



St. Peter's National School
Whole School Policy for Aistear

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 self, 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 the 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:

Theme	Aims
Well- Being	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Children will be strong psychologically and socially.• Children will be as healthy and fit as they can be.• Children will be creative and spiritual.• Children will have positive outlooks on learning and on life.
Identity and Belonging	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Children will have strong self-identities and will feel respected and affirmed as unique individuals with their own life stories.• Children will have a sense of group identity where links with their family and community are acknowledged and extended.• Children will be able to express their rights and show an understanding and regard for the identity, rights and views of others.• Children will see themselves as capable learners
Communicating	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Children will use non-verbal communication skills.• Children will use language (listening, speaking, signing, drawing, and writing).• Children will broaden their understanding of the world by making sense of experiences through language (listening, speaking, signing, drawing, and writing).• Children will express themselves creatively and imaginatively.
Exploring and thinking	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Children will learn about and make sense of the world around them.• Children will develop and use skills and strategies for observing, questioning, investigating, understanding, negotiating, and problem-solving, and come to see themselves as explorers and thinkers.• Children will explore ways to represent ideas, feelings, thoughts, objects, and actions through symbols.• Children will have positive attitudes towards learning and develop dispositions like curiosity, playfulness, perseverance, confidence, resourcefulness, and risk-taking

3. Types of play

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

4. Children with Different Needs

It is the policy of our school that all 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 special needs teachers 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.

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, pupil profiles and pupil scrapbooks. Mainstream teachers will record reflections of play sessions on the NCCA Aistear short term planning template.

Where possible, learn support staff will take part in Aistear sessions and make observation notes 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 and video clips.

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.

7. Organisational Planning

An Aistear session must include the following stages:

Planning: group discussion about the visual timetable. Paired or group planning of play using future tense	10 mins
Play: engaging with activities/material at assigned play areas. Tidy up.	Infant Play: 15-20 minutes Infant Tidy Up: 10-15 minutes
Reviewing: can include oral reporting (knee to knee), guided writing and free writing (using the playtime vocabulary board)	Infant Review - 10 mins

*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.
- Rough behaviour is not tolerated even within the context of role play and children are made aware of this beforehand.

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 methodology 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.

The NCCA Aistear template will assist in recording work covered, in evaluating progress in learning and in informing future teaching. *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.
- All teachers will be responsible for cataloguing resources and will arrange for opportunities for resources to be assessed for purchase.
- 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.

11. Parental Involvement

- 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 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. (Aistear leaflets are available on the NCCA website)
- Parents can view their child's involvement in Aistear through our school website www.stpetersnsdunboyne.com

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 Aistear 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 infant classes -
Marianne Coyle

Purchase of resources for infants - Infant teacher

14. Review

It will be necessary to review this plan on a regular basis to ensure optimum implementation of Aistear as a teaching methodology. We aim to review this plan during the 2019/20 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

BOM

Parent Teacher Association

Appendix

1. Games with rules.
2. Teacher's role in Aistear.
3. Planning and reviewing objectives.
4. Sample scheme of work (Junior and Senior infants).
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 an Aistear session 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"
- Gaeilge through "Abair Liom"
- English through "Jolly Phonics"
- Through other games used across the curriculum.

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, learn support staff will take part in Aistear sessions and make observation notes 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 the NCCA Aistear planning template for short term planning. Themes and specific vocabulary will be noted in long term Drama 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 not interrupt the play session in order to assess or question the children. 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. Teachers will use the NCCA Aistear planning template to record short term reflections.

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 four questions when reviewing: Who? What? Where? and How?
- 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.

4. Sample Scheme of Work - Junior and Senior Infants

Month	Pretend play	Language play	Creative play	Physical play
September 1/2	Free play	Free play	Free play	Free play
September 3/4	Socio-Dramatic play - The Doctor's Surgery	Parts of the body - identifying	Making faces	
October 1/2	Socio-dramatic play - the farmer's market	Farm house play - identifying animals	Autumn art	Using blocks to make diggers/tractors
October 3/4	Socio-dramatic play - witches spells		Halloween art	Water - creating spells
November 1/2	Socio-dramatic play- Space travel agents	Identifying planets- putting them in order e.g. smallest to biggest, closest to the sun	Rocket art	Looking for space objects in the sand using tweezers e.g. rocks, comets
November 1/2	Socio-dramatic play- Space travel agents	I-pads - matching space pictures	Cutting and sticking 2D space shapes	Using blocks to build rockets
December 1/2	Socio-dramatic play - Christmas Post Office	I-pads - sequencing and matching	Christmas art - Christmas trees	Santa's workshop - building toys using blocks
January 1/2	Socio-dramatic play - At the clothes shop	Labelling items on the washing line	Design your own t-shirt	
January 3/4	Socio-dramatic play - At the clothes shop	Weather chart - what clothing suits	Dress the doll/Ginger using materials	Doing the washing - using pegs to hang the clothes Making pairs out of socks
February 1/2	Socio-dramatic play - the building site	Identifying items/rooms in the home	Designing homes	Using blocks to build homes
February 3	Socio-dramatic play - the	Big Book - sequencing the	Junk art station	Giant block building

	building site	three little pigs		
March 1/2	Socio-dramatic play - the supermarket	Identify/label different foods	Design your own shopping bag	Find the food items in the sand
March 3/4	Socio-dramatic play - the sweet shop	Write a shopping list	Design your own sweet to sell	Supermarket sweep
April 1/2	Socio-dramatic play - The Garden centre	Identify/label parts of plant/flower	Flower/plant clay creation	Plant your own seeds
May 1/2	Socio-dramatic play - The very hungry caterpillar	Sorting minibeast into categories	Junk art - minibeast	Find the minibeast in the sand
May 3/4	Socio-dramatic play - The very hungry caterpillar	Sequencing story of the very hungry caterpillar	minibeast clay creation	Sensory tub - mini beasts
June 1/2	Socio-dramatic play - The ice cream parlour	A day at the beach - creative writing	Summer paintings	Playdough - ice cream cones
June 3/4	Socio-dramatic play - The ice cream parlour	Recipe for the perfect ice cream cone	Junk art - ice cream	

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/aistear toolkit>
- NCCA Aistear planning/reflection template (page 18) www.nccaplanning.ie/support/pdf/shorttermplanning/pdf
- Various big books and stories (available in the resource room, library and infant classrooms).
- Aistear resource packs (available in container)
- Dress up boxes (available in infant classrooms)

Ratified by the Board of Management of St. Peter's National School
on 13th December, 2018

Signed John Clanka

Chair Person of the Board of Management

Signed Rehael Benerhassell

Principal of St. Peter's National School