

Learning Through Play Policy

Coldstream ELC

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Date: September 2024

Review Dates: January 2026

Our school policy aligns with current national and SBC guidance.

Aim

To ensure children receive age- and stage-appropriate, play-based learning opportunities and experiences, based on:

- **Curriculum for Excellence Early Level**
- **Realising the Ambition**
- **How Good is our Early Learning and Childcare Setting**

Children will have their **right to play respected**, in accordance with **UNCRC Article 31**. Children will engage in **free-flow play** as much as possible during every ELC session. They will have the freedom to choose **where** (indoors or outdoors) and **with what** they play, with minimal interruption, and can spend as much time as needed in **deep play**.

Staff will **observe, interact, and play alongside children** to extend learning while respecting the child-led nature of play.

Learning Environment

Coldstream ELC's indoor and outdoor play spaces are organised to promote **independence** and **free choice**. Resources and materials are **easily accessible and recognisable** to the children.

Staff will plan play opportunities that **meet the needs and extend the learning of all children**, ensuring engagement across a variety of **play types**, including:

Types of Play

1. Schematic Play

"A schema is a pattern of repeated actions. Clusters of schemas develop into later concepts" (Athey, 2007). Schemas reflect children's fascinations. Each child may display different schemas:

- **Rotation:** Interest in circular movement (wheels, roundabouts).
- **Trajectory:** Exploring motion (dropping, pushing, running).
- **Enclosing:** Creating cosy spaces (dens, hiding toys).

- **Enveloping:** Wrapping objects or self (blankets, paint, fancy dress).
- **Positioning:** Arranging objects or self in patterns/sequences.
- **Connecting:** Joining things together (magnets, trains, construction toys).
- **Transporting:** Moving objects from place to place.
- **Orientation:** Exploring different angles and perspectives (climbing, hanging upside down).

2. Symbolic Play

Using **objects, actions, or ideas to represent other objects, actions, or ideas** (e.g., cardboard tube as a telescope).

3. Physical Play

- Developing **body awareness, flexibility, balance, coordination, and gross motor skills**.
- Close encounter play encourages positive, safe exploration of physical boundaries.

4. Social Play

- **Dramatic Social Play:** Acting out experiences (house, shop, restaurant).
- **Interactive Play:** Situations requiring rules or collaboration.

5. Creative Play

- Exploring, experimenting, and using imagination.
- Altering objects, making something new.

6. Dramatic Play

- Children assign roles and act them out.

7. Locomotor Play

- Movement for enjoyment (chase, tag, hide and seek, tree climbing).

8. Deep Play

- Encountering controlled risks (heights, insects, challenging experiences).

9. Exploratory Play

- Using senses to explore textures, smells, tastes, and functions.

10. Fantasy/Imaginative Play

- Make-believe scenarios, exploring new roles (pilot, driver).

11. Mastery Play

- Controlling physical and environmental elements (digging, constructing shelters).

12. Object Play

- Developing fine motor skills through hand-eye coordination (painting, manipulating small objects).

13. Recapitulative Play

- Exploring history, ancestry, rituals, stories, rhymes, fire, and darkness.
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Play Opportunities

- Play will be **responsive to children's interests**, including chance happenings and local community events.
 - Resources and materials will support **exploration, investigation, experimentation, problem-solving, and understanding cause and effect**.
 - Children will **suggest ideas, make decisions, and have input** into available play materials.
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Literacy and Numeracy

- Embedded within all play areas, indoors and outdoors.
 - Opportunities to develop **talking, listening, early reading, writing, and counting skills** will be plentiful.
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Observation and Assessment

- Staff will **observe, talk, and interact** with children to support learning.
 - Observations inform changes to the **environment** and **interactions** to extend learning.
 - Achievements will be recorded in **Personal Learning Journeys**, shared regularly with parents via the **Showbie App**.
 - Parents are encouraged to **contribute learning experiences** from home.
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Curriculum for Excellence Early Level

Children experience **play-based learning** and routine activities in:

- Literacy and English
- Numeracy and Mathematics
- Health and Wellbeing
- Technologies
- Science
- Social Studies

- Expressive Arts
- Religious and Moral Education

Staff will **plan learning opportunities** across curricular areas based on **children's interests**, often covering multiple areas at once. **Evidence** is captured in the **floor book**.

Risk-Taking and Safety

- Coldstream ELC encourages **risky play** to develop negotiating skills and self-awareness.
- Practitioners ensure children are safe by:
 - Discussing safety with children
 - Establishing and displaying behaviour expectations
 - Supporting children's decision-making
 - Conducting health and safety checks
 - Identifying acceptable/unacceptable risks and removing hazards
 - Guiding children to carry out their **own risk assessments**

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