



## **St Margaret's Primary School and Early Learning and Childcare Campus**

**Be Safe, Be Respectful, Be the Best You**

**The St Margaret's Way**

**'Play is the Way'**

**Rationale**

### **Introduction**

*"Play encompasses children's behaviour which is freely chosen, personally directed and intrinsically motivated. It is performed for no external goal or reward, and is a fundamental and integral part of healthy development – not only for individual children but also for the society in which they live.*

(Scottish Government, Play Strategy for Scotland, 2013:12)

At St Margaret's Primary School and Early Learning and Childcare Campus, we firmly believe in ensuring that all children achieve their full potential, to be the best they can be. We are committed to ensuring that all young children are provided with a nurturing environment which promotes creativity and curiosity, encouraging children to lead their own learning.

'Play is the Way' is Falkirk Council's strategy to ensure all pupils in the early years of Primary School receive a developmentally appropriate approach to learning.

At St Margaret's Primary School and Early learning and Childcare Campus we are now adopting a 'Play is the Way' approach to learning in Primary 1 and Primary 2. Throughout next session we will developing the role that play based and active learning plays in ensuring creative thinking, independence and high engagement in learning throughout our school.

### **What do we mean by 'play'?**

Play, more than anything else, defines childhood and is fundamental to children's quality of life. Play gives children an opportunity to express themselves, learn about the world and interact with others. Play is a process that is freely chosen, personally directed and intrinsically motivated. That is, children determine and control the content of their play, by following their own instincts, ideas and interests, in their own way for their own reason.

### **The Value of Play**

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.

We recognise the value of play in the following ways:

- Play promotes children's development, learning, imagination, creativity and independence.
- Play contributes to keeping children healthy and active.
- Play allows children to experience and encounter boundaries, and learn to assess and manage risk.

- Play allows children to develop a sense of community and learn about different people, places and environments.
- Play helps children learn about themselves; their abilities, interests and preferences and how that can contribute to a larger group.
- Play is therapeutic and can help children deal with stress, difficulties and emotional concerns.
- Play is an important way of initiating, building and maintaining important relationships.

### **Implementation**

*“As well as time for play, evidence shows us that the physical environment has a significant impact on children’s play experience. A stimulating and varied environment which makes playful resources available to children, supports more varied and complex play opportunities indoors and out.” (Play Scotland, 2017)*

Staff will ensure that children are provided with a stimulating environment that offers a variety of spaces and resources for open ended play, within a wide range of settings, including the outdoors.

There will be times when pupils are working with the class teacher as a whole class or in smaller ability and mixed ability groups. This is referred to as Teacher Led activities. There will also be teacher initiated tasks to be completed by the pupils throughout the day known as ‘Rich Tasks’. There will be flexibility in when these tasks are completed. These will generally relate to learning in Literacy and Mathematics and numeracy.

The class teacher and adults in the classroom will also work with pupils during their play by engaging children’s curiosity and questions, helping children reflect and extend their thinking and supporting children to solve their own problems.

### **Risk Management**

Two related principles guide our approach to play and risk management:

1. Children have the right to play.
2. Children have the right to be safe.

With this in mind, we acknowledge that risk is an inherent and important aspect of play. Children will naturally create and or seek out challenging situations. We recognise that any potential risk of harm to children needs to be balanced with the potential for good that may come from their taking part in a particular form of play. Through risk children learn their limitations and deal with environmental hazards.

Pupils will be involved in assessing potential risks in the play spaces, developing guidelines to mitigate risk. This is in keeping with the practices recommended by Falkirk Council. Further to this, the grounds, play spaces and equipment will be monitored and evaluated regularly to ensure high health and safety standards.