



North Dublin Muslim National School

Ratoath Road

Dublin 7

Aistear Policy

October 2020

1. Introductory Statement

This plan forms the basis of infant teachers' long and short-term planning and so will inform teaching and learning in individual classrooms. It also informs new teachers of our approaches and teaching methodologies in the infant classrooms.

2. Rationale

a) What is Aistear?

Aistear is a curriculum framework for children from birth to six years in Ireland. It describes the types of learning that are important for children in their early years. As a curriculum framework, Aistear can work as a guide for primary schools and teachers in planning practical learning programmes for children in infant classes. Aistear is to be used together with the Infant Curriculum to plan fun and challenging experiences for the children in your classroom.

b) The importance of play in our school:

Play can make a unique contribution to the development of the child. It is the child's way of making sense of the world – a learning tool that engages, motivates, challenges and pleases. Its purposes, and the particular character of its activity, provide the means by which the child can achieve an enhanced awareness of self and can experience a unique mode of learning. It can:

- Give each child a rich oral language experience and afford the opportunity to experiment with different registers of language.
- Give each child the opportunity to approach new knowledge through the dimension of imaginative activity and experience.
- Give each child the opportunity to approach knowledge in the ways that are most suitable to him/her
- Create the motivation and interest that can spur the child to research, and thus foster an attitude that views knowledge as essential in adapting his/her perception of the world.
- Provide the means by which the child can relate knowledge, in a special way, to previous learning and experience.
- Help the child to see pattern and unity in seemingly disparate pieces of knowledge encountered in different subjects.
- Make distant what is close and make close what is distant at both a cognitive and an affective level, so that aspects of life can be explored closely enough to afford effective examination but distant enough to provide safety for the child.
- Facilitate the child's imaginative, intellectual, emotional and physical development in a contemporaneous and holistic way.

- Foster the child’s creativity, invention, insight, discovery and problem solving through exploring actively the intuitive and the spontaneous.
- Allow the child, through the medium of play, to experience, understand and practice the life skills needed in reality.
- Promote empathy with the ideas, attitudes and feelings of others.

3. Vision

We seek to use the Aistear framework to provide information for teachers to help them plan for and provide enjoyable and challenging learning experiences, so that all children can grow and develop as competent and confident learners. We seek to use the Aistear methodology as part of early intervention in the infant classes. We intend for all children to be exposed to wide range of vocabulary in a practical setting in order to improve language fluency and comprehension.

4. Aims

We endorse the themes and aims of the Aistear framework:

Themes	Aims
<i>Well-being</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Children will be strong psychologically and socially ● Children will be as healthy and fit as they can be ● Children will be creative and spiritual ● Children will have positive outlooks on learning and on life
<i>Identity and Belonging</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Children will have strong self-identities and will feel respected and affirmed as unique individuals with their own life stories ● Children will have a sense of group identity where links with their family and community are acknowledged and extended. ● Children will be able to express their rights and show an understanding and regard for the identity, rights and views of others ● Children will see themselves as capable learners
<i>Communicating</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Children will use non-verbal communication skills ● Children will use language (listening, speaking, signing, drawing, and writing) ● Children will broaden their understanding of the world by making sense of experiences through

	<p>language (listening, speaking, signing, drawing, and writing)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Children will express themselves creatively and imaginatively
<i>Exploring and Thinking</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Children will learn about and make sense of the world around them ● Children will develop and use skills and strategies for observing, questioning, investigating, understanding, negotiating, and problem-solving, and come to see themselves as explorers and thinkers. ● Children will explore ways to represent ideas, feelings, thoughts, objects, and actions through symbols. ● Children will have positive attitudes towards learning and develop dispositions like curiosity, playfulness, perseverance, confidence, resourcefulness, and risk-taking.

5. Types of Play

Teachers will plan four types of play in each Aistear session.

a) Creative play: involves children exploring and using their bodies and materials to make and do things and to share their feelings, ideas and thoughts. Activities can include painting, playing with junk and recycled materials, working with play-dough and clay, and using their imaginations.

b) Language play: involves children playing with sounds and words. It includes unrehearsed and spontaneous manipulation of these, often with rhythmic and repetitive elements. Activities should encourage children to play with language – enjoy patterns, jokes, stories, sounds and nonsense words

c) Physical play: involves children developing, practising and refining bodily movements and control. It includes whole body and limb movements, co-ordination and balance. Exploratory play involves children using physical skills and their senses to find out what things feel like and what can be done with them. Constructive play involves building something using natural and manufactured materials.

d) Pretend play: involves children using their imaginations. It includes pretending with objects, actions and situations. Children use their developing language to move from

thinking in the concrete to thinking in the abstract. Children act out real events and they also take part in fantasy play about things that are not real, such as super-heroes. Children try out roles, occupations and experiences in their pretend play.

6. Pupils with Special Educational Needs

All pupils should have the opportunity to participate in and benefit from the full range of experiences offered in play. When planning for play, teachers will ensure that effective differentiation is established so that all children will be given the opportunity to obtain maximum benefit from the session.

7. Linkage and Integration

Linkage

Linkage within the play session will occur where a lesson based on one particular strand may also draw on another strand. For example: a group of children reflecting on the drama that they created in role play. Integration across curricular areas will occur where the teacher draws on another subject topic as a stimulus for the play session or uses play to aid consolidation of a particular topic. Aistear can be used to integrate all areas of the curriculum. For example, a play session about "The Restaurant" might include:

- Socio-dramatic play where children play in role using pre-taught vocabulary.
- An investigation area where children identify procedural steps for recipes.
- A story bag where children sequence and re-tell a known story using props.
- A creative area where children design and create menus to be used in the roleplay area.

Opportunities will be sought to integrate aspects of Religion and Arabic into Aistear where possible.

8. Assessment

The Aistear framework uses five assessment methods to gather evidence of children's learning and development across all themes. This evidence helps practitioners to build rich portraits of children as learners in order to celebrate their achievements and to help them take the next steps in their learning.

Records of assessment will be kept in observation notes and pupil profiles. Mainstream teachers will record reflections of play sessions on the NCCA Aistear short term planning template. SET teachers will take part in Aistear sessions and make observation notes alongside the mainstream teacher.

Assessment Methods:

- Self-assessment: using samples of work
- Conversations: one to one, paired, group and whole class
- Observation: teacher as an observer and teacher in role
- Setting tasks: worksheets and activities
- Testing/Questioning: reporting and reflecting on play using photos and video clips

9. Organisational Planning

An Aistear session must include the following stages:

Activity	Duration
Planning*: group discussion about the visual timetable. Paired or group planning of play using future tense.	5 minutes
Play: engaging with activities/material at assigned play areas. Tidy up.	Infant Play: 20 minutes Infant Tidy up: 5 minutes
Reviewing*: can include oral reporting (knee to knee), guided writing and free writing (using the playtime vocabulary board)	10 minutes

*See Appendix 3 for examples of questions that can be used to develop planning and reviewing.

10. Health and Safety

- Activities must be assigned to an appropriate area in the classroom. There must be a safe distance between play areas.
- Playtime resources/props are to be stored away on shelves.
- Teachers are to consider the health and safety of all children when selecting appropriate props and resources for playtime.
- Rough behaviour is not tolerated even within the context of role play and children are made aware of this beforehand.

11. Individual Teachers' Planning and Reporting

Teachers will consult this Whole School Plan and the curriculum documents for curriculum subjects being integrated in Aistear sessions when they are drawing up their long and short-term plans.

Teachers use Aistear as a methodology to aid curricular integration. Where suitable, Aistear will be used in a thematic way to integrate with the other curricular subjects. Each teacher will have a long-term plan for the year and will tailor them to the needs of their own classes in their short term planning.

The NCCA Aistear template will assist in recording work covered, in evaluating progress in learning and in informing future teaching.

12. Staff Development

- Teachers will have access to reference books, resource materials and websites dealing with Aistear.
- All infant teachers will be responsible for cataloging resources and will arrange for opportunities for resources to be assessed for purchase.
- Access to Aistear Toolkit: <http://www.ncca.ie/aisteartoolkit>

13. Parental Involvement

- Parents have an important role to play by discussing their child's playtime experiences with them. This gives the parent a valuable role in facilitating the children's playtime experiences with them.
- Parents can also assist with the compilation of toys, props and costumes.
- Parents will be made aware of the contribution that play makes to their child's learning and development (Aistear leaflets are available on the NCCA website).
- Parents can view their child's involvement in Aistear through our school twitter account.

14. Success Criteria

The school-wide implementation of this plan will result in the enhancement of pupils' well-being, identity and belonging, communicating and exploring and using skills. It will encompass the complete holistic development of each child and ensure that all pupils have the opportunity to learn through play.

Means of assessing the outcomes of the plan will include:

- Revisiting the aims of this plan as a staff.
- Teacher / Parent feedback
- Children’s feedback
- Inspectors reports / suggestions
- Results of class assessment

15. Implementation

a) Roles and Responsibilities

The plan will be supported and developed by all staff members. All infant teachers will be responsible for implementing Aistear effectively in their classroom.

b) Timeframe

It will be necessary to review this plan on a regular basis to ensure optimum implementation of Aistear as a teaching methodology. We aim to review this plan during the 2020/2021 school year.

c) Ratification and Communication

This plan was ratified by the Board of Management in October 2020 and will be available on the school website and staff shared drive thereafter.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Chairperson

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Principal

Appendices

1. Games with rules
2. Teacher's role in Aistear
3. Planning and reviewing objectives
4. Aistear themes
5. List of resources

1. Games with Rules

“Games with rules” is the fifth type of play used in the Aistear framework. It may not always be possible to plan for this type of play during an Aistear session as the nature of the activities often require constant adult supervision. It is advised that “games with rules” are explicitly taught in the following areas:

- English through “Jolly Phonics”
- Gaeilge through “Bua na Cainte”
- Maths through “Ready Set Go”
- Through other games used across the curriculum.

2. Teacher's Role in Aistear

Whilst the tendency to play is universally acknowledged as being innate, increasingly it is recognised that in order for play to flourish as a truly enjoyable, cognitive, and socially adaptive human ability, adult support is necessary. Where possible, SET staff will take part in Aistear sessions and make observation notes alongside the mainstream teacher.

The role of the mainstream teacher:

a) **Planning for play:** resources, space and what the children will learn. The teachers will use the NCCA Aistear planning template for short term planning. Themes* and specific vocabulary will be noted in long term Drama plans. *See appendix 4 for outline of themes.

b) **Supporting play:** observing, documenting, facilitating and participating in play. Teachers will remember that they are an equal participant and will not take over the play session. The session is to be child led and the teacher must ask the children if they may join the session. Teachers will not interrupt the play session in order to assess or question the children. Teachers will alter the type and amount of support as the children grow in confidence and competence.

c) **Reviewing play:** reflecting on the children’s play, what they learned and plan forward. *See appendix 3 for sample review questions. Teachers will use the NCCA Aistear planning template to record short term reflections.

3. Planning and Reviewing Objectives

Sample of Teacher's Questions which develop planning skills and use of future tense:

- What are you going to do in your area today?
- What toys are you going to choose?
- What equipment are you going to use?
- How are you going to make that?
- Why are you going to choose that?
- Who are you going to play with?

Sample of Teacher's Questions which develop recount skills and use of past tense:

- Who did you play with today?
- What area did you play in?
- What did you do in that area?
- What toys did you play with?
- What equipment did you use?
- What was your favourite part of playtime? Why?

Reviewing play:

- Reviewing happens at the end of the play session.
- The child considers four questions when reviewing: Who? What? Where? and How?
- The teacher should challenge easy answers, model correct grammar and model a clear speaking voice. The teacher will draw attention to vocabulary on the playtime board as it arises in conversation.
- A balance between individual, group and whole class discussion.
- A balance between reflecting, listening, speaking, writing and questioning.
- Can be enhanced by use of photos and video clips of the play session.
- Imagine what might happen in the future – make choices and consider consequences.

4. Aistear Themes

Year 1	Year 2
The Restaurant	Hospital
Space	Supermarket
Home Corner	Garden Centre/Minibeasts
Dentist	Travel Agent
Post Office	Weather
The Vet	Optician

5. Resources

- Aistear toolkit <http://www.ncca.ie/aistear toolkit>
- NCCA Aistear planning/reflection template (page 18)
http://www.nccaplanning.ie/support/pdf/short_term_planning.pdf
- Twinkl: role play packs and worksheets <http://www.twinkl.co.uk/>
- Primary Treasure Chest (lots of editable resources)
<http://www.primarytreasurechest.com/>
- Various big books and stories (available in infant classrooms)
- Aistear resource packs (available in infant classrooms)