



## **Whole School Plan for Aistear**

### **1. Introductory Statement and Rationale**

#### **(a) Introductory Statement**

- This plan forms the basis of the junior room teacher's long and short term planning and so will influence teaching and learning in the junior classroom.
- It also informs new or temporary teachers of approaches and teaching methodologies adopted in the junior classroom.

#### **(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 other

## 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 junior 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
<u>Well-being</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Children will be strong psychologically and socially.</li><li>• Children will be as healthy and fit as they can</li><li>• Children will be creative and spiritual.</li><li>• Children will have positive outlooks on learning and on life.</li></ul>

<p><u>Identity and Belonging</u></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children will have strong self-identities and will feel respected and affirmed as unique individuals with their own life stories.</li> <li>• Children will have a sense of group identity where links with their family and community are acknowledged and extended.</li> <li>• Children will be able to express their rights and show an understanding and regard for the identity, rights and views of others.</li> <li>• Children will see themselves as capable learners.</li> </ul>
<p><u>Communicating</u></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children will use non-verbal communication skills.</li> <li>• Children will use language (listening, speaking, signing, drawing, and writing).</li> <li>• Children will broaden their understanding of the world by making sense of experiences through language (listening, speaking, signing, drawing, and writing).</li> <li>• Children will express themselves creatively and imaginatively.</li> </ul>
<p><u>Exploring and Thinking</u></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children will learn about and make sense of the world around them.</li> <li>• 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.</li> <li>• Children will explore ways to represent ideas, feelings, thoughts, objects, and actions through symbols.</li> <li>• Children will have positive attitudes towards learning and develop dispositions like curiosity, playfulness, perseverance, confidence, resourcefulness, and risk-taking.</li> </ul>

### **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 "Visual Timetable" 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 five types of play in each Aistear session.

- a.i. 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.
- a.ii. 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.
- a.iii. 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.
- a.iv. 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.
- a.v. Games with Rule**

#### 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.

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

### **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:**

<b>Planning:</b> group discussion about the visual timetable. Paired or group planning of play using future tense.	10 minutes
<b>Play:</b> engaging with activities/material at assigned play areas. <b>Tidy up.</b>	Play: 30 minutes Tidy up: 5 minutes
<b>Reviewing:</b> can include oral reporting (knee to knee), guided writing and free writing (using the playtime vocabulary board)	Review: 15 minutes

## 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 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.

Teachers should not use the term "Aistear" on their timetable. Aistear is a play methodology. The phrase "integrated play" should be used, to be followed by a short English slot for reviewing play.

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.
- 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/aistear toolkit>
- 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 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. (Aistear leaflets are available on the NCCA website)

## 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 junior classes – Principal, junior class teacher
- Purchase of resources for infants – all teachers.

### **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

Ratified by the Board of Management on \_\_\_\_\_

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_



Chairperson B.O.M

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_  
Principal

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## **Appendix**

1. Games with rules.
2. Teacher's role in Aistear.
3. Planning and reviewing objectives.
4. 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 "Busy at Maths",
- Gaeilge through "Bua na Cainte",
- 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.
- **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.  
**\*See appendix 3 for sample review questions.** 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. 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](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
- Sand and water tables
- Dress up boxes