



John Scottus Pre-School

Curriculum Policy

This policy will be available to view and examine by all members of the school community: Parents, Staff, Board of Management and Trustees. They will be available for inspection in the Pre-school classroom in Old Conna, Ferndale Rd, Rathmichael Co Dublin and on our School website.

Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016 (Síolta Standard 2: Environments, Síolta Standard 7: Curriculum, Síolta Standard 6: Play, Síolta Standard 8: Planning and Evaluation) (National Standard 1: Information, National Standard 3: Working in Partnership with Parents or Guardians, National Standard 6; Evaluation, National Standard 8: Care, Play and Learning, National Standard 9: Nurture and Well-Being, National Standard 16: Equal Opportunities, National Standard 19: Equipment and Materials)

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“Encouraging each child’s holistic development and learning requires the implantation of a verifiable, broad-based, documented and flexible curriculum or programme”.

Síolta – the National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education

“Active learning, relationships, play, language, and meaningful experiences are priorities for supporting children’s early learning and development”.

Aistear - The Early Childhood Curriculum Framework.

Statement of Intent:

At John Scottus Pre-School we aim to provide an education for young children that caters for every aspect of their development: physical, mental, emotional and spiritual. We believe that nurturing strong connections between the child and the teacher is key in allowing children to develop and learn fully. We put strong emphasis on presenting the children with good material and good company through the approach of Love and Play. We acknowledge the natural connection children have with nature and we are committed to providing outdoor learning opportunities as much as possible.

Our Pre-School offers a range of learning opportunities to children, which are appropriate to the child’s stage of development. Our Pre-School is fully committed to being guided by the principles of Síolta and the curriculum framework Aistear.

We recognise how important high-quality early childhood experience can be in children’s lives. This Curriculum aims to encourage active learning, problem solving, effective communication, creativity and autonomy. It aims to give children a good start which will benefit their long-term success in life. Our Pre-School recognises the diversity of experiences and relationships that shape children’s lives.

Children learn best when they:

- Participate in making decisions as much as possible.
- Make choices and contribute to learning experiences.
- Share their opinions and diverse experiences and discuss their learning.
- Have positive role models within their teachers.
- Learn in a responsive and supportive social environment.
- Learn through multi-sensory experiences.
- Participate actively in experiences that engage them emotionally, physically, cognitively, socially and spiritually.

Aistear: The Early Childhood Curriculum Framework

Our programme will follow the Aistear guidelines and principles. Aistear is Ireland's curriculum framework for children from birth to six years. Aistear is designed to work with the great variety of curriculum materials currently in use in early childhood settings. Using the broad learning goals of Aistear we will adapt our curriculum to make learning even more enjoyable and rewarding for the children at the service. Aistear contains information for parents/guardians and practitioners that will help plan for and provide challenging and enjoyable learning experiences that can enable all children to grow and develop as competent and confident learners in the context of loving relationships with others. Aistear describes the types of learning (dispositions, values and attitudes, skills, knowledge, and understanding) that are important for children in their early years, and offers ideas and suggestions as to how this learning might be nurtured. The Framework also provides guidelines on supporting children's learning through partnerships with parents/guardians, interactions, play, and assessment. Aistear is based on 12 principles of early learning and development. These are presented in three groups:

1. Children and their lives in early childhood:

- the child's uniqueness
- equality and diversity
- children as citizens.

2. Children's connections with others:

- relationships
- parents/guardians, family and community
- the adult's role.

3. How children learn and develop:

- holistic learning and development
- active learning
- play and hands-on experiences
- relevant and meaningful experiences
- communication and language
- the learning environment.

Aistear also uses four themes that connect and overlap with each other to outline children’s learning and development. The themes are:

- Well-being
- Identity and Belonging
- Communicating
- Exploring and Thinking.

Each theme includes *aims* and broad *learning goals* for all children from birth to six years (see Figure 1). The aims and goals outline the dispositions, attitudes and values, skills, knowledge, and understanding that the adult nurtures in children to help them learn and develop.

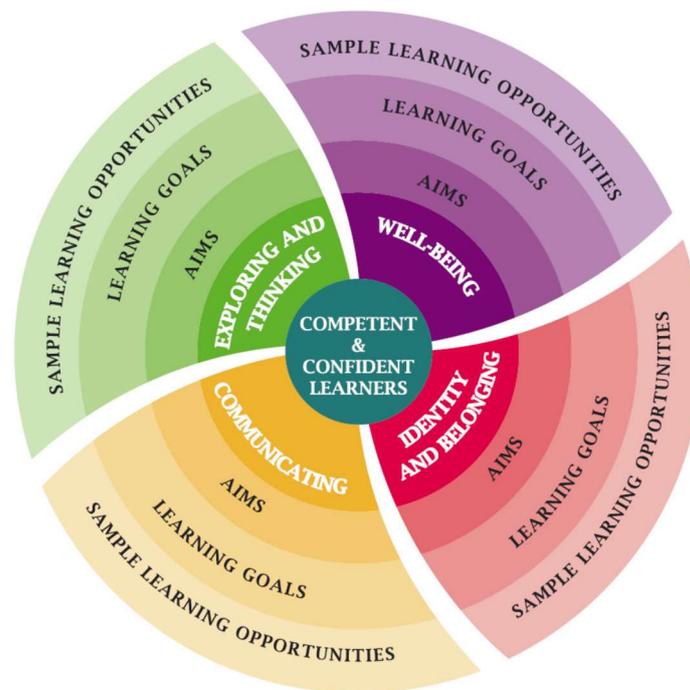


Figure 1: Curriculum Sheets

Our staff will organise learning activities through detailed planning and timetables. Activities should be age and stage appropriate and should include a combination of child-initiated, staff-initiated, collaboratively planned and spontaneous activities. The Curriculum will ensure that children have a balance of activities from the developmental areas listed above. The activities may be “theme based” depending on

the interests of the children at the time. We aim to establish sensory-rich outdoor and indoor learning environments to support our curriculum.

The Role of Teacher:

- To be a positive role model.
- To offer guidance, support and encouragement.
- To be calm and gentle in approach.
- Plan collaboratively with children as part of the curriculum decision making.
- Plan a responsive curriculum that reflects their needs and interests and complete curriculum planning sheets.
- Use a range of learning methods including free play, real-life experiences, focused learning, routines, equipment and play materials, etc.
- Organise environments that are dynamic and responsive to children's needs and interests.
- Celebrate diversity and challenge/question any racism, inequality and negative attitudes.
- To be non-judgemental and to be aware of our own values and assumptions.
- Work in close partnership with parents/guardians.
- Collect evidence on how children learn and recording this evidence through observation.

Understanding children's learning:

The service staff will plan activities based on the following significant characteristics of young children's learning:

- They learn through personal experience.
- Their understanding of other people's talk is often at the literal level.
- They understand best what they can feel (emotionally), see, touch, hear, taste and smell.
- Their attachment to particular adults and peers deepens their ability to learn from and with them.
- They are egocentric and, through experience and guidance, they learn how to cooperate, share and play collaboratively.

Equipment:

At the service it is the policy that the educational resources, and toys available are suitable, safe and age appropriate, while providing new exciting challenges and experiences for the developmental needs of our children. Equipment is chosen carefully and is appropriate.

- The layout of the room is carefully designed, and the equipment is low level and accessible for the children.
- The environment will encourage free choice and teaches the children to select, use and replace the materials/equipment after use.
- Some elements of the home environment will be established, our play will include clearly defined areas of interest (e.g.) home/ imaginative, sand/water, art/creative and construction play.
- New materials will be introduced on a regular basis, based on the children's developmental needs and interests.
- Our staff are responsible for the materials ensuring that all materials/equipment used is clean, safe and well maintained at all times.
- Parents/guardians can feel confident that their child is being cared for in a safe, happy environment.
- We strongly advise parents/guardians not to let children bring their personal toys to our Pre-School as they may get mislaid or broken and cause distress.

We encourage learning through free play with a range of activities including:**Imaginative Play:**

The children learn to play together, to share, to use their imaginations and to expand their vocabulary. This type of play encourages children to express their feelings and engage in imaginary situations such as doctors and nurses and going to the post office. This is a safe secure environment where children feel supported in their play.

Books:

The children learn to listen when a story is being read. Acting out or reading stories and describing incidents from their own experiences helps to develop their language. Story telling is an activity, which fosters the enjoyment of books, and can be a motivating factor in learning to read.

Music Activities:

Studies have shown that music has a powerful effect on the intellectual and creative development of children to:

- Inspire right-brain, creative thinking
- Induce relaxation
- Improve concentration and memory
- Increase verbal emotional and spatial intelligence

The children enjoy singing songs, using percussion instruments and listening to a wide variety of music, from rhymes to classical and pop music. This helps to stimulate their awareness and enjoyment of music and gives them an opportunity to use music as a form of expression.

Creative Play:

Children are introduced to activities such as art and craft, paint and play dough, sand and water play.

Messy Play:

Children have great fun, but they also develop manipulative and pre-math's skills through exploring and experimenting. Many children can express their emotions and feelings when playing with sand and water as well as finding it a very relaxing and soothing activity.

Arts and Crafts:

The children paint, draw, print, use scissors, glue and use clay. This allows the children to develop their creative and pre-writing skills. All this work gives the child a different medium to express their feelings, thoughts and emotions.

Play Dough:

This is not just a fun activity for children; it can also help strengthen muscles in their hands and develop hand eye co-ordination. Once again this is an activity where the children's imagination can be encouraged and developed. Play dough also allows the child to manipulate the material, which may relieve such emotions as anger/frustration.

Jig Saw Construction and Manipulative Toys:

In this area children's pre-reading, pre-writing and hand eye co-ordination are developed. The development of reasoning and problem solving is also developed and encourages small motor movement.

Energetic Play:

Organised energetic activities, such as running, jumping and skipping, will be a part of the Curriculum and encourages large motor movement. As well as aiding physical growth such activities can be a learning area and a great reliever of built up stress or tension.

Drama:

Through drama the children learn self-expression and it instils an inner confidence within themselves. Children enjoy drama and it gives them the opportunity to experience the freedom to express their feelings and emotions in a free, comfortable and safe environment.

John Scottus Curriculum

At John Scottus Pre-School. The child is at the core of everything we do. We see the child as pure, perfect and complete and we endeavour to hold their hand and join them on their discovery of the awe and wonder of our universe.

John Scottus Curriculum Pillars:

1. Play-based

We understand that play is the child's way of learning and of coming to terms with the world around them. Our play-based curriculum involves a range of activities and learning approaches – but the child's right to learn through play is at the centre of the curriculum.

2. Nature-Based

Nature-based early childhood education is where there is a focus on learning which occurs in the context of nature. Nature is at the core of the curriculum, there is extensive daily outdoor time over the course of a school year, and teachers implement high-quality early childhood practices as well as high quality environmental education practices. Our Pre-school blurs the lines between the indoor and outdoor space, outdoor time is extensive and often the first activity of the day, natural materials are found throughout the indoor space, and classroom activities are based on seasonal happenings.

3. Spiritual-Based

We invite the children to connect with their inner self through mindfulness practices. We encourage the children to regularly 'check in with themselves', we do this by closing our eyes and connecting to our senses and stilling our minds. The children are also invited to participate in uplifting Sanskrit chanting that acts as a phonetically sung meditation helping to bring peace to their being.

4. Real Life and The Teaching of The Virtues

We explicitly teach the children life virtues such as Fearlessness, Gratitude, Attention, Perseverance and Kindness.

We encourage children from as young as three to 'meet the need' and help take care of themselves and the world around them. This involves self-care activities (e.g. putting on and off their coat and wellies) and classroom activities (e.g. helping set the table and tidying up after mealtimes, tidying up toys etc). The activities are presented to the child in a fun and light way such that concentration, coordination, independence and order can be naturally developed.

APPENDIX A: Early Childhood Education Framework Principles

The service recognises the value and contribution of early childhood education to lifelong learning.

The following set of principles provides a framework for staff as they make decisions about their curriculum activities.

1. Children are capable and competent and have been learning since birth

Recognising children as competent learner's means recognising what they know and can do, and using that as a starting point for new learning. Children learn in different ways – from feeling, touching, music etc. Therefore, the curriculum planning sheets will be used in all rooms.

2. Children build deep understandings when they learn through all senses and are offered choice in their learning experiences

Children develop holistically when they take in information in through all senses including touch, hearing, seeing, body movement and smell. Children engage more enthusiastically in learning when they are able to participate in decision making about learning experiences.

3. Children learn best through interactions, actively exploring, experimenting and using a variety of materials

Staff support children by encouraging them by facilitating their learning in a range of ways such as movement, painting, drawing, speaking, writing, construction, table top activities and role play.

4. Children's positive attitudes to learning, and to themselves as learners, are essential for success in school and beyond

Staff have an important role in encouraging children to develop attitudes such as perseverance and a willingness to engage in new learning. Children develop attitudes when they receive feedback as they question, explore, create, invent and interact with others. Positive attitudes towards learning are also fostered by providing learning experiences that are relevant to children's lives and interests.

5. Children learn best in environments where there are supportive relationships among all partners in the learning community

Staff develop supportive partnerships with children, families, communities and professional colleagues by:

- Building a sense of child centeredness by planning with children.
- Involving families in supporting children's learning through sharing information and allowing families to contribute their own knowledge and perspectives.
- Working with external professionals (Speech therapist, Early Years' inspection team etc.) to provide quality learning programs.

6. Early childhood programs are most effective when they recognise, value and build upon the cultural and social experiences of children

Children have diverse experiences in homes, communities, early care and educational settings. Staff should ensure that learning environments reflect this diversity of cultural and social experiences as well as shared ideas, values, beliefs, and identities. Learning programs therefore acknowledge or build on children's diverse ways of thinking, knowing and behaving.

7. Building continuity of learning as children move to and through school provides foundations for their future success

Children successfully manage transitions into school and through school when teachers establish continuities between children's prior, current and future learning.

8. Assessment of young children

Assessment involves the purposeful and ongoing monitoring of children's learning. The information gathered is used for future planning and to make judgments about a child's learning and development. Children's everyday learning experiences offer rich opportunities for gathering this evidence of learning.