cognitive, and

socially adaptive human ability, adult support is necessary. Where possible, the SET team will take part in Aistear sessions and make observations alongside the mainstream teacher.

The role of the mainstream teacher:

**Planning for play:** resources, space and what the children will learn. The teachers

will use an Aistear planning template for short term planning. Themes and

specific vocabulary will be noted in short term Aistear plans.

**\*See appendix 4 for sample schemes of work.**

**Supporting play:** observing, documenting, facilitating and participating in play.

Teachers will remember that they are an equal participant and will not take over the

play session. The session is to be child led and the teacher must ask the children if

they may join the session. Teachers will alter the type and amount of support

as the children grow in confidence and competence.

**Reviewing play:** reflecting on the children’s play, what they learned and plan

forward. **\*See appendix 3 for sample review questions.**

**Appendix 3**

**3. Planning and Reviewing Objectives**

Sample of Teacher's Questions which develop planning skills and use of future tense:

* What are you going to do in your area today?
* What toys are you going to choose? / What equipment are you going to use?
* How are you going to make that?
* Why are you going to choose that?
* Who are you going to play with?

Sample of Teacher's Questions which develop recount skills and use of past tense:

* Who did you play with today?
* What area did you play in?
* What did you do in that area?
* What did you play with? / What equipment did you use?
* What was your favourite part of playtime? Why?

**Reviewing play**

* Reviewing happens at the end of the play session.
* The child considers questions when reviewing: Who? What? When? Where? Why? How? (First steps programme integrated)
* The teacher should challenge easy answers, model correct grammar and model a

clear speaking voice. The teacher will draw attention to vocabulary on the playtime board as it arises in conversation.

* A balance between individual, group and whole class discussion.
* A balance between reflecting, listening, speaking, writing and questioning.
* Can be enhanced by use of photos and video clips of the play session.
* Imagine what might happen in the future – make choices and consider consequences.

**Appendix 4**

**4. Aistear Themes to be covered in Early Start & infant classes**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Early Start** | **Junior Infants** | **Senior Infants** |
| Myself | Myself & School | Myself & School |
| Materials | Space | My Home- Three little pigs |
| Old and New | Fancy dress shop | Halloween- Haunted house |
| Christmas | Construction site | Pizzeria |
| Winter | Santa’s workshop | Little Red Hen |
| The Rainforest/ Animals | Doctor Surgery | Santa’s workshop |
| Spring | Dentist | Clothes shop/Fashion show |
| Community helpers (Garda, fire station) | Supermarket | The Garden |
| Around the world/Summer (Holidays) | Cinema | The Farm |
| The Farm | Vet | The lifecycle of the chicken & the egg |
|  | Garda | Easter-Easter egg hunt |
|  | Fire station | St. Patrick’s Day parade |
|  | Restaurant | Post Office |
|  | Animals- minibeasts/ | Pirates & Adventures |
|  | Safari | Summer Adventures/Summer Sports |
|  | Airport/ Holidays |  |

**\* Alternative stories may be chosen for each theme. Some themes will overlap in the different classes.**

**Appendix 5**

**5. Resources**

* Twinkl: role play packs and worksheets
* http://www.twinkl.co.uk/
* Primary Treasure Chest (lots of editable resources)
* http://www.primarytreasurechest.com/
* Aistear toolkit
* http://www.ncca.ie/aisteartoolkit
* NCCA Aistear planning/reflection template (page 18)
* http://www.nccaplanning.ie/support/pdf/short\_term\_planning.pdf
* Various big books and stories (available in the resource room, library and

infant classrooms).

* Aistear resource packs (available in Early Start & infant classrooms)
* Dress up boxes (available in Early Start & infant classrooms)