

CAIRNDOW COMMUNITY CHILDCARE LTD Policy No.24
Planning and Assessment Policy



This policy was drawn up in consultation with *committee and staff* of *Cairndow Community Childcare Ltd.*

Rationale

Assessment should be an integral part of the daily routine in the early years setting. It occurs as adults listen, watch and interact with a child or group of children. Assessment is a process involving the collection of information about children's learning and development and wherever possible staff should find ways of involving children in the process. Detailed and accurate assessment of children's abilities and developmental needs is the basis of learning and teaching. It influences both short and long term planning, recording, reporting and evaluating.

Purpose

This policy for assessment is based on the principles that:

- Children's learning is promoted through planning, observing and interacting with children during play
- Assessment is an integral part of learning and teaching
- The development of manageable and effective assessment practices involves teamwork by staff and parents
- Children's learning is enhanced when staff reflect on learning

Aims

Our aims are

- To plan effectively, clear goals for learning which are designed to match the needs and achievements of each child
- Through focused and selective observation and assessment of children at play to learn how and what they learn
- To use observations and assessments to help us plan learning experiences which take account of children's needs and development
- To report the next steps in a child's learning as a means of promoting partnership with parents and of sharing information with children, colleagues and other professionals.
- To use observation and assessment evidence gathered to review practice

Principles

Our assessment process adheres to the following principles:

- All children will have a comprehensive assessment profile completed prior to going to school

- The profile will cover all key aspects and learning outcomes of the 3-5 curriculum framework
- The assessments/observations will be carried out in the main by the pre-5 staff under the guidance of the manager or head of centre. In the case of children who have special educational needs this may also include therapists, educational psychologists, health visitor, social worker or the clinical medical officer as appropriate
- No child will be referred to or seen by another professional without parental consent
- Parents will be involved in the assessment process through ongoing dialogue and at parents' evenings/afternoons
- The children's key worker will be responsible for collating the information and completing the profile
- The children's profiles will be collated on the Argyll and Bute electronic database T.E.D.E.Y (Tracking Educational Development Early Years) after consultation with colleagues and other professionals if appropriate
- The profiles will be updated at 3 specified points during both the ante-school and pre-school years.
- The tracking system will result in the production of the Argyll and Bute Transition Document which will be sent to the receiving primary schools prior to children starting school
- Parent reports will be sent home once a year and parents will have the opportunity to discuss these with the pre-5 staff
- The need for confidentiality of all information gathered on children will always be respected. Any information held electronically within the establishment is always password protected

Procedures

Effective planning is central to effective learning for children. It is also the key to making learning and teaching manageable. Systematic planning is essential in order to provide appropriate learning opportunities within the 3-5 Curriculum Framework based on the individual needs, abilities and interests of each child. Effective planning establishes clear goals for learning that are designed to match the needs and achievements of children. Planning will be most effective when it:-

- Sets out clear expectations to support children's learning
- Enables staff to focus their involvement on effective learning and teaching
- Uses the insights and experiences of staff
- Involves children, reflecting their ideas, valuing their individuality
- Involves parents
- Is directly linked with assessment, celebrating children's learning and achievements and looks forward to next steps in learning

We have based our planning on the key aspects of learning and development outlined in the 'Curriculum Framework For Children 3 to 5' document issued by the Scottish Office 1999 and with reference to 'Promoting Learning: Assessing children's Progress 3-5' issued by the SCCC in 1998.

Planning should be manageable for the staff within the day-to-day demands of a pre-school establishment. To achieve this in practice involves, long, medium and short term planning.

Long Term Planning

Our long term planning will:

- Ensure that children have a wide range of learning opportunities and a balance is achieved across all curricular areas
- Plan time for festivals and seasonal themes
- Be flexible enough to prepare for interests and events which usually emerge during a year, such as a new baby or a hospital visit

The long term plan is completed at the beginning of each session and outlines the themes or backdrops to be covered over the session. It also notes the curriculum focus for each theme.

Medium Term Planning

Our medium term planning will:

- Build on information about children's previous learning
- Set out clearly the learning outcomes to be covered during the 'theme/backdrop'
- Show where observation and assessment will be focused
- Be flexible enough to include opportunities for learning that address identified next steps in learning for individual/groups of children
- Over a session the medium term plans will systematically plan for formal observations for every learning outcome for all the key aspects of learning and development
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The staff use a 'thematic' approach to backdrop planning. The theme may last between 4-6 weeks depending on the theme being explored. The theme is a useful starting point for planning and will provide relevance and motivation for the children but it will not be adhered to rigidly at the expense of progression in learning.

Short Term Planning

The medium plan is supported by a short term, weekly or daily plan. It should:

- Reflect the daily programme of the group
- Focus on the learning opportunities / play areas – both adult and child-led
- Be clear and provide a useful guide for each session especially in the case of staff absence
- Relate to the 5 key aspects of the 3-5 curriculum
- Provide evidence of the organisation of the week
- Be flexible in order to enable children's interests and needs to be developed

Reflection

We continually evaluate the quality of our planning process. As a staff we discuss the following questions to identify the strengths and weakness of our system.

- Do our plans provide a curriculum that has a breadth and balance across the five key aspects of child development?
- Do they ensure a relevance of learning experiences?
- Are they flexible and responsive to children's needs and interests?
- Do they provide opportunities to assess each child's development in a systematic, progressive way?
- Are the children responding well and making good progress?
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By asking these questions we can be sure that are plans are effective and we are achieving everything we intended.

Observation and Assessment

The purpose of assessment through observation and interaction is to systematically build up a knowledge and understanding of each child. Observations should tell us what the children can do not just what we think they have learned from the activity. Because it is not possible to observe everything where there are large numbers of children involved in a range of play activities, it is therefore necessary to be focused and selective in what is being observed and assessed.

Observations can focus on a variety of things:

- How children respond to the play environment
- What they choose to do
- Who they play with or talk to
- The level of adult support needed
- Their level of involvement in their play
- The range of play experiences over a short period of time
- Whether particular learning outcomes or skills targets for an individual or small group have been achieved
- Children's significant achievement in a particular area of the curriculum

The staff decide which observations lead to action so that observation influences what we do and improves the quality of learning.

Our formal observations provide clear statements about:

- What the child is expected to do – a skills target
- Any differentiation required to help the child access the activity or any extra challenge required to extend learning
- An assessment of the child's ability
- Any specific and significant observations

- The next steps in learning for either individuals or small groups of children

Observation and assessment is used to influence the planning of new learning experiences, highlighting the need to practise a skill and also to direct staff support in the short term. It highlights where additional support or challenge may be required for individuals or groups thus allowing immediate action by staff.

Staff also make brief, informal notes on their observations which also may be used for discussion and planning with other staff members.

Recording

As stated above day-to-day records of observations and assessments are used to plan learning experiences.

Records also provide an outline of each child's progress in all areas/aspects of the 3 to 5 curriculum. Records are used to inform reports to parents and to other professionals and colleagues in local primary schools prior to transfer to primary school.

Profiles are recorded on an electronic database system called T.E.D.E.Y – Tracking Educational Development Early Years in Argyll and Bute.

The profiles will be updated at 3 specified points during both the ante-school and pre-school years, using the staff notes and formal observations, in order to take stock of the progress in development of the children. Profiles are used in conjunction with folios containing samples of the children's work.

Reporting

Formal reporting will take account of the evidence about the child's learning contained in the folio and the profile and should encourage everyone involved to work together on the next steps for learning.

A profile is started when the child comes into the nursery. This will involve the children in recognising what they can do and will note what they have already achieved.

Throughout the year samples of the children's work may be sent home with them.

Informal communication with parents may take place on a day-to-day basis. parent evenings/afternoons are held each year.

Final reports are sent out in May and will be used as a basis for discussion during parent interviews.

The profile is used to complete a transition document, with a summary of the profile and attainment statements, which is sent to the receiving primary school.

The information in the transition document helps to ensure appropriate continuity in learning for each child.

Resources

The most valuable and important resource in the nursery is the human resource. It is therefore important that staff are given opportunities to extend their skills in planning, assessment and observation so that they can plan and provide effective learning experiences to maximise children's progress.

Monitoring and Review

The monitoring and review of this policy will be the responsibility of the head of centre.

Pre-5 workers and assistants will monitor the implementation of the policy at group and individual level.

All pre-5 staff will be involved in discussions when the policy is being reviewed.