

Policy: Play Policy

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Authorised by: Governing Body

Updated by: Headteacher & Play Lead

Building foundations for a love of life, a love of learning and a love of one another.

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. The school believes that all children need opportunities to play which allow them to explore, manipulate, experience and affect their environment within challenging settings, free from unacceptable levels of risk.

Play provision should be:

Welcoming and accessible to every child, irrespective of gender, sexual orientation, economic or social circumstances, ethnic or cultural background or origin, or individual abilities

Purpose

- Play is defined as any freely chosen activity which a child finds satisfying and creative. It may or may not involve equipment or other people.
- Play is essential for physical, emotional, social, spiritual and intellectual development.
- Play can be physical, imaginative, creative and explorative.
- Play enables children to explore the physical and social environment, different concepts and ideas.
- Play encourages self-confidence and the ability to make choices, co-operation and responsibility.
- Play is critical to children's physical and emotional health, and enables them to explore and develop the balance between the right to act freely and their responsibilities to others.
- Free play can have a direct positive impact on a child's ability to meet formal educational goals.
- Play is a chance to form social and communication skills and recognise boundaries of relationships across age-groups.
- Play is taking managed risks and being challenged – helping children to make informed and adapted decisions in play and life.
- Above all, play should be a fun, enjoyable, memorable and exciting experience.

Aims

We recognise that playtime is approximately 25% of a child's school day. With such a large proportion of time spent at 'play' we recognise the need to:

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1. Continue to keep children at the heart of decisions and provide a consistent message

- For those whose role is to plan for or provide for play within the school to gain a greater understanding of play, its principles, qualities and benefits and be kept up to date with training.
- To consult children in decision-making on the planning, design, creation and supervision of play opportunities.
- To give clear and consistent messages to children about what are acceptable boundaries in regards to loose parts, causing direct harm etc.

2. Improve the quality of the play environment

- Give our children opportunities to encounter challenge, stimulation and acceptable levels of risk in their experience of play so they can blossom in all areas of development across age groups.
- Give children regular opportunities to make and shape their play environment with loose parts and decision making about playground development.
- Make sure that care routines for Disabled children or behaviour management strategies do not mean that children miss out on any of their play time.
- Make sure that children can play out in almost all weathers through the provision of storage for wet weather clothes and footwear. There will however, be some circumstances of extreme weather in which the Senior Management Team may make the decision to not allow children outdoors. This is where our duty of care for the children's safety, outweighs the benefits of play.
- We ensure that there is minimum risk to children whilst playing in school by ensuring adequate adult supervision and first aiders (play leaders) being present around the school grounds and at a designated first aid area.
- This policy should be read in conjunction with the Whole School Behaviour Policy and the Lunchtime and Break Supervision Risk Assessment.

Risk

Risk is understood as an integral aspect of children's play: most children are naturally curious, and development often requires some experimentation and risk taking (think about how children learn to walk). The thrill in taking risks (physical, social and emotional) is what brings play its vitality and therefore benefits. In addition, taking physical risks helps children understand what their bodies can do and the process of assessing risks. It is understandable that adults want children to be safe, but there is a growing body of evidence that shows that over-protection may be counterproductive and that healthy play encompasses risk taking on children's own terms.

Vision

Play should enable a child to experience a love of life through discovery. Children should experience a love of life in all its fullness (John 10:10).

A Child-Centred Approach

Children are the most frequent users of the outdoors and spend approximately 40% of their playtime travelling from one place to another.

Because of this two factors are important:

1. **Access/choice:** The diversity of environments within the school grounds and the available access to the children are the most important factors for child development.

2. **Safety:** The safety of the environment for children. At Upton St Leonards CE Primary, we recognise that the environment in which children spend their time is an essential backdrop to play.

The School will:

- Work towards the provision of a hierarchy of well-maintained areas/spaces within school, offering a rich environment for play.
- Ensure the provision of a varied and interesting physical environment – different levels; spaces of different sizes; e.g. places to hide; trees and bushes; places that inspire mystery and imagination.
- Ensure the following measures will be taken to ensure a safe environment: linking into public open spaces;
- Ensure green spaces will welcome children and minimise prohibited/limited access areas.
- Have regard to the fact that communities go through stages and their needs change over time.