

Burnhaven School Play Policy

1. What is play?

“Every child has the right to rest, relax, play and take part in cultural and creative activities”
UNCRC Article 31

“Children’s play is any behaviour, activity or process initiated, controlled and structured by children themselves. Play is non-compulsory, driven by intrinsic motivation and undertaken for its own sake, rather than as a means to an end. It may take infinite forms but the key characteristics of play are fun, uncertainty, challenge, flexibility and non-productivity.”
General Comment 17 UNCRC

At Burnhaven we see play as creative, open ended and relaxed learning where children have autonomy and choice. Play promotes pupil voice, social interaction and exploration. When children choose their play activities, we see greater engagement and persistence which leads to better learning.

2. What are the benefits of play?

“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

“To a child, play is about having fun but to society it is so 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

At Burnhaven, we have explored play within our school and have recognised that the benefits include the development and application of skills, relationship building, increased engagement, increased willingness to take risks and to try new things. Children at play are happy learners.

3. Aims of this policy

With this policy we aim to:

- State how we use play in Burnhaven School
- Explain how play looks different in different contexts
- Promote the value of play for learning

4. Our promises for play

- We aim to maximise the range of types of play children can engage in across the school week.
- We will ensure that classrooms and play spaces are enabled so that children can choose the resources and equipment that they need.
- We will allow children to make mistakes and learn from these during play.
- Even if we don’t understand why children are playing in a particular way, we will respect their play process and be willing and enthusiastic when invited to play with them.

5. Play Opportunities

- **In the playground**

Our playground is large and varied but this makes it difficult to supervise. Depending on weather, and conditions of the grass, we move children to different areas, change the boundaries and provide different equipment.

In the top part of the playground there is a trip trail, a stage, football goals on grass and a concrete area.

In the middle part of the playground there is an outdoor classroom, water play section, garden area, tepee and mud kitchen. There is also an area being developed for imaginative play.

At the bottom of the playground – under development – is a wild area which already has a bug hotel and some trees. There will be wild flowers grown here.

- **In the classroom**

In the classroom games and practical materials are employed to give opportunities for children to learn through play. These activities are often more structured and targeted to the areas being taught. Classrooms offer basic provision of construction, number, literacy and creative or discovery stations.

- **The Hall play space**

Whilst this play space is predominantly set up for our infant pupils, all children may use it at certain times. There is a home corner, small world area, library box, construction and role play area. Technologies are also available.

- **Outdoors within classtime**

Teachers may take their classes outside to play outdoors. Sometimes this is structured and aimed at specific activities, sometimes this is unstructured play. E.g den building, drama for writing, hopscotch for numbers etc.

- **In the STEM classroom**

Interdisciplinary learning is planned for the STEM classroom. In the STEM classroom there are basic play provisions such as constructions, creativity, library, woodwork and technology. Continuous provisions are set up for each term with a task or a focus. Children are encouraged to do these tasks over the term. These may tie in with the basic provisions. These provisions are enhanced for the topic and challenges are set at three different levels from which the children may choose. Teachers also plan direct inputs to address specific skills which may be used when the children choose from the rest of the provision.

- **How and when we provide time for play**

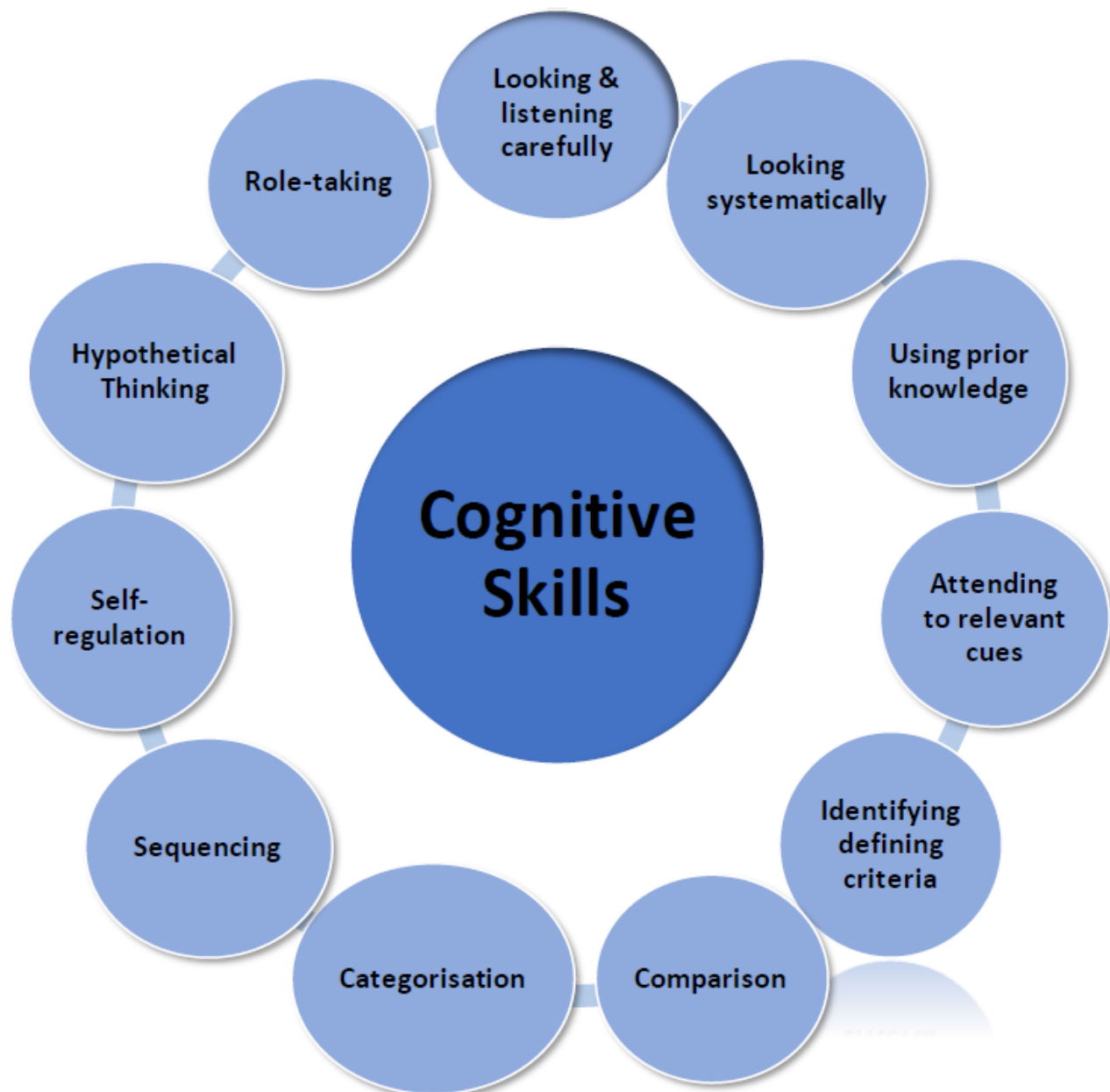
Structured play may be part of any lessons. P1 and P2 children have opportunities for free play every morning. Classes visit the STEM classroom twice a week. Children have 20 minutes “discovery” time within the hall and classrooms 3 – 4 times a week. Sometimes this discovery time is offered outside, and we are starting to use our additional classroom for music and pool opportunities.

- **Resources**

Where possible our resources are bought and cared for to allow long term use. We work with partners to keep costs down e.g the provision of our work benches. We recycle materials for junk modelling. Small world resources and home corner resources reflect our society in a wide sense. Children are consulted in participatory budgeting when choosing new resources.

- **What skills would we like to see developed in these environments?**

We believe that our approach to play, which offers both structured and unstructured opportunities, allows children to develop a wide range of cognitive skills.



Examples:

- Comparing and categorising when tidying up
- Self regulation – taking turns, waiting
- Using prior knowledge – using ideas from the classroom such as how forces work to develop ideas in the stem classroom.
- Role Taking – house corner or train station etc
- Hypothetical thinking – asking children “what if?” encouraging children to consider “what if?”

6. Measuring and assessing impact

Our observations and our photo records are used to show impact and development of the above cognitive skills. This is shared with parents at parent consultations, online and in newsletters. We track children’s progress against these cognitive skills and in particular how they are transferred into other areas of the curriculum. The skills are rarely taught in isolation so we assess how they are generalised and used more widely in the life of the school and community. The skills and the play which develops them may also be used to measure children’s progress against personal targets e.g the ability to take turns and share demonstrates some self regulation.

7. Our approach to risk and challenge in play

I am learning to assess and manage risk, to protect myself and others, and to reduce the potential for harm when possible.

Curriculum for Excellence Outcome: HWB 0-16a / HWB 1-16a / HWB 2-16a / HWB 3-16a / HWB 4-16a

We recognise that risk and challenges look different in different play spaces. We believe children are able to manage their own risk with some support.

In the classroom risk seems less because there may not be physical dangers but children may feel it is a risk to try new activities. We encourage children to take a risk and try new things. We provide some “risky” activities such as woodwork where the risk is managed and children are taught the skills to keep themselves safe. Outside we provide boundaries in which children are then allowed to take some calculated risks and learn their own limits.

Risks can increase and decrease depending on the children. Children need to be taught that their view of risk will change over time.

We teach about hidden hazards so children make informed choices e.g teaching that what they do may be copied by others, teaching children that there may be hidden holes or equipment may break or move and teaching children about the dangers of dog mess and cigarette ends or clapping dogs they don't know whilst out on trips.

8. The role of adults

Whilst we recognise that play should be child led, there are times when adults play a part in supporting the play and extending the learning.

Adults judge when it is the right time to intervene. Making the right judgement about when to intervene and what activities to provide can be challenging and as a school we value training and research for staff to help us make these decisions effectively.

Interventions may include

- Taking photos and observing. Observation sheets are available on the walls.
- Strategic positioning,
- Willingness to be play along.
- Provision of resources
- Specific interventions to stimulate or to challenge or to teach a new skill.
- Small group “play” may use an adult to build relationships and allow children to open up.

Adults regularly engage in professional learning to make best use of their interventions and to avoid “stealing the learning” from the children.

9. Involvement with stakeholders

Over the past year or so, we have explored the concept of play with all stakeholders.

Children identified play as fun and learning as boring. As we have increased play activities during class time and not just limited to playtime, we have included children in deciding the activities they would like to have available. The children are already starting to explain what activities they have set up and why they have done that. They can explain what they have enjoyed but need support to describe the learning that comes from it.

Our parents noted that play can make learning fun and allow children to learn or practise skills without realising it. They also felt it can be a break or reward after more academic tasks. They

recognised that a lot of learning of soft skills can come from play. However, they were more cautious about risk within school contexts.

Staff have noted improvements across both academic and social contexts. They have reported progress in reading and application of maths alongside increasing self-management, compassion for others and creativity within classroom play.

10. Agreement and Review

Developed over sessions 21-22 and 22-23. Review at end of 23-24 to ensure policy is embedded and evolving.

11. Documents and useful links

Realising the Ambition

Aberdeenshire early years play documents

Play Scotland