

The ABC Club Detectives

On 12th October 2018, the preschool leader was doing a risk/safety check on the garden and building after storm Callum. She came across something sinister in a puddle. A 'Barbie' head. There are no Barbies in the playschool. Seizing the moment, she explained to the children that she found something strange and they should check it out.

The children (all girls) race around the garden. Did anyone see what Mag found? Antoinette asks. Fiadh says 'it's a leprechaun', Emma says 'ooh chocolate coins' as she appears to remember our leprechaun hunt last March. Fiadh says, 'let's look before it runs away'. Antoinette says, 'I don't think this will be running away, I think Mag said it was a body'. Fiadh says, 'a body, it might be danger'. Paige asks worriedly 'a real one?'



Aine states, 'That's silly, it's a head and it's dirty, as she spots the head in the puddle, where's her body? Fiadh responds, 'maybe it's captive'.



Paige picks up a clip, 'it's her clip, now let's find the body, don't get caught'.



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Aine finds a doll with chalk on it, 'Look, she's been chalked, how do we get this mystery, let's all be detectives'. Antoinette asks Aine, what does a detective do, and she replies 'silly, they find clues'.

Fiadh finds a glove, 'these are for picking up yucky things. Mag thinks it was the wind Antoinette tells them. Aine says, 'no, no, no the wind doesn't have hands'. Paige says 'the leprechaun started it'.



Fetching a piece of chalk, Aine tells the others to follow her 'let's draw a plan, I drew a magnifying glass to see stuff and clues'. Paige makes marks on the fence, 'It's, it's the clue, you know for the body'.



Fiadh finds a net. 'Look we can trap them'. Ava and Ella Rose come and join in. Paige and Aine explain what they are doing. Ella Rose suggests 'they are here to steal something'. Aine asks 'but what can they steal?'



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Ava and Ella Rose find some coins. 'I knew it, I knew it, the leprechauns are here' Fiadh shouts jumping up and down with excitement. Aine says 'I had another idea, a detective idea, we need a hat'. Ella Rose inspects the gold coin through the magnifying glass. 'No, not chocolate', she says. 'Awww', the other children reply.



Gabriela and Eva join in looking for clues. Eva examines the chalked body. Aine says worriedly 'I hope it's not Ursula' and Mag replies 'No, I don't think so, she lives under the sea'.



These detectives bring all their funds of knowledge to their game about crime and detectives. They hypothesised and collaborated about what Mag had seen, before searching for clues and evidence to solve the mystery of the broken doll. They used words demonstrating their knowledge and depth of understanding in context, words such as danger, captive, mystery, detectives and magnifying glass. They showed emotions of excitement – to investigate and find the clues; anticipation - to find the leprechauns'; fear – is it Ursula; anxiousness – they came to steal; disappointment – it's not chocolate.

The adults were supportive of the game and allowed it to emerge and flow, they introduced a real magnifying glass and encouraged them to look for clues and they also planted the coins, extending the play and imagination as they listened and observed the emerging thoughts and ideas. She was reassuring that there was not a real body and it wasn't Ursula.

Printing out the photos, Antoinette reflected with the children about the game and further explored their thought process'. She learned what a detective wears and how they can save you from ugly earwigs and that Ursula's hair is black and Ariel's is red, not like our head.

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To further explore the theme, Antoinette asked a detective parent to visit and bring their finger printing kit so we can look for clues and to talk about her job. We are also hopeful to visit the local Garda station. We will plant clues in the garden for another mystery following the detective visit when the children will have more knowledge.

This simple story was instigated by Antoinette spotting a provocation for play and by simply asking a question, a wonderful game emerged which encompasses all the themes of Aistear, and some of the learning goals. It also highlights the importance of observant and tuned in adults who can take teachable moments as they arise. It demonstrates how play can be extended and knowledge enhanced by reflecting with the children and including the parent's occupation roles into the setting and by sharing it in their portfolios.