



Information for parents and carers

Curriculum for Excellence:
Learning at the early level

www.curriculumforexcellencescotland.gov.uk



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Curriculum for Excellence

Curriculum for Excellence represents Scotland's vision for the education of all children. It aims to raise standards, improve knowledge and develop skills.

It's different in scale, scope and approach to any kind of educational development that's been undertaken in Scotland before.

This enriched and creative curriculum requires the full involvement of teachers, practitioners, parents and learners, and for everyone to work together.

The aim of all pre-school centres providing education and primary schools

in Scotland is to ensure that every child should experience a broad education that develops skills for learning, for life, and work with a real focus on literacy and numeracy and promotes an active and healthy lifestyle.

Parents and carers are the biggest influence on a child's development, particularly in the early years. Staff and parents sharing information is key to the best possible start for children.

We don't just want children and young people to survive in this changing world, we want them to thrive in it.



This leaflet will give information to parents and carers about the early level of Curriculum for Excellence and this follows on from and provides additional information to the parent leaflet – **Bringing life to learning and learning to life:** www.curriculumforexcellencescotland.gov.uk/parenttoolkit

Play and active learning

A play-based curriculum is now widely considered to be the most appropriate approach for the development of young children's learning.

Young children learn and develop friendships very naturally through play.

Play brings about a wealth of opportunities for children to develop their language, creativity and co-ordination skills. These all contribute to healthy growth and development, knowledge and understanding and capacity to learn.

It's especially important that children have regular and frequent opportunities to play outdoors.



Through play, they can learn scientific concepts, such as what plants need to grow; mathematical concepts, for example, fitting blocks together to build a tower; literacy skills, such as looking for signs outdoors; technology skills, including scanning their artwork and emailing it to friends and family.

In this way, children learn how to:

- **Work in partnership with others**
- **Express themselves**
- **Build their independence**
- **Make sense of their experiences**
- **Manipulate materials**
- **Test out new knowledge**
- **Develop new skills**
- **Make choices and decisions**
- **Solve problems... and lots more.**

Play and active learning

Children also need to take risks to learn about and understand their own capabilities.

It's important that children are allowed to take risks, within a safe and supportive environment rather than remove all risk from the play experience. This will help them to learn how to manage their own risky play opportunities.

Giving children free rein to develop their wonderful and creative imagination is a vital part of any childhood. Incorporating risk into their play will help children develop, learn and enjoy themselves all at the same time!

Risky play opportunities occur every day and can include:

- **Climbing trees**
- **Toasting marshmallows on an open fire**
- **Building a den**
- **Creating models with appropriate tools such as hammer and nails**
- **Using real cutlery to help prepare snacks**
- **Cooking or baking cakes**
- **Tackling assault courses**
- **Clambering over rocks at the beach**
- **Exploring the woods**
- **Playing in the rain and snow**



Active learning within Curriculum for Excellence doesn't mean that children are actively running around. It is learning that engages children and challenges their thinking.

Motivated children who are actively engaged with tasks that have a clear purpose will retain and learn more and will be more likely to transfer the knowledge and be able to apply it in different situations.

Right from the outset, young children will be partners in the learning process; actively participating in the planning, shaping and directing of their own learning.

With sensitive adult support they'll learn how to make informed choices, take responsibility for their own learning and offer ideas for improvements.

Finding out about your child's progress

As staff form a relationship with your child by getting to know their strengths and preferences, they will consult regularly with you to create a joint record of your child's progress.

This could include:

- **Observing your child's activities and tasks**
- **Notes about how happy and settled they are**
- **Information gained by asking questions and listening carefully to their responses**
- **Examples of drawings, writing and artwork**
- **Something they've made or produced**

Staff will use this, along with any information you share to plan the next steps in your child's learning. This record will also be a basis for regular discussion with you, along with more informal day-to-day contact.



Quality of provision

All pre-school centres and primary schools are encouraged to arrange regular staff training and to keep under review how they work with children. Staff participate in regular professional development activities to ensure all children are provided with high quality learning experiences.

The Care Commission regulates all pre-school settings and inspects the quality of care in these. Where the pre-school setting belongs to, or is in partnership with the local authority, Her Majesty's Inspectors of Education and the Care Commission inspect jointly.

Copies of inspection reports are available from the centre or from:

www.hmie.gov.uk

www.carecommission.gov.uk

Transitions from Pre-school to Primary 1



The early level of Curriculum for Excellence serves a number of purposes.

For most children, it provides the basis for their learning experiences in pre-school years and Primary 1.

As the early level spans pre-school and Primary 1, staff will create opportunities to improve successful transitions.

Moving from pre-school to Primary 1 needs everyone involved, including

teachers, early years practitioners, parents and children, to understand the importance of continuing and building on children's learning.

For some children and young people with additional support needs, the early level will provide a framework for learning and progression beyond the early primary stage and, perhaps, for most of their time in school.

How you can help your child

Your child learns and develops rapidly during the important early years of their life. During this time, the home learning environment has a significant impact on children's development, and their ability and willingness to learn.

By making sure you talk, listen and play with your child, involve them in a wide range of activities as part of their daily routine, and help them investigate the world around them, you can help give them the best possible start in life.

You can help your child to learn by playing together and:

- **Encouraging them to be independent e.g. getting dressed and washing-hands**
- **Giving them opportunities to share and join in with other children**
- **Going out for walks or visits, and talking about what you see**
- **Helping them develop literacy skills by reading to them every day, learning nursery rhymes together and reading familiar words to them**
- **Helping them develop number skills by encouraging them to count and use numbers e.g. counting up and down stairs, pairing up socks or collecting stones and putting them in order of size**
- **Supporting, encouraging and listening to them as they express themselves, talk about their thoughts and ideas, and how they're feeling**
- **Singing, dancing, painting and have fun together**
- **Giving them opportunities to use their fingers and hands e.g. building with bricks, cutting with scissors, fastening zips and buttons**
- **Finding out what they're doing at nursery or school and think about what you can do to build on this**
- **Talking to the staff working with your child and share information with them**
- **Asking for extra help if you think your child needs it for any reason**
- **Remember to praise their efforts**

Finding out more

If you have any questions about what you have read in this leaflet, talk to the staff at your pre-school setting or primary school. You can also contact your local council (Education Department or Children's Service).

Further information for parents of children aged 3 to 18 about education in Scotland, including ideas on how to support your child's learning, can be found at:

www.parentzonescotland.gov.uk

www.curriculumforexcellencescotland.gov.uk

For parents of children with additional support needs further information can be found from Enquire at **www.enquire.org.uk** or by telephone: **0845 123 2303**

Additional copies of this guide are available from Learning and Teaching Scotland. Call Customer Services on tel: **08700 100 297**

