

# PLAY POLICY

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## Definitions

- **A play policy** sets out the values and principles which a group of people agree that they hold in common and that will inform the decisions that they make.
- **A play strategy** sets out priorities and objectives for action by which these principles will be put into practice.
- **A play implementation or action plan** sets out the specific actions and improvements to be undertaken and will be Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Timed.

## What is Play?

Play is any freely chosen activity which a child finds satisfying and creative. It may or may not involve equipment or other people. It may be serious or light hearted. It may produce something or it may be done simply for its own sake. It allows children an opportunity to be creative and make decisions.

Here at Rossendale School we recognise that play may need to make a noise, get dirty, make a mess and sometimes be out of the direct gaze of adults. We believe the role of the adults is to support the play process. Children will also have the opportunity for 'free range' play within the school grounds.

Through our belief in children's rights, we aim to:

- Provide a secure, caring environment where all children are happy, intrinsically motivated, relaxed and able to reach their potential.
- Children must follow instructions, use equipment without hurting others and have fun.
- Adults respect this right by providing opportunities for creative, exciting play, use conflict resolution to support children and supporting children who have additional needs at playtime.
- Children have the right to assess risk and tidy equipment away.
- Adults respect this right by assessing risk daily, encouraging children to assess risk also and helping children to tidy up.
- Adults respect this right by developing new opportunities for play, listening to children's ideas about play and supporting children who have additional needs to access play.

## **Commitment and Rationale**

This policy sets out Rossendale school's commitment to ensuring quality play opportunities are available to all children.

As a school we aim to improve the way we think and provide opportunities for play. We believe that play is essential for physical, emotional, social, spiritual and intellectual development.

The school grounds provide a crucial place for children to experience self-initiated play.

## **Our Aims**

Our school aims are:

- To provide children with a play setting which is both stimulating and challenging.
- To allow children to take risks
- To provide children with a range of environments which will support their learning across the curriculum and about the world around them.

We aim to give the children the opportunity to:

- Explore the world around them through playful experimentation
- Develop social skills, enhancing communication, collaboration and problem solving.
- Encourage resilience and self-confidence.
- Think creatively
- Develop independence and take responsibility for themselves and others.
- Develop physical health
- Develop emotional health, allowing the balance between acting freely and allowing everyone to have their rights.
- To develop skills in self-assessing and managing risk.

## **Benefit and Risk**

An essential element of exploration within the medium of play is the opportunity for children to experience freely chosen activities, where they can take acceptable risks and challenge themselves beyond their existing capabilities.

Allowing children to take acceptable risk develops their ability to judge risk independently and learn new skills. All children both need and want to take risks in order to explore limits, venture into new experiences and develop their capacities, from a very young age and from their earliest play experiences.

Children would never learn to walk, climb stairs or ride a bicycle unless they were strongly motivated to respond to challenges involving a risk of injury.

To manage the levels of risk we will follow the guidelines below:

- Recognise the need for professional judgment in setting the balance between safety and goals.
- All staff should self-assess and manage risk, e.g. red tape should be used to section off play areas or equipment which are deemed to be 'high risk.'
- Ensure risks are as apparent as possible to staff and children.
- Ensure risks that children may not appreciate are controlled and managed. Provide staff with training to supervise play setting.
- It is expected that staff will move around throughout the playtime, finding out what the children are doing and where the children are playing.

## **Forest school**

Play is the primary mode of learning within Forest School providing children with opportunities to explore, experiment and discover within the forest environment. Through play Forest school promotes both cognitive and practical skills whilst contributing to their emotional and physical development.

Key characteristics of play within Forest School:

- **Open ended** – play is not bound by strict rules or outcomes, open-ended play allows for creativity and exploration, there is no “right” way to play in the forest.
- **Sensory rich** – the natural environment provides a rich sensory experience, exposing students to a wide range of sensory stimuli. This may create some challenges for our students with sensory difficulties, however, the exposure will enhance their sensory awareness and help them build coping strategies.
- **Risk & Challenge** – The uneven and natural environment with sticks and brambles, rocks and streams provides students with an element of risk and challenge. Experiences such as climbing or balancing on logs provide opportunities through play to build their resilience, confidence and problem-solving skills.
- **Hands-on experiences**– The nature of Forest school is hands-on, building dens, climbing trees, collecting and using natural materials. Promoting experiential learning and skill development.
- **Imaginative play** – The forest environment lends itself to imaginative and creative scenarios, through story-telling the forest can be transformed into a kingdom of miniature Choo Choo people, dragons, fairies – you name it.
- **Child-Led:** allowing students to have the autonomy to choose their activities and set their own goals. This fosters a sense of independence and empowerment.

- **Social:** Through collaboration and communication with peers, students are encouraged to share experiences, building their teamwork and social skills.

## **First Aid**

First Aid equipment stored in the kitchen and classroom areas. All of the staff are First Aid trained.

Any head bumps and accidents must be reported to parents via phone call and reported to the office for completion of an accident form. This will be completed by the member of staff dealing with the child.

## **Clothing**

We would advise as staff that all children come prepared for outdoor/ all weathers play.

Children should also wear coats during cold weather.

Children need to be responsible for managing their outdoor clothing. This includes being prepared before they go outside to play.

In the summer children will need sun cream and hats to protect themselves.

Part of outdoor play means children may get muddy. We will endeavour to reduce this as much as possible. A uniform is designed to give children a sense of belonging but also a way to protect their 'good' clothes they wear at home.

## **Equality and Access**

All children are entitled to welcoming and accessible play provision, irrespective of gender, economic or social circumstances, ethnic or cultural background or origin or individual abilities. It is our responsibility to ensure adequate provision is provided.

This policy will be closely monitored by the SLT and reviewed based on the needs of the adults and children's in the school.

The policy will be reviewed in line with the SEND code of practice to ensure all children are able to access the play provision ( this may mean with support for some children).

## **Environment**

- Our health and safety officer performs regular health and safety checks of the area.
- The staff will check for risks/ dangers when they are outside with the children.
- Children will be made aware of possible risks and help to manage those by alerting staff to them.

