



“Play is central to how children learn, both in terms of cognitive skills and softer skills around relating to other people.

It is a fundamental part of children's quality of life and a right enshrined in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

**Play is the universal language of childhood.**

It is through play that children understand each other and make sense of the world around them.

## New Machar School Play Guidelines

At New Machar School, we believe in ensuring that all children reach their full potential. Staff are committed to ensuring that young children are provided with a stimulating and nurturing learning environment that encourages the children to take responsibility for and lead their own learning. Through an increased awareness of how play can support learning, practitioners and teachers will promote creativity and curiosity. By investing in all our young learners we can strengthen their ability to achieve their full potential. Through play children create their own culture, develop their abilities, explore their creativity, challenge their limitations and assumptions and learn about the people and places around them.

**“Play is fundamental to children and young people’s quality of life but first and foremost it is a child’s right and one which the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child is keen to see actively applied”  
(Scottish Government, Play Strategy).**

**“Play creates a brain that has increased flexibility and improved potential for learning later in life.”  
(Lester & Russell, 2008)**

**‘The experiences children have in early life – and the environments in which they have them – shape their developing brain architecture and strongly affect whether they grow up to be healthy, productive members of society’  
(Harvard University, 2010).**

**“International research suggests that play-based learning in the early years, may be associated with better later academic results. Children’s later school success appears to be enhanced by more active, child-initiated learning experiences. Their long-term progress may be slowed by the introduction of more formalised learning experiences too early for their developmental stage. Introducing more formal adult directed learning too soon may have an adverse impact when children move up the school and are required to think more independently and take greater responsibility for their own learning process”  
(Marcon 2002, in Play based learning in Early Education).**

**Play is an essential part of a happy, healthy childhood and ‘when children play their brains do two things: they grow and the become organised and usable’  
(Hughes, 2013).**

## Play

Play types can simply be described as the different behaviours we can see when children are playing. There have been numerous attempts to categorise different types of play. The image below uses play types from play theorist Bob Hughes' (2006: 33) PlayTypes – Speculations and Possibilities<sup>3</sup> in which he explains that 'each play type is both distinctly and subtly different from the others'. It is useful to be able to recognise them since 'engaging in each one is a necessary corollary for a child's healthy development'.



(Bob Hughes (2006: 33))

Teachers, PSAs and Practitioners commit to ensuring that planning, evaluation and application of play allows the children to access the key ways that play supports learning:

- Cognitive, social and emotional challenges that are embedded in play.
- Play helps develop skills for thinking, learning and acting in social worlds.
- Play facilitates perceptions of new connections across ideas, experiences, skills and knowledge.
- Play allows meaning to be constructed from experience.
- Play is intrinsically motivating, and this helps develop problem-solving abilities.
- Physical play builds brain connections and coordination.
- Exploration of feelings in play develop resilience, self-regulation and stress management.

## What is the role of the teacher, EYP, PSA / adult?

Staff commit to providing high quality play experiences throughout the curriculum that will ensure that children are provided with a variety of opportunities to engage in play activities within a wide range of activities. Children will be able to make secure links and build upon their knowledge and learning.

Staff will ensure that interventions will:

- Engage children's curiosity and questions.
- Help children reflect and extend their thinking.
- Support children to solve their own problems.
- Challenge the children through questioning.
- Offer appropriate materials and activities to support all learners' needs and abilities.

**“Play is key to raising attainment.”  
Scottish Government.**

## Nursery

In Nursery, Staff will ensure that observations of the child are conducted to assess each child's unique abilities and talents. Staff will ensure that activities will be structured, well-planned for and have the appropriate resources to meet the developmental needs of each child. The foundation of these assessments will be based upon the child's interests, to enable the practitioner to appropriately plan for their learning and next steps.

## School

In School, Children will continue to have opportunities to learn through play. Staff will ensure that there continues to be a range of activities to meet the developmental needs of each child. These play activities will also link to the Whole School Contexts for learning, as well as including other planned curricular areas. The Senior Leadership Team demonstrate their commitment to increasing and developing play opportunities. Staff are supported to do so through priorities in School Improvement Plan and community life at New Machar School. Staff are encouraged to lead their own professional learning around Play and the benefits.



## **References:**

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Play Strategy For Scotland: Our Vision

Play Types Toolkit Bringing more play into the school day

## **Useful Links:**

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Early Learning. '*Benefits of Creative Play in Early Education*'. Available at <https://www.earlylearningfurniture.co.uk/blog/benefits-of-creative-play-in-early-education/>

Education Scotland. '*Curriculum for Excellence. Experiences and Outcomes*'. Available at [https://education.gov.scot/scottish-education-system/policy-for-scottish-education/policy-drivers/cfe-\(building-from-the-statement-appendix-incl-btc1-5\)/Experiences%20and%20outcomes](https://education.gov.scot/scottish-education-system/policy-for-scottish-education/policy-drivers/cfe-(building-from-the-statement-appendix-incl-btc1-5)/Experiences%20and%20outcomes)

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Scottish Government. (2013) '*Play Strategy for Scotland: Our Action Plan*'. Available at <http://www.gov.scot/resource/0043/00437132.pdf>

Scottish Government. '*Play Types Toolkit: Bringing more play into the school day*'. Available at <http://www.playscotland.org/wp-content/uploads/Play-Scotland-Play-Types-Toolkit-bringing-more-play-into-the-school-day.pdf>

UNICEF. '*Convention on the rights of the child*'. Available at <https://www.unicef.org/crc/>