



Rethinking Curriculum

Play-based learning and continuous provision evaluation framework

Delivering an expansive and inspiring curriculum for all

This evaluation framework has been developed by the Chartered College of Teaching as part of the Rethinking Curriculum project, funded by the Helen Hamlyn Trust. It is one of a series of evaluation frameworks that have been shared as part of our Rethinking Curriculum toolkits.

The framework captures some of the key ideas explored in the Rethinking Curriculum **play-based learning and continuous provision** toolkit and offers some key ideas for you to evaluate your school's curriculum practice on this theme. These ideas are drawn from research and evidence and from our work with schools, and include input from leading experts.

The ideas explored are not intended to provide a definitive approach to curriculum development on this theme. There may be gaps or omissions and this should be viewed as a work in progress, which we will aim to develop further as the evidence base continues to evolve. You are encouraged to consider this framework alongside the [play-based learning and continuous provision toolkit](#), and to undertake your own reading and research to build your understanding of the key ideas discussed prior to implementing changes in your context.

This evaluation framework has been developed in collaboration with Kath Bransby, national education coordinator for Steiner Waldorf schools, Jo Gray, head of educational development for One Education, and Jenna Crittenden, curriculum development lead at the Chartered College of Teaching.



Chartered College
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Part 1a: Building a culture and a curriculum of play-based learning

Evaluation

Reflect on where your school is in your journey and allocate a number against each of the statements below to evaluate the extent to which it reflects current practice in your context (1–2 = low; 3–4 = medium; 5–6 = high).

Key ideas from research, theory and evidence

- ✓ Staff at all levels are supported to build their expertise and understanding in relation to the role of play in child development and learning, within and beyond EYFS. Staff understand that the spectrum of play encompasses a range of play types, including what the role of adults may look like within those learning opportunities.
- ✓ The wider school community is provided with opportunities to develop a research-informed understanding of the importance of play-based learning for all stages of childhood.
- ✓ Expectations of what play-based learning is within the school have been developed collaboratively, discussed and shared with staff at all levels, in order to build a cohesive vision for play. This should include decisions around:
 - the role of the adult within play for all ages
 - the types of play (e.g. free play, guided play, directed play) and what these look like at all ages
 - the expectations of regularity of play opportunities
 - the expectations around indoor and outdoor play
 - the inclusivity of play opportunities for all.
- ✓ Although they may be guided by the whole-school play principles and approaches, teachers have a degree of agency over pedagogical choices and may adopt their approach to suit a particular pupil need, subject area or event.
- ✓ Assessment includes the observation of children's play and this is used to plan follow-on activities within the classroom, as with other assessment methods.
- ✓ School systems and policies support play-based learning across the school and are regularly reviewed to ensure that barriers are negated.

Your
evaluation
(1–6)

Common barriers

What might impede improvement?

Staff are not confident in planning for or delivering play-based learning and do not understand the role of the adult within play, resulting in surface-level activities and missed opportunities for quality play interaction.

Staff always interact with the play, inhibiting the children's interactions and limiting the observation impact for future learning.

The vision of what play looks like across the school is not developed and shared, and play-based learning is viewed as an EYFS tool, undervalued for older children within the school community.

School systems, such as planning expectations or assessment, do not value play and inhibit practitioner ability to plan and deliver effectively.

External pressures, such as external assessments or inspections, inhibit the use of play-based learning and, in turn, practitioners limit the value of play.

Questions for reflection and discussion

1. Do our values and vision outline play-based learning as a priority and how is this seen in the culture of our school? How do we share this with all stakeholders?
2. How do we ensure that staff and the school community have a clear understanding of the value of play-based learning in our curriculum for all ages?
3. What CPD or other support do we have in place to build our staff expertise and how adequate is this for the whole team?
4. How do our assessment systems encourage and value play-based learning?



Part 1b: Building a culture and a curriculum with continuous provision

Evaluation

Reflect on where your school is in your journey and allocate a number against each of the statements below to evaluate the extent to which it reflects current practice in your context (1–2 = low; 3–4 = medium; 5–6 = high).

Key ideas from research, theory and evidence

- ✓ The pedagogical rationale and vision behind the use of continuous provision has been developed collaboratively and shared across the school. (E.g. Is this for play-based learning or pupil-led investigation?)
- ✓ Staff at all levels are (or will be) provided with ongoing CPD and training on the use and planning of continuous provision, and this is regularly revisited and led by the identified needs of the team.
- ✓ Clear expectations of what continuous provision should look like within each stage of the school have been developed and shared. This should allow for teacher agency over the pedagogical choices that are suitable for the cohort, subject and events within the class.
- ✓ Continuous provision has been carefully planned to provide learning challenges and opportunities that are relevant and aligned to the National Curriculum expectations. This includes regularly reviewing the provision to ensure challenge and inclusivity.
- ✓ Physical resources have been budgeted for and protected on a long-term basis to ensure that the quality of provision is equal across the school, and teachers are regularly involved in developing resources for each classroom.

Your
evaluation
(1–6)

Questions for reflection and discussion

1. Have we communicated to all stakeholders our rationale for the use of continuous provision and how do we know that this is understood?
2. Do we have a clear vision of what continuous provision should look like at each stage of our school and has this been shared effectively with all stakeholders? Do we have a clear progression from EYFS to Year 6?
3. How do we (or how do we plan to) build staff understanding and expertise in using and planning continuous provision to support our curriculum?
4. Do we have (or can we afford to purchase) the physical resources to develop this across the school or do we need to agree where this would be most valuable?

Common barriers

What might impede improvement?

Continuous provision has been introduced to the physical environment but the pedagogy and curriculum expectations have not been aligned, limiting the opportunities for learning through continuous provision.

Staff are unsure about how or why the approach has been chosen and therefore do not plan for this as part of their toolkit for learning.

Planning for the provision is not regularly reviewed and improved, and learning is limited by lack of progression and challenge.

Resources are limited and there is not enough for all classrooms to offer engaging and purposeful continuous provision.

The classroom appearance is valued over the planned activities, limiting the depth and value of the learning taking place.



Part 2: Key considerations for successful implementation

Evaluation

Reflect on where your school is in your journey and allocate a number against each of the statements below to evaluate the extent to which it reflects current practice in your context (1–2 = low; 3–4 = medium; 5–6 = high).

Key ideas from research, theory and evidence

- ✓ Leaders clearly set out the vision and values that are to inform the school's work around play-based learning and continuous provision, along with the wider curriculum, ensuring that these are understood by all.
- ✓ Leaders ensure that sufficient time, resources and supporting structures are in place to enable staff to deliver and develop a play-based curriculum or continuous provision effectively.
- ✓ Leaders draw on research and evidence to inform curriculum development work relating to play and continuous provision; they gather data from their context to evaluate existing practice and consider how they will evaluate the impact of implementing a new approach across the curriculum.
- ✓ Implementation and development of play-based and continuous provision is a collaborative process, characterised by iterative cycles of development, meaningful professional learning, shared problem-solving and ongoing review.
- ✓ There is an identified play and continuous provision champion (or group of champions), who lead upon the work around play and continuous provision; these champions, and middle leaders (where appropriate), have clarity around their role and are well positioned to support colleagues and help to drive the curriculum forward.
- ✓ Teachers are supported to build their expertise so that they develop strong subject/pedagogical content knowledge, have a deep understanding of effective pedagogical approaches and are able to combine these with knowledge of the school curriculum, pupils' needs and the wider context, in order to plan and implement the curriculum effectively.

Your
evaluation
(1–6)

Common barriers

What might impede improvement?

Leaders and/or staff find it difficult to articulate vision/goals/values.

Implementation may be rushed or not well thought-through.

There is a lack of resources/time to support development of curriculum.

Curriculum changes are implemented wholesale, without sufficient consideration of context, school needs and/or capacity.

School leaders do not systematically seek staff input into curriculum development and, as a result, there may be a disconnect between the intended and enacted curriculum.

Curriculum changes are seen as a 'quick fix', with new ideas introduced with limited further development or impact evaluation.

Teachers implement new approaches too quickly, without a clear rationale or understanding of how they fit into the school context, ultimately resulting in a lack of impact on pupil learning.

Questions for reflection and discussion

1. Is your school ready to implement curriculum development activity in this area? Have you already evaluated existing practice using the full Rethinking Curriculum evaluation framework, to ensure a strong foundation for this work?
2. Do you have a clear plan for implementation? How will you involve staff in this process?
3. Is there existing capacity and/or how will you create capacity for this work? Is there anything that you will need to de-implement to enable this to happen?