

# a curriculum for excellence

## building the curriculum 2

active learning in the early years

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# a curriculum for excellence

## building the curriculum 3–18 (2)

### active learning in the early years

#### Who is this for?

All staff working with children in pre-school education settings and the early years of primary and special schools.

#### What is this for?

Personal reflection to support a more active approach to learning and teaching.

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# introduction

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*A Curriculum for Excellence* establishes clear values, purposes and principles for education from 3 to 18 in Scotland. It sets out to enable children and young people to develop their capacities as successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors. It provides us with an important opportunity to improve early education<sup>1</sup> for all children: we have an opportunity to ensure that all children in pre-school and primary school settings

experience stimulating, effective learning in ways that are appropriate to their needs.

In 2004, the Ministerial Response to the Curriculum Review proposed to:

*'... bring the 3–5 and 5–14 curriculum guidelines together to ensure a smooth transition in what children have learned and also in how they learn. This will mean extending the approaches which are used in pre-school into the early years of primary, emphasising the importance of opportunities for children to learn through purposeful, well-planned play.'*

For the first time, the curriculum for the pre-school sector and the early years of primary will therefore be presented together as one level. This will describe experiences and outcomes for children's learning in ways which will support a more active approach to learning and teaching in early primary school and encourage better continuity and progression for all children across all settings. This publication addresses these key aspirations of *A Curriculum for Excellence*.

## Early years education in Scotland

Scotland's early education settings are very diverse. We have a wide variety of pre-school provision in the public, private and voluntary sectors. In the early years of primary school, children are taught in settings ranging from large primary schools with and without nursery provision to schools with different kinds of composite classes. The principles of continuity and progression in learning and teaching apply to all settings, but the way these are put into practice will vary according to the stage of development of children and the local circumstances.

<sup>1</sup> In this document the terms 'early years' and 'early education' refer to all pre-school and early primary settings. The term 'staff' is used to refer to all those working with young children including headteachers, heads of centres, teachers, early childhood practitioners, classroom assistants and support for learning assistants.



In the early years we already have many examples of very good practice which reflect the values, purposes and principles of *A Curriculum for Excellence*. In these settings children in pre-school centres and early primary school are having high quality, well planned experiences based on active learning approaches. They move from one setting to another with minimum disruption to their development and progress as staff plan learning and teaching to meet each child's emotional, social and intellectual development.

Referring to pre-school education in *Improving Scottish Education*, HM Inspectorate of Education (HMIE) states:

*'In the majority of instances, activities on offer to children are wide-ranging yet carefully planned to extend interest and learning.'*

However, not all children in primary or pre-school education experience this high quality. For example, HMIE goes on to identify as a key theme for improvement in primary schools:

*'... the quality of pupils' learning experiences is still too variable and too often lacks relevance, engagement and excitement.'*

With *A Curriculum for Excellence*, all settings have an opportunity to review and improve their approach to children's learning and development.

## Using this publication

The *Building the Curriculum* series is considering key features which will make *A Curriculum for Excellence* a reality. Successful implementation of *A Curriculum for Excellence* will depend upon children having the highest quality of learning and teaching in the early years. This publication provides an overview of active learning in practice. It considers:

- > what we know about young children's learning and how this relates to the four capacities
- > how methodologies can change to support children's learning as they develop
- > the importance of continuity in children's learning and experiences as they move into primary school
- > practical aspects of active learning – staffing, space and resources
- > development of staff.

By offering principles and reflective questions it aims to:

- > support local authorities, schools and early education centres to review methodology and improve practice where necessary to meet the needs of all children
- > be relevant to the institutions which provide qualifications, training and continuing professional development (CPD) for staff
- > provide, for all staff, a stimulus for reflection, debate and review of approaches to learning and teaching. The reflective questions can be used in conjunction with other tools for reflection such as *The Child at the Centre*<sup>2</sup>, *How Good is our School?*<sup>3</sup>, *Ensuring Effective Transitions*<sup>4</sup>, and *The Journey to Excellence*<sup>5</sup>.

Some local authorities are already giving priority to extending high quality active learning in all their early years settings and particularly in Primary 1. This publication will help to extend this process throughout the country.

## Leadership for learning

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All staff have a role as leaders of learning in helping to bring about improvement for children. Many staff will already be practising active learning approaches while others may need to adjust their practice to meet children's needs better.

Headteachers and heads of centres have a critical role in ensuring that all children have high quality learning experiences. They need to be clear about their vision, values and aims for curriculum change, to

lead and support colleagues in identifying good practice, and to build on existing strengths to implement *A Curriculum for Excellence* in their schools and pre-school centres. Many staff will require opportunities and support to develop their methodology and thinking in relation to active learning. Leaders therefore need to work with their colleagues to:

<sup>2</sup> *The Child at the Centre: Self-evaluation in the Early Years*, Scottish Executive, 2000.

<sup>3</sup> *How Good is our School?*, HM Inspectorate of Education, 2002.

<sup>4</sup> *How Good is our School: Ensuring Effective Transitions*, HM Inspectorate of Education, 2006.

<sup>5</sup> *How Good is our School: The Journey to Excellence*, HM Inspectorate of Education, 2006.



- > build confidence that changes to learning and teaching will be in the best interests of children
- > evaluate practice and identify how it might be improved
- > ensure that appropriate resources are available and used in the best ways
- > plan systematically for change and manage it at an appropriate pace.



# active learning

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## What do we mean by active learning?

In Scotland, as in many countries throughout the world, active learning is seen as an appropriate way for children to develop vital skills and knowledge and a positive attitude to learning.

Active learning is learning which engages and challenges children's thinking using real-life and

imaginary situations. It takes full advantage of the opportunities for learning presented by:

- > spontaneous play
- > planned, purposeful play
- > investigating and exploring
- > events and life experiences
- > focused learning and teaching

supported when necessary through sensitive intervention to support or extend learning. All areas of the curriculum can be enriched and developed through play.

This definition is supported by staff who attended seminars which took place in 2006 across Scotland to discuss the implications of *A Curriculum for Excellence* for the early years. When asked to reflect on what active learning might look like in early primary school, delegates suggested:

*'A true building on experiences in nursery. Hands-on independent play with appropriate skilled intervention/teaching.'*

*'Children learn by doing, thinking, exploring, through quality interaction, intervention and relationships, founded on children's interests and abilities across a variety of contexts. All combining to building the four capacities for each child.'*

*'Environments that offer differential play and challenge, staff who are well informed and able to challenge learning, child-centred and building on previous experiences, fun absolutely essential, children planning and evaluating their learning.'*



## Active learning and the four capacities

Active learning in the early years can support children's development of the four capacities in many ways. For example, they can develop as:

- > *successful learners* through using their imagination and creativity, tackling new experiences and learning from them, and developing important skills including literacy and numeracy through exploring and investigating while following their own interests
- > *confident individuals* through succeeding in their activities, having the satisfaction of a task accomplished, learning about bouncing back from setbacks, and dealing safely with risk
- > *responsible citizens* through encountering different ways of seeing the world, learning to share and give and take, learning to respect themselves and others, and taking part in making decisions
- > *effective contributors* through playing together in leading or supporting roles, tackling problems, extending communication skills, taking part in sustained talking and thinking, and respecting the opinions of others.

## Research background

There is much agreement in the work of researchers<sup>6</sup> that active learning, including purposeful play, has a positive and lasting impact on children's learning in pre-school and the early years of primary school.

In recent years, a more formal approach to learning and teaching has become prevalent in the early years of primary school, perhaps due to schools' response to an increasingly crowded curriculum. Research indicates that developmentally appropriate practice is most conducive to effective learning. For example, it suggests that there is no long-term advantage to children when there is an over-emphasis on systematic teaching before 6 or 7 years of age. A key message is that approaches to fostering learning need to be flexible to take account of the needs of the child, and will change as children develop.

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<sup>6</sup> See, for example, a commissioned report by SEED: Christine Stephen, *A Review of the International Literature on Early Years Education, 2006*.

Work which was commissioned by the Scottish Executive Education Department (SEED)<sup>7</sup> to explore the scope for a more learner-centred and differentiated approach in Primary 1 also supports this view.

Early intervention has been used in Scotland to provide focused support for young children's literacy and numeracy. In 2001, the early intervention initiative was evaluated<sup>8</sup> to determine the impact that the initiative had had on children's learning. The report described a number of improvements. Across Scotland, education authorities reported considerable success in raising attainment in literacy and numeracy as a result of the interventions. However, there was concern about growing pressure on some children and that play and self-directed activity were now perceived to be less valued in the early years of primary school. The report listed a number of recommendations including the following:

*'There is a need to debate curriculum balance in the early stages of the primary school, and consider whether play and self-directed learning opportunities are under-represented.'*

A number of education authorities responded to concerns about diminished opportunities for play and active learning through their CPD programmes, which included courses and workshops on the importance of play as a vehicle for learning. In addition, a number of authorities provided additional resources and appointed staff tutors to support play in the classroom.

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<sup>7</sup> Insight 28, *Early Years Education: Perspectives from a review of the international literature*, SEED, 2006.

<sup>8</sup> Interchange 71, *Early Intervention in Literacy and Numeracy*, SEED, 2001.



# active learning in practice: principles and reflective questions

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Developing a more active approach to learning requires attention to:

- > progression in children's development and learning
- > supporting continuity in learning and development
- > the environment for learning, staff and resources
- > the involvement of parents
- > continuing professional development.

The sections which follow examine each of these areas, offering principles and reflective questions to support staff in developing their practice. It will be the role of local authorities, headteachers and heads of centres to lead and support this process.

## Progression in children's development and learning

The early years of children's lives are times of rapid growth and development. Three-year-olds entering pre-school education will already have had significant learning experiences in the family and community and in various forms of provision for childcare and play. They are beginning to form friendships with other children, learning to take turns and share, and taking rapid steps towards independence in being able to look after themselves, in acquiring and using language, in physical and aesthetic development and in their knowledge of their environment. They need close and warm emotional support and interactions from staff and often practical help in their lives and learning.

As children progress, their confidence grows and their skills as independent and co-operative learners develop. They are able to take decisions about their play, at times to initiate it and organise it, and to ask questions and find information. Their experience of a range of learning broadens. They become less reliant on adult support as part of their emotional, personal and social development and become increasingly interested in their friends. They become more able to imagine, concentrate, listen and talk for longer periods. They readily become absorbed in play. They need encouragement from staff to extend their skills, to persevere in solving problems and to widen the scope of activities.

Most children enter primary school as enthusiastic, independent learners who are used to making decisions, solving problems and initiating their own learning. They will bring a range of skills including early literacy and numeracy, and the ability to use these skills in engaging and concentrating during learning activities. They will be eager for new learning to widen their experiences of people, places and nature, and to access and use the written word and mathematical activities, and they will be keen to demonstrate their capabilities in movement, art, music and much more. Many will respond well to stimulating teaching and learning which challenges their thinking. Staff need to build upon this by planning approaches to learning which reflect these enthusiasms, needs and interests.

For some children, progress is slower, and the kinds of learning activity and the nature and extent of adult support will vary to reflect their needs. Vulnerable children will need carefully judged support to help to overcome barriers to their learning. This may take place, for example, through a nurture group within the primary school setting. It will be important for schools and early education centres to work in partnership with a range of specialists from professional and voluntary organisations to provide additional support for children who need it.

### Reflective questions

Reflecting on supporting progress in children's development and learning:

- > What steps do you take to ensure continuity of experience, learning and curriculum between home, the pre-school setting and the early years of primary school?
- > How do you support children to build relationships and become accustomed to new environments?
- > How do you plan an environment and climate where children feel safe and confident to tackle new challenges and take risks, and where trial and error are viewed as a normal part of the learning process?
- > How do you decide what mix of activities is appropriate to meet the stage of development and learning of the children?
- > In what ways do you provide an environment and ethos that encourages a positive sense of self and others, and respects diversity?
- > What strategies do you have in place to ensure that where necessary, children receive appropriate help from external services and partner agencies?



## Supporting continuity in learning and development in moving to Primary 1

It is important to achieve as much continuity as possible when children move from pre-school settings to Primary 1. Yet the learning and teaching approaches used in pre-school education and in Primary 1 often contrast sharply in emphasis.

- > In *pre-school settings* staff often balance short periods of teaching with longer periods where children learn through play, either in play chosen or initiated by the child or in play activities or experiences planned by staff. Children play for much of the session in small groups, are free to move about and talk during play and have high levels of adult support available for their emotional and learning needs.
- > In *Primary 1* there is a stronger emphasis on teaching, with children sitting and listening for longer periods, and working on activities such as writing and reading. There are fewer opportunities for them to talk to adults and sometimes to other children, and adult support is more limited. Too often, completing and colouring worksheets feature prominently. There tend to be fewer opportunities for children to choose or initiate activities. Children spend more of the day on individual tasks.

Some of these differences appropriately reflect children's increasing development as learners. At this stage, most children are ready for more teaching, especially where it is interactive and linked with high quality activities. As they develop, children do become less dependent on adults and are able to concentrate longer on individual tasks as well as to work in small groups. Using newly acquired skills in reading, writing and number is highly motivating for young children.

Overall, however, a move like this from a pre-school setting to Primary 1 too often provides an abrupt transition for children which can prove damaging for some children's confidence and progress. It is important to achieve a greater continuity of approach, together with a greater emphasis upon matching support and experiences to children's differing needs. In practice this means reviewing the pattern of the Primary 1 day. It means:

- > deciding when teaching is the most appropriate way of promoting learning for different groups of children
- > considering the use of available resources including classroom assistants, parents and additional teaching staff to support active learning through play
- > targeting staffing resources to help children to develop, contextualise and practise skills

- > making use of the capabilities of children to initiate their own learning and to work together
- > using staffing resources to provide extended periods of learning through play for some children
- > planning the careful development of literacy and numeracy skills supported by a strong and continuing emphasis on oral language and development.

### Reflective question

Reflecting on these points:

- > How well does your current practice support continuity in experiences and learning for all children as they move into Primary 1, and what steps do you need to take to improve?

### Progression through the curriculum

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In the Curriculum Review one of the principles of curriculum design is progression, which is described as follows:

*'Young people should experience continuous progression in their learning from 3 to 18 within a single curriculum framework. Each stage should build upon earlier knowledge and achievements.'*

Children in pre-school settings and early primary school will work within one level. Their skills, knowledge and understanding will become deeper – and broader – as they progress. To achieve this, experiences and outcomes are likely to be revisited. However, the learning would be different each time and would build on previous knowledge and experience.

For example, an outcome may state:

*I have experienced the wonder of looking at the vastness of the sky, and can recognise the sun, moon and stars and link them to daily patterns of life.*



*At the beginning of the early stage, children may be fascinated by watching the night sky and wonder about the lights and shapes that they see. They may learn to name the sun and the moon. As children progress they will become aware of the patterns of night and day and talk about the effect of the sun and moon on aspects such as hot days or bright nights. Some may become interested in the stars, their shapes and stories. By the time they have progressed through this level, the same children will have a much deeper knowledge and may be taking their interest further and exploring the wonder of the planets, carrying out their own research using appropriate books or computer programs.*

There will be wide-ranging possibilities for breadth, depth and progression in learning within each outcome. These will depend upon children's needs and interests and the creativity of staff.

The more varied and imaginative the opportunities given to children to use newly acquired skills, the more likely will be the increased motivation and sense of self-confidence that are essential to real and lasting learning. Understanding that play and other forms of active learning are the backbone of learning and teaching in the early years gives shape to the kinds of professional judgements that staff will have to make as children progress through the early level. Direct and interactive teaching will be part of the repertoire of staff from the beginning, although it will become more prominent towards the end of Primary 1. More structured learning should move ahead at a good, enjoyable pace as children's needs dictate.

New skills can be introduced as appropriate with continuing opportunities to practise them in play and interesting planned situations throughout the curricular areas. Children will develop a range of skills including literacy and numeracy which are built on in pre-school education from their experiences at home. However, a more formal approach, for example to reading and writing, should be introduced only when staff feel that children are developmentally ready to benefit from this. Each child, each group of children and indeed each day might demand fresh thinking. Different curriculum areas offer different opportunities for a variety of methodology, but the emphasis on active learning applies to them all.

From the beginning of the early years, children will naturally play and work alone or in a variety of sizes of group. Progression in methodology should aim to encourage more co-operative experiences as children develop. Much effective learning is social, and teaching and learning amongst peers can sometimes be even more effective than when it is offered by an adult. Sharing, planning and contributing toward joint efforts can enhance confidence and responsibility so that by the time children move through to the next stage they should feel comfortable working independently, with one other child, in a small group and also as a member of the whole class.

## Reflective questions

Reflecting on progression through the curriculum:

- > How do you ensure there is breadth and depth in the opportunities provided for children to develop their range of skills, talents and interests?
- > How do you plan activities to provide appropriate support and challenge to enable children to make progress?
- > How do you plan opportunities and time to support learning across the curriculum and help children make purposeful use of their emerging understanding of, for example, literacy and numeracy?
- > How do you provide opportunities for children to learn individually, in pairs and in small and larger learning groups?
- > How do you revisit learning experiences in order to deepen them – applying understanding in different situations?
- > In what ways do you use assessment information to plan next steps in learning?

## The role of staff in supporting learning

To enable continuity, it is important for staff in the pre-school and primary settings to adopt a joint, collaborative approach to organising learning and to evaluation to ensure continuity and progression. In primary schools with nursery classes this can be part of a regular routine of forward planning meetings, staff meetings and in-service days. For nursery schools, partner provider centres and other stand-alone settings, joint planning may present more of a challenge. It will be important for staff in all early education centres and associated primary schools to find ways to work together. Close communication about children's previous experiences and learning is crucial at the time of transition.

Children have a natural disposition to wonder, to be curious, to pose questions, to experiment, to suggest, to invent and to explain. Staff have an essential role in extending and developing this. Sometimes it is appropriate to allow the environment and resources alone to encourage and extend the learning activities of individuals and groups. However, it is often the skilled involvement of staff that ensures that learning is taken further. For all children, it is important to gauge intervention sensitively and flexibly.

When children are involved in self-directed play, staff have an opportunity to observe their learning and, if appropriate, take it forward through sensitive intervention or using a more direct teaching approach.



## Reflective questions

Thinking of how staff interact with children to support and extend their learning:

- > In what ways do you demonstrate and model activities?
- > How do you listen, suggest, contribute and sometimes question?
- > In what ways do you support children's social development?
- > How do you encourage children to talk with one another and to share their thinking?
- > How do you actively involve children in planning their own learning?
- > How do you ensure that learning extends children's learning styles?
- > In what ways do you support children to reflect on their own learning?
- > How do you provide opportunities and time to engage children's curiosity and prompt enquiry (children asking and answering their own questions)?

## Creating an environment for active learning

Young children learn best when they have scope for active involvement in a wide range of learning experiences. The learning environment – both indoors and outdoors – needs to provide challenge and opportunity to explore exciting learning possibilities. All early years settings need to provide flexible and stimulating environments to fully engage children in their learning. At all stages this requires activities, space and resources to be well planned and organised.

## Use of space

The spaces available in pre-school and primary school settings differ in size and shape, and also in the resources and equipment they contain, numbers of children and numbers of staff. However, there are key features which all children should have the opportunity to experience. Space should be arranged to provide opportunities for children to learn through social, sensory, creative, constructive and dramatic activities. Children's responses to these different contexts will depend upon their interests and stage of development. With the active learning approach, space will be needed for children to work alone, for children to work together in pairs or groups and for them to rest and be quiet.

In some settings the availability of space will be a challenge. However, in all circumstances it should be possible to review regularly how it is being used, to provide variety and breadth



of opportunity. The use of space should be flexible with children involved in planning so that contexts for learning are adapted to meet their changing needs and interests. It may be desirable, for example, to remove some tables and use those that are in the room for a variety of purposes.

### Active learning outdoors

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The outdoor learning environment offers motivating and different opportunities for learning. Most establishments provide safe, secure outdoor spaces where children have regular outdoor play, fresh air and exercise. Some learning that takes place indoors can be revisited outdoors, and staff can make connections between indoor and outdoor learning across the curriculum. All aspects of the curriculum can be explored outside. The sights, sounds and

smells of the outdoors, the closeness to nature, the excitement most children feel, the wonder and curiosity all serve to enhance and stimulate learning.

In support of an active, stimulating approach to learning, staff need to be open to the changing possibilities of using the spaces they have, and using them flexibly and differently, with children learning both indoors and outdoors.

### Reflective questions

When considering learning indoors and outdoors:

- > How can you best organise the space you have available to provide an active learning environment?
- > How do you ensure rich and varied opportunities for play and experiences that will stimulate children's imagination?
- > How can you best organise your space and furniture to allow children to have places to carry out different kinds of activity?
- > How do you ensure regular opportunities for physical activity?



- > How do you include the outdoor environment as a resource when planning children's learning?
- > In what ways can children be given opportunities to explore the natural world and their local environment?
- > If there are barriers to learning outdoors, how can you overcome them?

## Resources

Active and creative learning can be enhanced by resources which are organised and used well. Children will use and adapt the environment to meet their needs and interests, so resources need to be flexible, accessible and able to be used in different ways. Above all, staff should feel that they are using the resources to support learning rather than the resources dictating the learning programme. Resources should be organised so that children have easy and independent access, encouraging the use of their self-help skills and decision making. Where pre-school settings and schools are in close proximity it may be possible to extend opportunities by sharing resources. Children often reinforce their learning by revisiting favourite books, toys and contexts. If staff plan together across the sectors and share appropriate resources, they can create opportunities for more learning in depth.

In some settings the variety of children's learning interests can be provided for through continuous access to a varied range of resources and learning areas. In others there may need to be changes during the day, perhaps for reasons of staffing, to enable a change of teaching techniques or to reflect the varied needs and interests of children. As they develop, children begin to enjoy co-operative group experiences (self-selected and adult-initiated), mixing resources from a variety of sources to satisfy their own curiosity, imagination and intentions.

## Reflective questions

Consider the availability and organisation of resources:

- > How do you plan to provide high quality, interesting resources that encourage curiosity, challenge, investigation and creativity?
- > How can you make best use of published resources?
- > Which resources and activities are the richest in terms of integrating learning across the curriculum?

- > There is much potential for learning in everyday familiar objects and natural materials. How do you use these types of resources to support learning in imaginative ways?
- > How do you include beautiful, interesting and curious things to prompt creativity?
- > In what way can you plan to share resources with other staff/stages to support continuity, progression, excitement and challenge?
- > Are there opportunities to share resources between and across the sectors to support and extend children's learning?
- > What criteria do you use when planning to invest in resources? For example, resources that can be used for different purposes or can be used differently to support progression in learning.

## Time

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The review of the curriculum is aiming to declutter the curriculum significantly, particularly in key areas of primary, to free up more time for children to achieve and to allow teachers the freedom to exercise judgement on appropriate learning for children. In *A Curriculum for Excellence* the level spanning pre-school and primary is being designed to provide time and space for children to experience a wide range of learning opportunities at an appropriate

pace and in sufficient depth to provide challenge and to meet their intellectual needs.

For effective active learning, children need sufficient time to engage with ideas, resources, peers and adults. This requires staff to plan routines as far as possible to create time slots that are uninterrupted. Children consolidate their learning when they have time to engage in activities in depth. It can be good practice for children to revisit a piece of work again and again to learn more deeply.

The child's day should provide a suitable mix of opportunities for work with the class, in a group or individually. Staff can plan their time to interact with identified children, support learning through sensitive intervention, work with smaller groups and also have whole class activities as and when appropriate. Staff also need time to observe children, in order to learn



about their understanding and approach to learning. They can then plan appropriate next steps and gauge the level of support or challenge required.

## Reflective questions

When considering the best use of time:

- > How do you make time to observe children's learning?
- > How do you plan time for children to engage in new experiences and talk through ideas?
- > How can you ensure sufficient time for children to explore, to research and engage in learning contexts and areas of interest?
- > How do you encourage children to take time to persevere with their enquiries?
- > How do you build in time to allow children to continue a project over several days or re-explore the same experience?
- > How do you plan time for children to work with a supportive adult to complete a task?



# active learning in practice: a whole school approach

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## Involving parents

Parents are the first and most influential educators of their children. It is important that staff across all early years settings recognise the interests and experiences children bring from home and use these as a starting point to extend learning. Most establishments spend time discussing the curriculum and methodology with parents to help them to play a full part in

their children's learning. They can encourage parents to be involved in all aspects of their children's learning from pre-school education and into primary school (and beyond).

In the early years of primary school there may be some difficulty with the word 'play' itself. Parents often need reassurance that their children will learn effectively through play, because of its association with leisure. What is important is that all staff with responsibility for planning early years learning recognise that active learning, including purposeful play, has a central role in that process and when necessary can demonstrate this to parents.

## Professional development

At the heart of an active learning approach is the creative, adaptable professional who can enjoy developing the ideas that arise from children immersed in their learning.

Many staff are committed to and comfortable with this approach. Others may require support from headteachers, heads of centres and peers to develop their practice with confidence. For all staff, appropriate professional development which builds understanding, confidence and skill will be an important element in achieving high quality learning experiences for all young children. For this to happen, local authorities, schools and pre-school centres will need to identify and plan for a range of continuing professional development opportunities for staff – through, for example, working with colleagues to learn



from each other, reflecting together on current practice, and planning for improvements. Pre-school and primary staff have much expertise to offer each other. Increasingly, authorities are working successfully with staff from the different sectors including partner providers. This good practice of joint training should be applied wherever possible.

In putting the principles outlined in this document into practice, local authorities, schools and centres can be confident they are providing effective opportunities for children to develop as successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors.

## Examples of good practice

Interesting case studies of active learning in practice can be found on the Learning and Teaching Scotland website at [www.LTScotland.org.uk/earlyyears/sharingpractice/approacheslearning/learningthroughplay/index.asp](http://www.LTScotland.org.uk/earlyyears/sharingpractice/approacheslearning/learningthroughplay/index.asp)



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