

'Excellent Education for all'



St Andrews Play Policy

January 2015

Rationale

The *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child* Article 31 enshrines the child's right to play

At St Andrews Primary School we will encourage children to explore their world through play and ensure that all children, regardless of ability, have the opportunity for quality play experiences.

We recognise the need to ensure children are safe when they play, enabling them to take appropriate risks and challenges to develop lifelong skills in line with our school vision of '**Excellent Education for all**'.

We also recognise the need to ensure sustainability in our community and the wider environment and see opportunities for play involving the natural environment and recycled materials.

In line with national and local initiatives to develop children's skills for life and work, we value play as a key educational tool to develop our children's skills to enable them to become

Confident Individuals, Responsible Citizens, Effective Contributors and Successful Learners.



The Value and Purpose of Play

Through play children understand each other and make sense of the world around them. Children learn many things from play; it teaches them social skills such as sharing, taking turns, self-discipline and tolerance of others. Children's lives are enhanced by playing creatively and by playing children learn and develop as individuals; it assists in their emotional and intellectual development and mental health resilience which are core building blocks for life and work.



Characteristics of Play

Play is a natural spontaneous and voluntary activity in which all of us, children and adults, benefit from engaging in throughout our lives. All children **like** to play and there is no "right way" or "wrong way" for children to play. They can use their imagination to develop games and interact with each other without being in an adult-led environment. Play is often called the 'work' of children. We therefore need to encourage unstructured free play, loosely supervised, as much as possible, as over programming spoils the true benefits of play. Children's play may or may not involve equipment or have an end product. Children play on their own and with others. Their play may be boisterous and energetic or quiet and contemplative, light-hearted or very serious.

Inclusion

Inclusive play is about all children being able to play together and about recognising the need to cater for exceptional skills as well as disability. True inclusion offers a range of play opportunities, for a range of needs and abilities.

At St Andrews Primary School through thoughtful design and appropriate adult support we will actively ensure inclusion for all of our learners enabling them to experience as many good play opportunities as possible. This will not necessarily mean that all activities are open to all young people but rather that everyone will have access to a variety of play experiences suitable to their needs and skill levels. It will also mean that our young people regardless of ability will have opportunities to play together.

Adult support

Real play places great emphasis on the quality of the people who provide the play opportunities. They need to be skilled and motivated, and excited by the opportunity to deliver the best possible play solutions. They will also reflect the diverse communities that make up this school. And they will be committed to working together, combining their talent, experience and energy.

At St Andrews we will ensure that there are opportunities for staff development and ongoing support of staff skills through the recruitment and training process. Opportunities for staff to meet to discuss issues and ideas for play will be organised on a regular basis. Staff will be supported and encouraged to work collegiately across other schools to develop their leadership skills and to support the play's development in school.



Managing risk

Risk taking is an essential feature of play if we are to enable our children to develop their capacities and to explore their limits. We need to allow children the chance to encounter acceptable risks as part of a stimulating and challenging controlled learning environments. If we do not provide this they may look elsewhere for this experience and be open to greater harm.

Children need and want to take risks with their play. We aim to respond to these needs and wishes by offering children stimulating and challenging environments which offer opportunities for them to explore and develop their abilities. We aim to manage the level of risk so that children are not exposed to unacceptable risk which would result in serious injury.

Safety in play is not an absolute and cannot be addressed in isolation. Play provision needs to be exciting and attractive and this usually involves some element of risk. Educating children about risk is an effective method of managing play environments, exploring children understanding of risk and identifying areas where children need support and awareness raising.

Judgements about the acceptability of risks are made on the basis of risk assessment which is a dynamic process taking account of social and psychological factors and our local environment. Almost any environment contains hazards or sources of harm; the important thing is to assess the benefits of the activity measured against the likelihood of coming to harm and to manage the risk appropriately. This system can be described as risk-benefit assessment and examples are included in the appendix.



Partnerships

Supporting play is a partnership between school and home with the wider community playing an important part in this.

Children sometimes attend formal clubs for sport etc. and this can teach them important life skills but they rarely offer opportunities for freedom or choice. The value of free play within the community can be stressful for both children and adults with many opportunities for children to play reduced to formal organised outdoor spaces and activities. The value and opportunities for free play have reduced over the decades and many children never play alone within their community.

St Andrews hopes to develop and support the use of their play spaces as community spaces used by formal groups e.g. playschemes. We also welcome the possibly use by informal group from the local community in the future as part of initiatives by local and national government



Commitments

At St Andrews Primary School we will

- recognise and promote play in all its forms and designs.
- increase the quality of children's play opportunities in a variety of settings e.g. playground
- ensure that all children and young people have easy access to opportunities to play.
- Ensure there is creative design of our spaces to support all children's play experiences.
- ensure that the risk assessment of play opportunities, environments, facilities and provision takes appropriate account of the benefits to all children and young people of acceptable levels of risk, challenge and stimulation
- ensure all staff are highly trained to support real play
- resource and support play environments in an ethical and environmental manner.
- enable opportunities for all children and young people's views to be routinely heard and taken into account regarding decisions made which affect their play
- enable opportunities for parents view to be routinely heard through the parent council and other consultation methods.
- encourage play opportunities in our wider community through developing partnership with community groups and organisations.

