



Simonside Primary School Play Policy

Date Agreed: June 2019

Date for Review: June 2020

This policy sets out Simonside Primary 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. In a time where outdoor play environments and opportunities are on the decline, 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 children's 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, tolerance 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. Our rights and responsibilities are displayed in every classroom.
- To develop skills in self-assessing and managing risk.
- Improve their imagination, independence and creativity;
- Improve social skills;
- Be resilient, confident, good problem solvers;
- Be ready for anything as a result of negotiation and independence of thought;
- Be better at problem solving;
- Develop life skills; and
- Improve physical development, co-ordination and fitness.

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. 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 it should give children the opportunity to play with all ages and that it is the role of the adults to support the play process. Children will also have the opportunity for 'free range' play within the school grounds.

Rationale and Respecting Rights

Children spend up to 20% of their time in school at play. Therefore this time needs to be coherent and planned for. Changes in society such as heavier traffic, busier lifestyles, less areas for play and awareness of risk have led to 'play poverty' for today's children. This makes their play opportunities at school even more vital.

Better play leads to happier children and in turn fewer behaviour problems, a more positive attitude to school, skills development, fewer accidents and more effective learning in the classroom as less staff time is spent resolving issues.

In addition to these reasons to prioritise play in school, Article 31 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child states that '*all children have a right to relax and play and to join in a wide range of activities*'

In addition to all the policy guidance on the importance of play, the children have been surveyed about their views on play time. Many of the children's comments included; '*there is not enough to do*', '*we need more things to play with*', '*different adults tell us different things*'. These comments by children highlight the need to improve our play resources and opportunities at Simonside.

At Simonside Primary we see that children's rights are a central focus in everything we do, as a framework for our teaching and learning and at the heart of our ethos. 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 have a right to be happy therefore to respect this right the children must follow instructions, use equipment without hurting others, assess risk and tidy equipment away. 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 be safe therefore to respect this right children must follow instructions, use equipment without hurting others, assess risk and tidy equipment away. Adults respect this right by assessing risk daily, encouraging children to assess risk also and helping children tidy up.

Children have the right to play and relax therefore to respect this right the children must follow instructions, use equipment without hurting others and help others who need it. 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.

Risk assessment and play

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.

Play England

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

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

- Recognise the need for professional judgement in setting the balance between safety and goals
- Ensure risks are as apparent as possible to staff and children.
- Design spaces where the risks of hazards are clearly apparent.
- Ensure risks that children may not appreciate are controlled and managed.
- Provide staff with training to supervise play setting.

Adults' Role in Play

Play Leaders are designated to an 'area'. It is expected that adults play alongside the children and model good behaviours in play to them.

Remote/ranging supervision

We may not be able to see every child all of the time, especially when the children are using the trees and other outdoor areas. Staff are assigned a zone on a termly rotation and it is expected that all staff will move around throughout playtime, finding out what the children are doing and where the children are playing. Staff can then check in on the children's play throughout playtime. Regular assemblies are held with the children about the designated adults and how to behave responsibly and independently.

Conflict Resolution

All staff follow the schools Behaviour Policy over lunchtimes and playtimes with the aim to solving conflict by working alongside the children where possible. At times children may need time out but this is encouraged to be outdoors so the children can continue to have time outside.

Inclusion

All children are entitled to welcoming and accessible play provision, irrespective of age, gender, economic or social circumstances, ethnic or cultural background or origin or individual abilities. It is our responsibility to ensure adequate provision is provided. All children need time and space to play freely and confidently with their peers, free of charge, indoors and outdoors, somewhere they feel safe. Play provision should actively include the widest range of children and seek to engage with those from minority groups. Play opportunities will hold no barriers to any of our children within our school.

Benefit and Risk

The Health and Safety Executive document states that 'Play is great for children's well-being 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.'

Our school extends the choice and control that children have over their play, the freedom they enjoy and the satisfaction they gain from it. We recognise the child's need to test boundaries and responds positively to that need. We will manage the balance between the need to offer risk and the need to keep children safe from harm. We aim to promote and foster independence and raise self-esteem of all children. At the heart of our play opportunities, we foster and promote children's respect for each other and offer opportunities for social interactions across all age groups.

All fixed equipment will be risk assessed by ROSPA overseen by the school Site Supervisor and Head Teacher.

All lunchtime staff will carry a First aid waist bag, which contains basic First Aid equipment, in line with school policy. There is also additional First Aid equipment stored in the designated area within school. A number of staff are First Aid trained and they will be consulted with regards to more serious injuries.

Environment

Part of our children's learning experiences involve playing out in all-weather types and conditions. To be able to enjoy the vast space and activities children should always come to school with the appropriate equipment as we try to keep all of the school play zones open all year so the children will play on the field even in the winter months and with wet conditions.

All children are expected to wear wellington boots and waterproofs on the field, particularly in poorer weather. Welly stores have been created and children have been asked to provide wellies or old outdoor shoes for use at playtimes. Children then return to their welly stores and put their shoes back on. Hand washing facilities are provided both in classroom and bathroom areas.

All risks are monitored and approved through South Tyneside Council Health and Safety procedures and all equipment is checked thoroughly. The grounds are checked daily by the school Site Supervisor and inspections of play equipment are carried out.