



BANCHORY-DEVENICK SCHOOL
A Practice Statement for LOOSE PARTS PLAY



'Play is the highest form of research.'

Albert Einstein

'When children pretend, they're using their imaginations to move beyond the bounds of reality. A stick can be a magic wand; a sock can be a puppet; a small child can be a superhero.'

Fred Rogers

Rationale:

At Banchory Devenick School, we believe that a combination of structured and unstructured play aids in the development of gross motor skills, fine motor skills and social skills including teamwork and kindness. Children need opportunities to be creative and inventive in their environment, manipulating and constructing their ideas through play. Through loose parts play, we strive to offer opportunities for children's to play that supports the SHANARRI wellbeing indicators - Safe, Healthy, Achieving, Nurtured, Active, Respected, Responsible, and Included.



'Children have a right to play' (Article 31 - UNCRF) and we recognise the importance of all the children having sufficient time and space to play freely as part of their day. To children, playing is one of the most important aspects of their lives, and for some, school offers their only regular opportunity to play with friends.

The Four Capacities:

The Curriculum for Excellence is centred around helping children develop the four capacities, and loose parts play can help develop these in a natural way.



- **Responsible Citizens** - Caring for the equipment,
 - Caring for the play environment,
 - Developing an understanding of personal risk,
 - Respecting their peers.
- **Confident Individuals** - Gaining independence through experimentation,
 - Developing resilience and ability to regulate emotions when things don't go well,

- Assessing their own risk to make choices in their play.
- Successful Learners - Being motivated and excited to learn,
 - Developing fine and gross motor skills,
 - Exploring maths in the wider world,
 - Developing communication skills.
- Effective Contributors - Developing critical thinking skills,
 - Transferring skills between formal learning and play,
 - Working in partnership with a range of peers,
 - Taking initiative and leading groups of peers,
 - Creating and developing ideas.

Proven Benefits of Loose Parts Play:

There is an ever-increasing body of research detailing the benefits of loose parts and play through childhood. Some of the notable benefits are:

- Problem solving and theoretical reasoning,
- Ability to think creatively,
- Excitement and adventure through play,
- Social skills and teamwork, including communication and negotiation skills (Maxwell, Mitchell and Evans, 2008),
- Physical activity,
- Improved behaviour in the classroom,
- Achievement of curriculum objectives (Wagland, 2015),
- Coordination (Fjørtoft and Sageie, 2000).

Risk:

As with many things, loose parts play comes with a variety of risks. With this in mind, a full risk assessment has been carried out. All objects are visually checked by the staff as they are brought out for each session and any we are unsure about, will be kept away until another member of staff can give a second opinion. We approach loose parts using a risk/benefit mindset and will allow the children to play uninterrupted unless we deem the risk of the activity to outweigh the benefit for the child/children. This mindset is supported by the Health and Safety Executive in their high-level statement, *Children's Play and Leisure: Promoting a Balanced Approach*. Staff have open and honest dialogue with each other and the children about what is deemed appropriate and acceptable, and what is not.

Guidelines:

At Banchory Devenick School, we will ensure that:

1. Children in P1-4 have access to a range of loose parts within the classroom environment. These are used to both to enhance learning during structured play and can be accessed during free play. These are rotated regularly to keep play exciting and engaging.
2. Children have access to outdoor loose parts, including our mud kitchen, at least two lunchtimes a week, more often where possible.
3. Children play an active part in the development of loose parts expectations. The current expectations were agreed by the P1-4 class when we first introduced loose parts sessions. These have since been adapted using feedback from children across the school.
4. We will provide access to loose parts in a range of weathers to allow the children to experience the objects in different ways. Through discussion with the children, some objects will not be outside during wet weather for safety reasons.
5. We will allow all children to play with the outdoor loose parts equipment together at lunchtimes. This will help to further embed our ethos of inclusion across the school. Any structured loose parts tasks set up within the school building will be shared with all class teachers so a decision can be made as to whether the task is suitable for their class at that point in time.
6. All staff are aware of the benefits of play and its links to children's development.

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