



Aistear Whole School Plan (Junior and Senior Infants)

Introductory Statement and Rationale

(a) Introductory Statement

The staff of St. Brigid's Primary School formulated this school plan in September 2020.

(b) Rationale

1. To benefit teaching and learning in our school
2. To provide a coherent approach to the implementation of Aistear across the whole school
3. To form the basis for teachers' long and short term planning
4. To inform new teachers of the approaches and methodologies used in our school

Vision:

Early childhood is a time of great opportunity for learning and development. In these early years, children learn through loving, trusting and respectful relationships, and through discussion, exploration and play. They learn about languages and how and when to use them; they learn to think and to interact with others and the environment. They learn to be creative and adventurous, to develop working theories about their world, and to make decisions about themselves as learners.

Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework celebrates early childhood as a time of being, and of enjoying and learning from experiences as they unfold. This early learning also lays important foundations for later learning. This whole school plan for Aistear in St. Brigid's P.S. the Coombe has been developed in conjunction with the Primary Language Curriculum, the Aistear Curriculum Framework and with social and communication objectives in mind.

Aims: Aistear is based on 12 principles of early learning and development. These are presented in three groups:

1. The first group concerns children and their lives in early childhood: ■ the child's uniqueness ■ equality and diversity ■ children as citizens.
2. The second group concerns children's connections with others: ■ relationships ■ parents, family and community ■ the adult's role.
3. The third group concerns how children learn and develop: ■ holistic learning and development ■ active learning ■ play and hands-on experiences ■ relevant and meaningful experiences ■ communication and language ■ the learning environment.

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1. Aistear Themes, Aims and Goals

The themes describe what children learn—the dispositions, attitudes and values, skills, knowledge, and understanding. Each theme begins with a short overview of its importance for children as young learners. The theme is then presented using four aims. Each aim is divided into six learning goals and we have divided these up between junior and senior infants as you will see in the table below.

Junior Infants – (*Themes, Aims and Goals taken from the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework*)

Month	Aistear Theme	Aistear Aim	Aistear Goals – In partnership with the adult, children will:
September	Well-being	1. Children will be strong psychologically and socially	1. make strong attachments and develop warm and supportive relationships with family, peers and adults in out-of-home settings and in their community. 2. be aware of and name their own feelings, and understand that others may have different feelings. 3. handle transitions and changes well.
October	Identity and Belonging	1. Children will have strong self-identities and will feel respected and affirmed as unique individuals with their own life stories	1. build respectful relationships with others. 2. appreciate the features that make a person special and unique (name, size, hair, hand and footprint, gender, birthday). 3. understand that as individuals they are separate from others with their own needs, interests and abilities.
November	Communicating	1. Children will use non-verbal communication skills	1. use a range of body movements, facial expressions, and early vocalisations to show feelings and share information. 2. understand and use non-verbal communication rules, such as turn-taking and making eye contact. 3. interpret and respond to non-verbal communication by others.
December	Exploring and Thinking	1. Children will learn about and make sense of the world around them	1. engage, explore and experiment in their environment and use new physical skills including skills to manipulate objects and materials. 2. demonstrate a growing understanding of themselves and others in their community. 3. develop an understanding of change as part of their lives.

January	Well-being	2. Children will be as healthy and fit as they can be	1. gain increasing control and co-ordination of body movements. 2. be aware of their bodies, their bodily functions and their changing abilities. 3. discover, explore and refine gross motor skills.
February	Identity and Belonging	2. Children will have a sense of group identity where links with their family and community are acknowledged and extended	1. feel that they have a place and a right to belong to the group. 2. know that members of their family and community are positively acknowledged and welcomed. 3. be able to share personal experiences about their own families and cultures, and come to know that there is a diversity of family structures, cultures and backgrounds.
March	Communicating	2. Children will use language	1. interact with other children and adults by listening, discussing and taking turns in conversation. 2. explore sound, pattern, rhythm, and repetition in language. 3. use an expanding vocabulary of words and phrases, and show a growing understanding of syntax and meaning.
April	Exploring and Thinking	2. Children will develop and use skills and strategies for observing, questioning, investigating, understanding, negotiating and problem-solving, and come to see themselves as explorers and thinkers	1. recognise patterns and make connections and associations between new learning and what they already know. 2. gather and use information from different sources using their increasing cognitive, physical and social skills. 3. use their experience and information to explore and develop working theories about how the world works, and think about how and why they learn things.
May	Well-being	3. Children will be creative and spiritual	1. express themselves creatively and experience the arts. 2. express themselves through a variety of types of play. 3. develop and nurture their sense of wonder and awe.
June	Identity and Belonging	3. Children will be able to express their rights and show and understanding	1. express their views and help make decisions in matters that affect them. 2. understand the rules and the boundaries of acceptable behaviour. 3. interact, work co-operatively, and help others.

		and regard for the identity, rights and views of others	
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Senior Infants (*Themes, Aims and Goals taken from the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework*)

Month	Aistear Theme	Aistear Aim	Aistear Goals
September	Well-being	4. Children will have positive outlooks on learning and on life	1. show increasing independence and be able to make choices and decisions. 2. demonstrate a sense of mastery and belief in their own abilities and display learning dispositions, such as determination and perseverance. 3. think positively, take learning risks and become resilient and resourceful when things go wrong.
October	Identity and Belonging	4. Children will see themselves as capable learners	1. develop a broad range of abilities and interests. 2. show an awareness of their own unique strengths, abilities and learning styles, and be willing to share their skills and knowledge with others. 3. show increasing confidence and self-assurance in directing their own learning.
November	Communicating	3. Children will broaden their understanding of the world by making sense of experiences through language	1. use language to interpret experiences, to solve problems, and to clarify thinking, ideas and feelings. 2. use books and ICT for fun, to gain information and broaden their understanding of the world. 3. build awareness of the variety of symbols (pictures, print, numbers) used to communicate, and understand that these can be read by others.
December	Exploring and Thinking	3. Children will explore ways to represent ideas, feelings, thoughts, objects, and actions through symbols	1. make marks and use drawing, painting and model-making to record objects, events and ideas. 2. become familiar with and associate symbols (pictures, numbers, letters, and words) with the things they represent. 3. build awareness of the variety of symbols (pictures, print, numbers) used to communicate, and use these in an enjoyable and meaningful way leading to early reading and writing.

January	Well-being	1. Children will be strong psychologically and socially	4. Be confident and self-reliant. 5. respect themselves, others and the environment. 6. make decisions and choices about their own learning and development.
February	Identity and Belonging	1.Children will have strong self-identities and will feel respected and affirmed as unique individuals with their own life stories	4. have a sense of 'who they are' and be able to describe their backgrounds, strengths and abilities. 5. feel valued and see themselves and their interests reflected in the environment. 6. express their own ideas, preferences and needs, and have these responded to with respect and consistency.
March	Communicating	4. Children will express themselves creatively and imaginatively	1. share their feelings, thoughts and ideas by story-telling, making art, moving to music, role-playing, problem-solving, and responding to these experiences. 2. express themselves through the visual arts using skills such as cutting, drawing, gluing, sticking, painting, building, printing, sculpting, and sewing. 3. listen to and respond to a variety of types of music, sing songs and make music using instruments.
April	Exploring and Thinking	4. Children will have positive attitudes towards learning and develop dispositions like curiosity, playfulness, perseverance, confidence, resourcefulness and risk-taking	1. demonstrate growing confidence in being able to do things for themselves. 2. address challenges and cope with frustrations. 3. make decisions and take increasing responsibility for their own learning.
May	Well-being	2. Children will be as healthy and fit as they can be	4. use self-help skills in caring for their own bodies. 5. show good judgement when taking risks. 6. make healthy choices and demonstrate positive attitudes to nutrition, hygiene, exercise and routine.
June	Identity and Belonging	2. Children will have a sense of group identity where links with their family and community are acknowledged and extended	4. understand and take part in routines, customs, festivals, and celebrations. 5. see themselves as part of a wider community and know about their local area, including some of its places, features and people. 6. understand the different roles of people in the community.

2. **Planning:** The class teacher and the support teacher must take joint responsibility for the planning and implementation of Aistear. Work together to decide upon activities and resources. Both teachers must account for Aistear formally in their fortnightly notes also.

Aistear Lesson Format: Pre-lesson → Stations (structured play) → Recap/Reflect

3. Approaches and Methodologies

- Modelling Language
- Talk and Discussion
- Play and Games
- Use of Concrete Materials
- Story/Teacher Read Aloud
- Improvisational Drama
- Role Play/Drama Activities
- Use of Poetry and Rhyme
- Shared language experience
- Free Writing
- Visual Scaffolding
- Use of pictures and photographs
- Singing Games and Action songs
- Teacher-In-Role

Aistear Stations:

Choose between: Construction, Junk Ark, Play dough, Small World, Role Play, Sand, Water, Puzzles, Investigations, Art and Crafts.

- 4. Aistear Topics:** Each month the children will work on a different topic. Each classroom is allocated a box in September and then again February. The boxes that you are allocated in September and February are your responsibility. Inside each box is a folder outlining the resources, materials, games, books etc that should be in it. Please maintain your box and if you notice there is anything missing please replace it. When the boxes are not in use, they are kept on the ground floor, outside the Junior Infant classrooms. When you are finished with your box at the end of each topic;

Room 1 passes to Room 14
 Room 2 passes to Room 1
 Room 3 passes to Room 4
 Room 4 passes to Room 2
 Room 14 passes to Room 3

Junior Infants Topics:

Sept	Room 14	My School and Locality	School/ The Fire Station
Sept	Room 1	My Family/Homes	The Home
Sept	Room 2	Myself and My Body	The Dentist
Sept	Room 4	Shopping and Toys	The Toy Shop
Sept	Room 3	The Weather/Space	Space/The Weather Station
Feb	Room 14	Animals	The Farm
Feb	Room 1	People Who Help Us	The Doctor
Feb	Room 2	The Café/Healthy Eating	The Restaurant
Feb	Room 4	Transport	At the Airport
Feb	Room 3	Under the Sea	Under the Sea

Senior Infants Topics:

Sept	Room 14	My School and Locality	School/ The Post Office
Sept	Room 1	My Family/Homes	The Home
Sept	Room 2	Myself and My Body	The Optician
Sept	Room 4	Shopping and Toys	The Clothes Shop
Sept	Room 3	The Weather/Space	Space/The Weather Station

Feb	Room 14	Animals	The Zoo
Feb	Room 1	People Who Help Us	The Vet
Feb	Room 2	The Café/Healthy Eating	The Café
Feb	Room 4	Transport	At the Train Station
Feb	Room 3	Under the Sea	Under the Sea

Books: Titles that should be covered during each topic: (most of these can be found within the designated Aistear box)

	Junior Infants	Senior Infants
My School and Locality	A Dublin Fairytale The President's Glasses No Dragons for Tea	The Jolly Postman Postman Bear
Autumn	Stuck	Red Leaf, Yellow Leaf
My Family/Homes	The Great Big Book of Families This is our House Owl Babies Five Minutes Peace The Three Little Pigs	Families, Families, Families Stella Brings the Family Let's Build a House All in One Piece Goldilocks and the Three Bears
Halloween	Room on the Broom	Winnie the Witch
Myself and My Body	The Gruffalo Once they were Giants Polar Bear Polar Bear What do You Hear? Open Wilde	Dogs Don't Wear Glasses Lola and the Big Blur Brown Bear Brown Bear What do You See?

Shopping and Toys	Curious George Visits the Toy Shop Kipper's Birthday The Smartest Giant in Town	I Want my Hat Back Ella Sarah Gets Dressed
Winter/Christmas	Stickman Lost and Found	The Gruffalo's Child
Weather/Space	The Way Back Home Whatever Next Aliens Love Underpants We're Going on a Bear Hunt	The Darkest Dark Cloudy with a Chance of Meatballs How to Catch a Star
Animals	Farmer Duck Pig in the Pond A Squash and a Squeeze	Giraffe's Can't Dance Gorilla Dear Zoo Monkey Puzzle
People Who Help Us/Medical/Vets	Zog and the Flying Doctor	Doctor Nice
The Café/Healthy Eating	The Very Hungry Caterpillar The Tiger who Came To Tea	Handa's Surprise
Spring	The Tiny Seed	The Bad Tempered Ladybird
Transport	Sailor Bear The Hundred Decker Bus	Amelia Earhart The Train Ride
Under the Sea	Rainbow Fish Tiddler	The Snail and the Whale Commotion in the Ocean

5. Assessment:

The assessment templates below have been designed in conjunction with the Primary Language Curriculum, the Aistear Framework and with social and communication objectives in mind. The four assessment methods are:

1. **Aistear Learning Story** – identify a wall/notice board within your room that can be used to compile your Aistear Learning Story. There should be a section for each Aistear topic. At the end of each topic, add photographs of the children playing/engaged in activities. Build upon this wall and the learning story as the year goes on. It will document a playful, learning journey throughout the year.
2. **Aistear Language Development Assessment** – to be completed by the support teacher. One assessment per child, per topic. These should then be kept safely by the class teacher until the end of the year. They will then be filed into the children's individual assessment files that will travel with them throughout the school.
3. **Social and Communication Skills Assessment** – to be completed by the class teacher. This detailed assessment must be filled out by the class teacher at the end of each topic based on anecdotal notes/observations that have been taken throughout the topic. The class teacher will focus on just 4 children per topic (one child per table group). This way, they should get through each child twice within the academic year and can gauge progress. These should also be kept safely by the class teacher until the end of the year. They will then be filed into the children's individual assessment files that will travel with them throughout the school.
4. **Key Vocabulary and Phrases Assessment** – To be completed at the end of each topic (class teacher and the support teacher working together). These should also be kept safely by the class teacher until the end of the year. They will then be filed into the children's individual assessment files that will travel with them throughout the school. This assessment can be found at the back of the folder in each Aistear Theme box. Please photocopy as necessary.
5. **Aistear Learning Log** – Children's individual copy books. One page (minimum) to be completed by each child at the end of each topic. The children are instructed to draw a picture of their favourite station/activity from the topic. The teachers then conference with the children individually and write down one sentence over the picture in the child's words, that describes the picture.

6. Linkage and Integration

- **English:** Oral language, Reading, Writing
- **Mathematics:** Number rhymes, Use of concrete materials, Counting
- **Gaeilge:** Rainn, Amhráin
- **SESE:** Animal songs, Season songs, Sounds, Topical Vocabulary
- **Art:** Responding to Images, Working from Experience, Working from Imagination, Exploring Materials and Tools
- **Music:** Rhymes, Singing Songs and Action Songs
- **SPHE:** Myself, Myself and Others, Myself and the Wider World
- **Drama:** Role Play, Improvisational Drama
- **PE:** Station Teaching, Co-operative games, Exploration of Movement, Problem-based Learning

7. Children with Different Needs

It is our policy that all children participate in Aistear activities. Aistear activities will be differentiated in order to meet the needs of the children.

8. Equality of Participation and Access

Equal opportunities will be given to all children regardless of gender, ethnic background, socio-economic status across all Aistear activities.

Organisational Planning

9. Timetable

45minutes of time will be allocated to Aistear in every infant class each day.

10. Resources and ICT

A comprehensive box has been developed for each Aistear Topic. When not in use, these are kept on the ground floor outside the Junior Infant classrooms. Boxes will be maintained regularly by the infant teachers and resources will be replaced/added to as necessary. Relevant online resources relating to particular topics can be shared by teachers through email/Aladdin.

11. Health and safety

Care and attention will be given to the following;

- Regular sanitisation of toys and resources
- Hidden dangers if children are moving around the classroom
- Storage facilities
- Access to and movement of resources
- Appropriate space for activities

12. Individual Teacher's Planning and Reporting

This School Plan for Aistear will inform teachers' yearly and short-term plans. Work covered will be outlined in the fortnightly plan.

13. Staff Development

Staff will be encouraged to attend courses when available, and will be made aware of such courses in staff meetings and through school email. Relevant speakers may be invited in to carry out a workshop/talk to the staff throughout the year also.

14. Parental Involvement

Class teachers will keep in touch with parents regularly and inform them on the different Aistear topics that are being covered in their classroom each month. Parents will be encouraged to ask their children questions about the Aistear topic and to encourage the children to use the vocabulary associated with that topic at home.

15. Community Links

Aistear lends itself ideally to community involvement. Where permitted, and if it is safe to do so, members of the community may be invited into the infant classroom to explain their role within the community. For example, if the children are working on the topic of 'People Who Help Us,' a traffic warden or local Garda could be invited in to speak about their role. The class teacher may also organise a visit to the local library, opticians etc. Any involvement with the community will always be welcomed by the staff of St. Brigid's.

16. Success Criteria

Teacher Self-Assessment:

- Have I/we covered the agreed programme?
- What do I/we need to change?

Pupil Assessment:

- Teacher observation and Teacher designed tasks/activities
- Photographs and Audio recording
- Questioning/Conferencing and Aistear Learning Log

DES/outside assessment:

- Inspections

17. Implementation

a) Roles and responsibilities

Class teachers and support teachers are responsible for the implementation of the Aistear plan.

b) Timeframe:

The content of this school plan for Aistear will begin to be implemented from September 2020

c) Review:

Progress made will be made on an ongoing basis

18. Ratification and Communication

This school plan for Aistear was ratified by the Board of Management on 24th September 2020. It will be reviewed on a regular basis.

Date: 24th September 2020

Signed: Amanda McGarry

Chairperson of the Board of Management