At Plays Cool we follow the Síolta Quality Framework and Aistear Early Education Curriculum we place a huge importance on parental involvement and choice within early years development. As early child care educators we treat every child as an individual and will work with parents, as primary educators, on learning plans tailored towards your child’s cognitive and developmental needs.



**Aistear Early Education Curriculum**

**Principles of early learning and development**

Aistear is based on 12 principles of early learning and development. These are presented in three groups:

1. The first group concerns children and their lives in early childhood:

* the child’s uniqueness
* equality and diversity
* children as citizens.

2. The second group concerns children’s connections with others:

* relationships
* parents, family and community
* the adult’s role.

3. The third group concerns 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 uses four themes and each team has learning goals:**

**Theme**: **Well-being**

**Aim**: Children will be happy, healthy and show a positive outlook on learning.

**Learning Goals**: Children will feel confident, understand their feeling and others feelings, learn to respect other children and adults and also respect their environment. Children will learn to be independent by making choices and decisions. Children will see the positive link between home life and their school environment. Children will understand the importance of good personal hygiene.

**Theme**: **Identity and Belonging**

**Aim**: Children see themselves as capable learners and feel respected

**Learning Goals**: Children will understand that they are an individuals and we are not all the same people look different, eat different foods and have different values and beliefs Children will be motivated and be aware of their own abilities and feel confident in expressing themselves. Children should feel that they have a place in the community and understand that the community is made up of different cultures. They should feel that they fit it at all times they should be free to share stories about themselves, their experiences and their families. Children should be encouraged to develop a broad range of interests

**Theme: Communicating**

**Aim**: Expressing themselves through language

**Learning Goals**: Children will use a range of body movements, facial expressions, and early vocalisations to show feelings and share information. Children use both verbal and non verbal communication to be heard. Children should be given opportunities to explore sound, rhymes and patterns. Children will become proficient uses of one language and should have an awareness of other languages. Children should you language to express themselves through music and songs, and role play. Children should be given opportunity to express their feeling and share stories.

**Theme: Exploring & Thinking**

**Aim**: Children should see themselves as explores and thinkers

**Learning Goals**: Children will engage, explore and experiment in their environment and use new physical skills including skills to manipulate objects and materials. Children have a sense of time, and space. Children will understand concepts such as matching, comparing, ordering, sorting, size, weight, height, length, capacity, and money in an enjoyable and meaningful way. Children will become familiar with pictures, numbers, letters and words. Children should have access to books to explore and share. A child’s confidence is increased when they realise their own abilities. Children are naturally curious and enjoy taking risks.

**Mission Statement**

Plays Cool is committed to the provision of high quality care with a home-like atmosphere for all children, their families and staff.

We recognises that each child is a unique individual, with specific needs, strengths and interests that need to be nurtured and developed.

Plays Cool values a learning environment that is a safe, caring, non-threatening, challenging, and stimulating atmosphere in which children are free to learn, grow and experiment to develop their own learning through self-directed play. Plays Cool recognises that children learn through play. Through play children can work in their own comfort zones whilst being challenged developmentally. Plays Cool's program provides opportunities for children to develop the following skills:

* Listening and understanding skills
* An appreciation of story and verse
* Motor Skills
* Vocabulary
* Questioning
* Predicting and sequencing
* Confidence in self-expression
* An awareness of other cultures and customs

Plays Cool is committed to continuing professional development of staff to extend skills and keep in touch with current industry practice and standards.

**AIMS**

Plays Cool's aim is to cater for the needs of children their families and the wider community.

**In regards to children:**

* Provide high quality care in a fun learning environment.
* Develop, implement and evaluate a stimulating and challenging education program for all children based on their skills needs and interests.
* Provide a home-like atmosphere that is safe and secure.

**In regards to families:**

* Welcome families & support the family in their role as primary caregivers and reinforce to children the value of the family.
* Develop and maintain good relationships with parents that is built on warmth, trust, understanding and support.

**In regard to the community:**

* provide a high quality service in a caring environment.
* Prepare children to be continuing members of the community, Irish society and the wider world stage.
* Develop an awareness of the multicultural nature of the Irish

society. Develop awareness and understanding of environment

issues.

**The Value of Play**

Play to children is far more than a break from routine.  It is not just the burning off of energy or the keeping out from under the feet of busy adults.

Play is the child's method of learning.  It is their way of discovering about the world in which they live and their place in it.  It is their training ground and their chance to practice and perfect skills which will be necessary when they become adults.

The young child playing in the sink, emptying and filling containers is not aware she is developing mathematical concepts of "full" and "empty", "heavy" and "light", or that a scientific experiment about "floating" and "sinking" are what she is doing with the plastic saucer and the spoon.  She is drawing conclusions, testing theories and extending her knowledge all the time.

The early years are probably the most important years of learning and developing.  We talk about the child's "painting" as a means of developing her fine motor skills and "pre-writing" skills; we talk about water and sand play as a means of developing her "pre-math" skills; we talk about circle time and story time as a means of developing vocabulary and linguistic skills; while we adults talk about all these theories and methods we must remember that our children are children and we much grant them their right to play.  We must take care not to rush them into formal education and adulthood.

Our role as adults is to provide them with space, time, materials, encouragement, recognition, and allow them to be who they are, to enjoy their childhood and the joy and freedom childhood brings.

**Curriculum**

The schedule of activities planned for the preschool age group is reviewed regularly based on the interest of the children. Much of the day is taken up with free play which is interspersed with short periods of structured activities.

During a free play session the children decide for themselves what materials they would like to play with. Materials are easily accessible on low-level shelves and the child is free to move about, see what choices are on offer, and make a decision about what they will engage in.

At this age children are not expected to sit for long periods and their need to move about frequently is respected and reflected in the layout of their environment.

Structured activities for children include:

* Creative art – painting, colouring, cutting gluing
* Songs, music and dance
* Drama
* Books, Story time
* Outdoor play
* Sand Play
* Water Play
* Home Corner
* Cars, Trains, train tracks
* Construction Play – blocks, Lego
* Circle time
* Tabletop Work - pegboards, play dough, threading

Children are encouraged to put materials away after they have played with them.

**Free Play**

During a Free Play session the child is provided with materials and decides for themselves how, where, with whom, when and what to play. Materials which are made available include:

* Books
* Jigsaws
* Water Tray
* Sand Tray
* Paint, Paper, Crayons, Pencils
* Stencils
* Scissors, Glue, magazines for cutting
* Home Corner - kitchen, shop, t-sets, groceries, dolls, prams etc.
* Cars, train sets
* Animal sets
* Blocks made from various materials including wood, metal, cardboard and plastic (Lego, stickle bricks)

Children in a free play session are made aware of where materials can be found.  All toys are stored on low easily-accessible shelves and children are free to play with whatever materials they choose.

 The role of the adults present is to:

* Ensure that materials are provided which will engage the child in a meaningful way.
* Provide progression in their learning by adding materials when appropriate.
* Ask meaningful question without interfering in the child’s own learning process.
* Ensure that materials are age appropriate.
* Supervise the play in a non-intrusive way.
* Encourage the children by responding to questions and praising work

 The child’s learning is internally motivated and comes from the child’s own experimentation, creativity and discovery. The learning may not be immediate but is over a period of time. Learning in a Free Play environment is progressive takes place in a “building” manner. We find that gradually learning from one area begins to influence play in other areas and children expand their own learning.

**Circle Time**

During circle time the children in each group sit together with their teacher.  The central idea in Circle Time is that the children are all together as a group and talking.  This is an ideal opportunity for children to:

* Learn to listen to each other
* Voice their opinions
* Tell stories
* Learn about each other
* Develop their language skills
* Introduce new activities
* Share stories or ideas
* Ask questions

**What we hope each child can has achieved by the time they finish in Plays Cool.**

**Independence**

* Able to take off/put on own coat, hat, gloves, scarf, hang them up, without help from adult. Same with school bag.
* Able to open/close school bag, lunch box, drinks, packets, etc.
* Know how to blow own nose and dispose of tissue.
* Know how to wash hands properly and dry them

**Social skills:**

* Able to walk in a line with other children without pushing, touching, skipping ahead or wandering.
* Able to listen to others either adult or child, without interrupting or speaking over them.
* Show some empathy towards other children, e.g. comfort another child if they are upset, fall over etc.
* Able to deal with small conflicts with other children by seeking help from adult, rather than lashing out or losing temper.
* Know how to share toys, games.
* Able to wait for their turn in game or discussion/conversation.
* Able to sit on chair properly with no tilting, sliding, wriggling, kneeling, for up to 15/20 minutes.
* Able to sit on floor for a group activity without sprawling, stretching out legs, wriggling.
* Able to accept correction from teacher without sulking, getting angry.
* Able to understand that there are rules and follow them.

**Language:**

* Able to stay on topic in short group discussion/conversation.  
  Use proper words and no baby talk for example horsey.
* Know their own full Christian name and surname.
* Know all the standard nursery rhymes like Humpty Dumpty.
* Know all the usual fairy tales, Cinderella, Ugly Duckling etc.

**Maths**

* Know all colours primary and secondary.
* Know shapes, circle, square, triangle, rectangle.
* Know number names, 1-10.
* Recognise numerals 1-5.
* Be able to count from 1-10, that is be able to count accurately a number of objects in this range. Saying the numbers from 1-10 is not counting.
* Be able to recognise pairs, matching items.
* Be able to sort items into groups for similar features, e.g. size, colour, shape, function.

**Motor Skills**While in Plays Cool the child has been practicing fine motor skill exercises designed to prepare hand and fingers for writing, such as threading beads, play dough. This is to assist them and enable them to:

* Cut with scissors .
* Hold paintbrush, crayon properly.
* Possibly be able to hold pencil but this isn't essential yet. Its better if they don't hold a pencil at all than be allowed to have one before they are ready.

**Illness**

If you suspect your child has an infectious disease they should be kept at home. The following are a list of childhood diseases and how long the child must remain out of school. These are the World Health Organisation guidelines :

Chicken Pox - 6 days after appearance of the crop of pox.

Strep infection/ Tonsillitis - 7 days from onset or 24 hrs after an antibiotic has been administered.

Influenza – Until fully recovered.

Conjunctivas – 24 hours after institution of appropriate therapy.

Skin infections – Crusty Sore , Scabies – itch, Ringworm – until judged y the doctor as non infective.

Whooping cough – 4 wks from onset or 24 hrs after an antibiotic has been

administered.

**Parental Involvement**

Parental involvement is very important to us at Plays Cool. Parental involvement in a childcare service has many benefits for all concerned:

* The children learn from a very young age the importance of education and that their parents and childcare workers have an interest in the well being.
* The parents become familiar with the environment their child is being educated in and also the staff who work with their children on a daily basis.
* The childcare service gets to know the family as a unit, which in turn improves the communication between the service and the family.

**Example parental involvement calendar**

**Yearly Planner/ Parental Involvement**

**September 2015 - June 2016**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Month** | **Themes** | **Events** | **Parental Involvement** |
| **September** | All about me |  | Settling in Period |
| **October** | Autumn  Healthy Eating  Halloween | Halloween | Halloween Party |
| **November** | Family  Diversity  Winter |  | Nature Walk |
| **December** | Winter  Christmas | Christmas | Christmas Play |
| **January** | Planets |  | Baking Day |
| **February** | Farming | Pancake Tuesday 9th Feb | Coffee Morning |
| **March** | Spring | Mothers Day 6th March  St Patrick Day 17th March  Easter Sunday 27th March | Mothers Day Tea Party  Patrick Day Parade  Easter Bonnet Display |
| **April** |  |  | Art Display |
| **May** | Summer |  | Open Day |
| **June** |  | Father's Day 21st June | Sports Day |
|  |  |  |  |