



# Pedagogical principles of the Tusla Early Years Inspection process

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## **Introduction**

The work of Tusla early years inspectorate is underpinned by a number of pedagogical principles based on our experience and expert knowledge of child development, early learning and care and pedagogy. This knowledge and experience is influenced by our fundamental beliefs and values, which are as Pajares (1993, p.307) suggests, 'the best indicators of the decisions individuals make'. As an inspectorate we believe that it is important to be explicit about the pedagogical principles which underpin our work and our activity, and in doing so give visibility to our frame of reference in the inspection of early years services.

These principles have been documented based on our belief and recognition of the importance of keeping the best interests of the child at the heart of the inspection process. The *Child Care (Pre-School Services) (No 2) (Amendment) Regulations 2006* specifically Regulation 5 highlighted the importance of **process quality** underpinned by the "whole Child Perspective" as outlined in the National Children's Strategy (Department of Health and Children 2000) and underpinned by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), (UN 1989). Placing the child at the heart of our understanding and recognising the child as an active participant in her or his own development and learning continues to be central to the Tusla early years inspection process under the current Regulations - *Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016*. These pedagogical principles have also been influenced by the two national practice frameworks, *Síolta, the National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education* (CECDE 2006) and *Aistear, the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework* (NCCA, 2009) and by the European Commission (2014) *Key principles of Quality Framework*.

## **Pedagogical Principles**

### **1. The Child**

Our image of the child is based on a belief that the child is competent, unique and an active participant in her / his learning and development.

### **2. Rights Based Approach**

Children have rights as outlined in The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN 1989). These rights should be met when children access Tusla registered early years services. These rights include the right to be safe, the right to have quality relationships, the right to learn and play the right to have a voice in matters that affect them, the right to their identity and the right to have their parents engaged in their service provision.

### **3. Basic Care Needs**

As outlined in Maslow's Hierarchy of needs; food, sleep and rest, shelter, safety and security, quality relationships must be met before a child can reach high levels of self-actualisation, with high levels of wellbeing and engagement in their learning processes. Tusla early years inspectorate recognise that children cannot reach a level of self-actualisation unless their basic care needs are met, therefore ensuring children's basic care needs are met in Tusla registered early years service is a priority for the inspectorate.

### **4. Basic Psychological Needs**

Children's basic psychological needs for autonomy, (to make choices and have control over their decision making) competence (to have active, meaningful experiences) and relatedness (positive relationships) (Ryan and Deci 2017), should be supported while accessing Tusla registered early years services.

### **5. Relationships**

Quality relationships are the 'active ingredients' which support high levels of wellbeing and development. Each child accessing a Tusla registered early years service should have high quality relationships and interactions.

## **6. Partnership with parents/ guardians and families**

Tusla early years inspectorate believe that the active participation of parents is an integral part of the early learning and care experience. Working in partnership with parents and guardians supports quality early years provision and positives experiences for children attending early years services.

## **7. Bio ecological Model**

Tusla early years inspectorate respect and value the importance of the child at the centre, influencing and being influenced by a complex system of relationships from the micro systems, context and culture within the family, early years setting, community to the macro systems at national and international policy level.

## **8. Early Learning Care Environment**

Tusla early years inspectorate believe that for children to have quality early years experiences in Tusla registered early years services that the early learning and care environment should support children's emerging interests to be curious, to explore, to think and to make meaning. Children's identity and belonging should be supported and reflected in the early learning and care environment. The active learning environment should support children to actively engage and have high levels of wellbeing and high levels of involvement in their play and learning.

## **9. Safety**

Tusla early years inspectorate believe that every child accessing a Tusla registered early years service must be safe. Parents have identified that this is the most important criteria for them and as such our duty of care is to ensure that children are safe in early years settings.

## **10. Governance**

Excellent governance where individuals are accountable, transparent in their actions, communicate effectively, operate the early years service in a professional, effect and efficient manner, are trusted by service users, children, parents, guardians and other stakeholders and communicate and operate efficiently are a core component of quality early years provision.

## **11. Leadership**

Leadership in early years services plays a central role in promoting, improving and sustaining organisational performance, quality improvement and innovation. Leadership involves both administrative and pedagogical functions. Leaders in early years services, support and lead staff to implement a shared vision for both structural and process quality provision. A shared vision and a cohesive team where staff feel valued and have opportunities to grow and develop are essential to quality provision and children having quality experiences in early years services.

## **12. Play**

Children accessing Tusla registered early years services should have joyful play and learning experiences, where the pedagogical approach is nurturing. We believe that the approach to learning should be autonomy supportive, where there is a balance of child and adult led initiatives. In an autonomy supportive learning environment, children and adults engage in

sustained, shared thinking (Siraj-Blatchford et al, 2002) and children's emergent interests are supported.

Children have a fundamental right to play as outlined in the UNCRC (UN 1989). Opportunities should be provided for children to play both indoors and outdoors daily. Equally children have a right to be heard and we know from listening to children they love to play. Tusla early years inspectorate believe that children should experience joy, wonder and delight (Mardell et al 2016) in their play in early years services.

### **13. Identity/ Belonging / Inclusion**

Within the early years setting the child's identity should be celebrated, the child should feel secure and have a sense of belonging. All children should have access, be included and actively participate based on their individual ability.

### **14. Conclusion**

Tusla early years inspectorate is committed to these shared pedagogical principles. The principles will be reviewed discussed and evaluated on an on-going basis. The pedagogical principles will be amended as required to meet changing pedagogical research and Tusla's commitment to on-going learning and development of the inspectorate.

