

Aistear at Firies National School

Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework is the new exciting programme developed by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) at www.ncca.ie/earlylearning in 2009. It is the new **curriculum framework** for children from **birth to six years** in Ireland. Since Sept. 2010 we have begun to introduce it in the infant classes at Firies N.S. It gives information to help plan for and provide enjoyable and challenging learning experiences so that all children can grow and develop as competent and confident learners. *Aistear* describes the **types of learning** that are important for children in their early years, and offers ideas and suggestions for how this learning might be nurtured. The Framework also provides **guidelines** on aspects of early childhood practice and is being used in the range of early childhood settings in Ireland including primary schools.

What is in Aistear?

Aistear uses **four themes** to outline children's learning and development. These themes connect and overlap with each other: *Well-being / Identity and Belonging / Communicating / Exploring and Thinking*. Each **theme connects** with most if not all of the **subjects** in the Infant Curriculum.

How are the themes structured?

Each theme includes *aims* and broad *learning goals* for all children from birth to six years. The aims and goals outline the **dispositions, attitudes and values, skills, knowledge, and understanding** that the adult nurtures in children to help them learn and develop. In this way, the aims and goals guide the adult's work with children.



Aistear's **guidelines** also give practical ideas and suggestions for using different types of **play** to extend children's learning; a range of strategies to **interact** with children; ways to **assess** children's learning and plan for the next steps; and a number of ways to involve **parents** in their children's learning and development.

Exploring the potential of 'Play' at Firies N.S.

Play provides a great vehicle for active learning in infant classrooms as it is one of the key ways young children learn and develop. Play is children's "work". **Construction play** tends to involve opportunities for mathematical and technological learning. **Sand and water play** provides opportunity for scientific learning. **Fantasy play** involving the invention of characters, a higher form of play as it encourages higher order thinking, while **socio-dramatic** play encourages children to become competent users of literacy.

Based on *Aistear's* guidelines for creating **partnerships**, and involving parents in their own child's learning, we invite the parents of the junior infant classes to join us in supporting structured play in class each day. Following information and support meetings, a rota of interested parents is compiled. These parents contribute hugely to the quality of adult/child play interactions on a daily basis at our school. We would like to take this opportunity to express our gratitude for their continued interest, support and involvement with play again this year. We hope the experience is as enjoyable for them as it is rewarding for the teachers and pupils involved.



Some of the Junior Infants enjoying being vets, doctors, nurses and shopkeepers during playtime 2010-2011