



Merley First School

Play Policy

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Merley First School EPIC play policy

INTRODUCTION

Merley First School is committed to ensuring that quality play opportunities are available to all children. Our school is committed to providing the leadership and support to enable our staff and children to work together to develop and maintain enriching play skills and environments.

1. Commitment

Our school will refer to this play policy in all decisions that affect children's play. We are committed to providing and maintain quality play provision for all children.

2. Rationale

Our school believes that **all** children need opportunities to explore, play, imagine and create within the environment. We believe play provision should be welcoming and accessible to every child, irrespective of differences, enhancing their sense of belonging within the school and promoting our school values of Respectful, Engaged and Ready.

3. Definition and value of play

"Play is a process that is freely chosen, personally directed and intrinsically motivated." As stated by the Playwork Principles. Play has its own value and provides its own purpose. It may or may not involve equipment or other people.

We believe play has many benefits, including:

- Play is critical to children's health and wellbeing, and essential for their physical, emotional, social, spiritual and intellectual development.
- Play enables children to explore the physical and social environment.
- Play enhances children's self-esteem and their understanding of others through freely chosen social interactions.
- Play requires ongoing communication and negotiation skills, enabling children to develop a balance between their right to act freely and their responsibilities to others.
- Play enables children to experience a wide range of emotions and develop their ability to cope with these.
- Play maintains children's openness to learning, develops their capabilities and resilience.
- Play develops the "whole child," in school.

4. Aims

In relation to play our school aims to:

- Provide an environment that is varied and challenging which encourages children to become risk aware not risk averse.
- Equip the children with skills to broaden relationships and develop resilience through independence and collaboration.

5. Rights

Our school recognises the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which includes *the right to play, recreation and leisure* (Article 31) and the *right of children to be listened to on matters important to them* (Article 12). We acknowledge that we have a duty to take these rights seriously and listen to children's views on their play.

6. Benefit and risk

'Play is great for children's wellbeing and development. When planning and providing play opportunities, the goal is not to eliminate risk, but to weigh up the risks and benefits. No child will learn about risk if they are wrapped in cotton wool.' Managing Risk in Play Provision: An Implementation Guide (Play Safety Forum, 2012)

The schools will use the Health and Safety Executive guidance document *Children's Play and Leisure – Promoting a Balanced Approach* (September 2012) as the principal value statement informing its approach to managing risk in play. ([Here](#)) In doing so, the schools will adopt a risk-benefit approach as detailed in *Managing Risk in Play Provision: An Implementation Guide* (Play Safety Forum, 2012). ([Here](#))

7. Supervision

The law requires that children in school have supervision but for primary school playtimes there are no stated ratios. During EPIC Play opportunities there will be adequate adult supervision. The accompanying adult expectation for children will be *"If you are seen, then you are safe."* For all new starters and reception aged children, whose skills and orientation of the school environment will need to be considered, the school will support their transition into EPIC play. Adults will wear a high vis jacket whilst supervising play and will have access to walkie-talkies to communicate with each other if needed. All adults will be aware of the risks within all EPIC activities and how these can be managed.

8. Resources

The children will be made aware of their responsibility for identifying unsafe resources or loose parts that are in a poor condition. This responsibility will be taught and refreshed through EPIC play assemblies and supported by the adults within school. Unsafe and unsuitable resources will be disposed of.

9. Clothing

All children should come prepared for outdoor/all weather play. All children are required to have in school at all times: A warm, waterproof coat and optional waterproof trousers and a pair of wellington boots Children need to be responsible for managing their own outdoor clothing before and after EPIC playtimes.

10. Review and assessment procedure

Assessing the risk/ benefit of play opportunities will be ongoing and changes will be made if needed.