



“Show me your way, Lord teach me your paths.” Psalms (25.4)

OUTSIDE PLAY POLICY

Rationale

This policy sets out the school’s commitment to ensuring that quality environments for play and informal recreation are available to all its children, and aims to improve the way we think about, and provide, opportunities for play. In line with South Gloucestershire Council policy, the school believes that all children need opportunities to play which allow them to explore, manipulate, experience and affect their environment.

The Value of Play

Play enables children to learn through experience that cannot be taught. Through exploring and testing ideas children learn:

- About their bodies and themselves as a person
- About how to get on with people
- About the physical world around them.

As a school we recognise the value of play and aim to develop a wide range of outside play environments to meet the needs of all of our children. Play is satisfying and freely chosen by the child. It may be serious or light hearted. It may produce something or it may be done simply for its own sake. We aim to ensure children’s choice over their experiences is promoted in our grounds.

Aims

- To ensure play settings provide a challenging and stimulating environment.
- To allow children to take risks.
- To provide opportunities for children to develop their skills of getting on with each other.
- To aid children’s physical, emotional, social, spiritual and intellectual development.
- To provide a range of environments which will encourage children to explore and play imaginatively.
- To provide a range of environments which will support children’s learning across the curriculum and learning about the world around them.
- To promote independence and team work within children.
- To build emotional and physical resilience.
- To promote enjoyment and happiness in childhood.
- To build healthy minds and bodies.

Learning Opportunities

- The physical world e.g. earth, air, fire and water.
- Man-made and natural materials.
- Challenge in relation to the physical environment.
- Movement e.g. running, jumping, climbing, balancing.
- Emotions e.g. learning about oneself and others, sadness/gladness, rejection/acceptance, frustration/achievement, boredom/fascination, fear/confidence.
- The operation of the five senses through sounds, textures, tastes, smells and sights.
- Social interactions - enhancing self-esteem and understanding of others through freely chosen interactions e.g. within peer groups, with individuals, with groups of different ages, abilities, interests, gender, ethnicity and culture.
- Making choices, problem solving, being creative.
- Achieving and also coping with failing.
- Communication and negotiation skills.
- Change e.g. building/demolishing, transforming the environment and experiencing the seasons.

All weather Play

'There is no such thing as bad weather, just bad clothing'

Norwegian Headteacher, April 2005

- The school takes a 'whatever the weather' approach to play.
- In order to allow for access to the whole grounds throughout the year; both pupils and staff are expected to have suitable warm and waterproof clothing in school at all times, including boots.
- In extreme weather however, such as torrential rain, icy conditions or intense sun, the decision will be made by the member of staff on duty as to whether to limit or curtail play activities if it is felt that by not doing so the children will be at *significant* risk.

Play and Risk

Managing Risk in Play Provision.

'Children need and want to take risks when they play. Play provision aims to respond to these needs and wishes by offering children stimulating, challenging environments for exploring and developing their abilities. In doing this, play provision aims to manage the level of risk so that children are not exposed to unacceptable risks of death or serious injury.'

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 risks develops their ability to independently judge risks and learn new skills. *'Without opportunities to take acceptable levels of risk children's development is inhibited, undermining their capacity to deal with the wider unsupervised world.'*

It is the school's responsibility to strike a balance between the risks and the benefits. This policy sets out the school's overall objectives for children to take acceptable risks in their play. The school recognises the challenge that this new thinking brings and follows the guidance provided by South Gloucestershire Council.

Carefully considered and comprehensive risk assessments of all play provision within the school should be reviewed on an annual basis, or whenever significant change/development in play provision/equipment or child circumstances takes place.