



Lochgoilhead Primary School and ELC

Outdoor Learning and Active Play Policy

This policy was adopted by:

Lochgoilhead Primary and ELC

On Monday 20th October 2025

Signed Louise Blair Designation: Head Teacher

Articles of the UNCRC (the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child)



Article 3 Best interests of the child

Article 12 Respect for children's views

Article 28 Access to Education

Article 29 Aims of Education

Article 31 Rest, play and culture.

Health and Care Standards (Health and Social Care Standards - My support, my life.)

1.25 I can choose to have an active life and participate in a range of recreational, social, creative, physical and learning activities every day, both indoors and outdoors.

1.30 As a child, I have fun as I develop my skills in understanding, thinking, investigation and problem solving, including through imaginative play and storytelling.

1.31 As a child, my social and physical skills, confidence, self-esteem and creativity are developed through a balance of organised and freely chosen extended play, including using open ended and natural materials.

1.32 As a child, I play outdoors every day and regularly explore a natural environment.

Statement of Purpose

From 2020, the Scottish government extended its hours and with this wanted an increase in children's access to outdoor play and learning. Scotland's coalition outdoor play and learning position statement commits to embedding play and learning as an everyday activity and to celebrate it as a fundamental part of growing up in Scotland.

'Realising the Ambition: Being me' (2020) explores interaction, experiences and spaces we need to provide for young children to help them learn and grow best from their earliest days to being a young child in Primary School.

All children and young people have the right to play and the right to learn as enshrined in the UN Convention on the Rights of Children.

It is our shared responsibility to support and enable all of Scotland's children and young people to access our diverse greenspaces and natural landscapes and to empower them to enjoy these spaces for the purposes of playing and learning. We commit to working together to meet these responsibilities.

(Scotland's Outdoor Play & Learning Coalition Position Statement, 2022)

The ambition in the Play Strategy for Scotland is for all children and young people to enjoy high quality play opportunities, particularly outdoor free play in stimulating spaces with access to nature, on a daily basis in early learning and childcare, nursery and school.

Learning for Sustainability report (2013) shared that every practitioner should demonstrate learning for sustainability in their practice. By 2030, all learners should acquire knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development.

Throughout this guidance the term '*parents*' is used to include all main caregivers.

What is Outdoor Learning?

Outdoor learning supports teaching across the curriculum. Outdoor learning is a broad term that includes: outdoor play in the Early Years, school grounds projects, environmental education, adventurous activities, personal and social education, team building, education for sustainability and much more.

Benefits of Outdoor learning and Play

At Lochgoilhead Primary and ELC, we know the benefits of outdoor learning, exercise and play for children which include:

- Supports physical and mental health and wellbeing.
- Support physical and cognitive development.
- Supports a brain child's development, especially in the early years.
- Facilitates children's capacities to negotiate, have emotional balance, resolve conflicts and make decisions.

- Children learn by doing, being more curious and exploring the world around them.
- Experiment with new ideas, roles and experience helping those to understand and construct the social position within the world.
- Helps to improve their social competence and connections with communities and help them to develop a connectedness with nature.

At Lochgoilhead Primary and ELC all children should enjoy energetic activity both indoors and out and the feeling of wellbeing that it brings. We know outdoor learning and play provide a multi-sensory environment which responds to individual learning styles. It complements and enhances all aspects of children's development and learning through its physical, open-ended nature.

We encourage children to take and manage risks whilst accessing outdoors and play.

Aims of outdoor learning

- ❖ To create opportunities to explore outdoor environments.
- ❖ To learn and explore through active play.
- ❖ To follow Care Inspectorate guidelines, UNCRC
- ❖ For children to understand and take risks and be able to problem solve creating their own solutions.
- ❖ To encourage children to access outdoor learning in all weathers to promote mental health and wellbeing as well as building resilience.

Objectives of outdoor learning

- ❖ To enjoy outdoor activity throughout the seasons.
- ❖ To investigate and experiment with a variety of natural resources.
- ❖ To make discoveries using senses.
- ❖ To develop and use language to describe, explain, predict, ask questions, and develop ideas.
- ❖ To develop an appreciation of the outdoor environment, learn to respect the outside environment and promote curiosity through exploration.
- ❖ To assess own risk for play
- ❖ To care for the environment of the Pre-5 Unit, and create an awareness of wider issues, e.g. Eco
- ❖ To plant and grow their own vegetables and use these to make soup/ eat (self-sustainable)
- ❖ To be a responsible citizen in the community.

Implementation of outdoor learning

In order for this policy to be implemented in the ELC the staff will:

- ❖ Provide resources that allow children to self select.
- ❖ Present resources in a stimulating manner.

- ❖ Provide resources that cover all aspects of the curriculum.
- ❖ Staff will provide waterproofs for all children.
- ❖ Encourage them to dress themselves.
- ❖ Interact with children to extend learning and promote curiosity.
- ❖ Model a positive attitude to active and outdoor play and play with the child when invited to play by the child.
- ❖ Ensure both indoor and outdoor area is adequate, safe and secure.
- ❖ Raise parental awareness of benefits of outdoor learning via Seesaw and verbally.
- ❖ Encourage parental involvement in outdoor activities.
- ❖ Encourage opportunities started in the ELC to be extended into the home environment. These are promoted through Seesaw and learning conversation with parents/carer.
- ❖ Natural resources are accessible indoors and outdoors to encourage children to connect with and learn through nature.
- ❖ Provide outdoor activity every day daily.
- ❖ Be responsive to their learning opportunities and encourage them to connect with these both indoors and outdoors.
- ❖ Record observations of new learning or if this is included within Es and Os and use this to plan next steps for their learning with the children.

What is play?

Play means different things to different people. UNCRC (2007) defines play as 'activities of children which are not controlled by adults. Article 31 of UNCRC shares that 'Every child has the right to rest, relax and play and to take part in cultural and creative activities. Playwork principal shares 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'. UNCRC shares, 'The key characteristics of play are fun, uncertainty, challenge, flexibility, and non-productivity. These factors contribute to the enjoyment of playing and the incentive of continue playing'. Froebel shares 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'.

Below are some of the benefits of play

- 'Supports wider learning by boosting creativity, imagination and understanding'. This is further enhanced in green spaces (Outdoor Play and learning coalition statement).
- 'Play create a brain that has increased flexibility and improved potential for learning later in life' (Lester and Russell)
- 'To a child, play is about having fun, but to society it is much more. Play is essential to healthy development from birth to adulthood, contributing to capacity for learning, resilience and the development of physical, cognitive social and emotional skills' (Play strategy for Scotland, Our Vision)

- 'Play can be fun and serious. Through play children explore social, material and imaginary world and their relationships with them, elaborating all the while a flexible range of responses to the challenges they encounter. By playing, children learn and develop as individuals, and as members of the community' (Best play: What play provision should do for children)
- 'Play is an essential part of a happy, healthy childhood and when children play their brains do two things: They grow and become organised and usable' (Bob Hughes, Playwork theorist)

Play opportunities provided

- Time- Children need plenty of time to play at regular intervals through the day. Children benefit from opportunities to immerse themselves in a play for more extended periods of time.
- Environment- The physical environment is a platform for play. Children need spaces that they can use in their own way, and which offer variety, flexibility and especially outdoors, challenge and natural features.
- Resources- Suitable resources for playing such as loose parts, natural materials etc enable children to extend and elaborate on their play activity.
- Permission- Children play with language, ideas, and action in environments where experimentation is valued. It is important that children are allowed to figure things out by collaborating, testing concrete properties of the physical world or abstract ideas and concepts.
- Exploring wider concepts as they grow and develop.
- Using their senses to explore the world around them.
- Use of outdoors stimulus such as green space in the community, outside space at the ELC, hills and river walks
- Explore with loose parts- Materials shared with no set purpose that children can manipulate and stimulate their curiosity.

Risk and Challenge

We understand that children need to learn from and manage their own risk while playing. They need to understand and explore limits. We support children to complete potentially hazardous activities such as woodwork using real tools, exploring nature using mud and sticks etc. According to Playwork, Staff must balance risk and the developmental benefit and wellbeing of children.

When staff carry out risk assessment they consider the activity, the hazard (if controls are and are not put in place), the outcome and potential severity (What is the worse that can happen?) and risk reduction and control (What measures will you put in place to reduce the hazard?)

Implementation of play pedagogy at Lochgoilhead Primary and ELC

- Children have access to different zones of play such as creative, discovery and social zones.
- Planning is very much led by what the children want to learn

- Children are provided with rich, relevant experiences to enhance their play and practise skills, explore the world around them and develop knowledge and understanding in their own way and in their own time.
- Innovative and creative opportunities enable children to experience high quality play both indoors and outdoors.
- Open ended materials extend a child's creativity and thinking. Both indoor and outdoor environments along with engagement with the natural world offer regular high quality experiences that enable children to explore ideas and materials using their imagination freely.

National Guidance can be found at:

- Realising the Ambition: Being me (2020)
- Early Education and Care: Outdoor Play and Learning (2021)
- www.playscotland.org
- Learning for Sustainability (2013)
- RRS Article 28: Every child has the right to an education.
- RRS Article 29: Education must develop every child's personality, talents and abilities to the full.
- RRS Article 31: Every child has the right to rest and leisure, engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts.

Monitoring of this Policy

It will be the responsibility of the manager to ensure that new or temporary staff are familiar with this policy and to ensure that it is being implemented by all staff and parents. This will be achieved through observation of staff practice. All staff should know and apply this policy in their practice. This policy will be reviewed annually to ensure that it is relevant and up to date.