

WELTON PRIMARY SCHOOL



Play Policy

Date: January 2019



Midsomer Norton
Schools Partnership

Commitment

This policy sets out Welton 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 and many children may spend much of their time indoors, we recognise that the school grounds provide a crucial place for children to experience self-initiated play and the benefits this brings.

Rationale

Children spend 1.4 years of their primary school attendance in playtimes. This is a considerable amount of potentially valuable time which needs careful planning. Better play means happier children. Happier children mean fewer behaviour problems, a more positive attitude to school, more effective learning, core skills development together with less staff time spent resolving problems, fewer accidents and a happier school.

In 1992, Play England drew up The Charter for Children's Play which sets out a vision for play that we still believe is relevant today (See Appendix 1). It states that:

- Children need time and space to play at school;
- Adults should let children play;
- Children value and benefit from staffed play provision;
- Children's play is enriched by skilled playworkers;
- Children sometimes need extra support to enjoy their right to play.

Links to Learning

Play is recognised for the important contribution it makes to education and lifelong learning, a finding confirmed by many studies of early childhood. Research shows that play can enhance problem solving; it is also widely regarded as providing opportunities for social interaction and language development. The contribution of play to educational development is suggested through the inherent value of different play types e.g. through risk taking and exploratory play in formal and informal settings, allowing children to experiment, try new things and push their boundaries.

Our Aims

Our school aims are:

- to provide children with a play setting which is enjoyable, 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 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.

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 the role of the adults is to support the play process. Children will also have the opportunity for 'free range' play within the school grounds.

Respecting Rights

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child makes clear that '*all children have a right to relax and play and to join in a wide range of activities (Article 31)*'. At Welton Primary School we promote these rights as a central focus in all we do. 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. In addition:

- *Children have the right to be happy* therefore to respect this right the children must follow instructions, use equipment without hurting others and have fun. Adults respect this right by providing opportunities for creative, exciting play, use conflict resolution and emotion coaching in line with our behaviour policy, to support all children.
- *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 to 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.

Remote Supervision

We may not be able to see every child all of the time, especially when the children are playing amongst the trees or down the bank. It is expected that 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.

Inclusion

All children are entitled to welcoming and accessible play provision, irrespective of gender, economic or social circumstances, ethnic or cultural background or origin or individual abilities. It is our responsibility to ensure adequate provision is provided.

Structure of adult roles

OPAL Team

This is the team working directly with OPAL to ensure policy is in place and develop play and outdoor learning at Welton. It consists of:

- The Head Teacher
- Play Co-ordinator
- Playtime Leader
- Caretaker
- Pupil Voice Co-ordinator
- Parent Representative/Associate Governor
- Other staff members with an interest in developing play

Welton Play Team

All adults working at the school are part of the play team and have a responsibility to follow this policy. When on the playground at playtimes, all staff are considered ‘play makers’. Our play structure consists of:

Play Co-ordinator

(Leads and manages strategy)

Playtime Leader

(Leads and manages playtimes)

Assistant Play Leader

(Supports play leader and steps up in their absence)

Play Makers

(Support children’s’ play)

Review

This policy will be closely monitored by the Head teacher. The ‘OPAL working group’ will take responsibility for managing the action plan for play.

This policy has been shared with the whole school community including children, staff and parents.



Charter for Children’s Play

‘We play boulders – that’s where you sit on the swing and someone shouts “boulders”, they jump on that person then everyone jumps on top until the last one falls off, unless it hurts, then we stop!’

Introduction

The *Charter for Children’s Play* sets out a vision for play and aims to be a catalyst for individuals and organisations to examine, review and improve their provision for children and young people’s play and informal recreation.

The charter may also serve as a guide and framework to all those involved in developing, revising and implementing play strategies, community plans and children and young people’s plans.

Organisations whose services impact on children’s play, such as local authorities, voluntary organisations, and health, education and social service providers, can formally adopt the charter in order to raise awareness of the importance of play. The charter underpins all Play England’s work and its adoption is a requirement for membership.

The value of play

Playing is integral to children’s enjoyment of their lives, their health and their development. Children and young people – disabled and non-disabled – whatever their age, culture, ethnicity or social and economic background, need and want to play, indoors and out, in whatever way they can. Through playing, children are creating their own culture, developing their abilities, exploring their creativity and learning about themselves, other people and the world around them.

Children need and want to stretch and challenge themselves when they play. Play provision and play space that is stimulating and exciting allows children to encounter and learn about risk. This helps them to build confidence, learn skills and develop resilience at their own pace.

Play is the fundamental way that children enjoy their childhood. It is essential to their quality of life as children.

- Playing is fun: it is how children enjoy themselves.
- Play promotes children’s development, learning, imagination, creativity and independence.
- Play can help to keep children healthy and active.
- Play allows children to experience and encounter boundaries, learning to assess and manage risk in their lives; both physical and social.
- Play helps children to understand the people and places in their lives, learn about their environment and develop their sense of community.
- Play allows children to find out about themselves, their abilities, their interests and the contribution they can make.
- Play can be therapeutic. It helps children to deal with difficult or painful circumstances such as emotional stress or medical treatment.
- Play can be a way of building and maintaining important relationships with friends, carers and family members.



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Children's right to play

The right to play and informal recreation, for all children and young people up to 18 years of age, is contained in Article 31 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, ratified by the UK government in 1991. The government has a duty under this convention to protect and promote play opportunities for all children and young people.

UN Convention on the Rights of the Child: Article 31

1. States Parties recognise the right of the child to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts.
2. States Parties shall respect and promote the right of the child to participate fully in cultural and artistic life and shall encourage the provision of appropriate and equal opportunities for cultural, artistic, recreational and leisure activity.

What we mean by 'play'

'Play is what children and young people do when they follow their own ideas and interests, in their own way and for their own reasons.' (DCMS, 2004)

Play is a generic term applied to a wide range of activities and behaviours that are satisfying to the child, creative for the child and freely chosen by the child. It has frequently been described as 'what children and young people do when not being told what to do by adults.'

As children grow they are more likely to describe these informal recreational activities in ways other than 'playing'. Under the UN Convention, older children's right to their own recreational and cultural lives is as important as younger children's right to play. This charter applies equally to all ages of children.

In the charter, children are defined as anyone under the age of 18 years. This definition draws on that used in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and ratified by the United Kingdom in 1991.

The essence of play is that it arises from children's innate need to express themselves, to explore, learn about and make sense of their world. Its benefits for children derive

from them making their own choices, following their own instincts. At play, children have a certain freedom and autonomy from adult direction. This freedom – to choose, to explore, to associate, to create, to move around, to challenge themselves and others – is an important part of their lives now; and vital to their development.

The charter, therefore, is underpinned by some key understandings:

- Play is an essential part of every child's life – vital to his or her development. It is the way that children explore for themselves the world around them; the way that they naturally develop understanding and practise skills.
- Play is essential for healthy physical and emotional growth, for intellectual and educational development, and for acquiring social and behavioural skills.
- 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.
- Children's own culture is created and lived through their play.

Implementing the charter

Making it Happen, a detailed guide to implementing the *Charter for Children's Play* is available from Play England. This guide offers action points to children and young people, parents and carers, play providers, policy makers and planners on different ways to promote the charter and work towards better provision for play and informal recreation for all children and young people.



Charter for Children's Play

Children have the right to play

All children and young people have the right to play and need to play: free to choose what they do – lively or relaxed, noisy or quiet – with the chance to stretch and challenge themselves, take risks and enjoy freedom. The right to play is enshrined in Article 31 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Every child needs time and space to play

All children and young people – disabled and non-disabled – whatever their age, culture, ethnicity or social and economic background, 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.

Adults should let children play

Parents, carers and other adults can support children and young people's play by respecting the value and importance of all types of play, playing with their children and by creating opportunities and allowing time for children to play independently with their friends, inside and outside the home.

Children should be able to play freely in their local areas

Children have the same right to use and enjoy public space as others. Local streets, estates, green spaces, parks and town centres should be accessible for children and young people to move around in safety and offer places where they can play freely, experience nature, explore their environment and be with their friends.

Children value and benefit from staffed play provision

Children should have access to a choice of staffed facilities where children's play rights and needs are the first priority, such as adventure playgrounds, play centres, holiday play schemes, after-school play clubs, breakfast play clubs, toy libraries, play buses and play ranger services.

Children's play is enriched by skilled playworkers

Qualified, skilled playworkers are trained to put children's play needs at the centre of their work in a variety of settings, enhancing the range and quality of play experiences for all children. They are the best people to run staffed play provision for school-aged children. The role of the playworker is as important as that of any skilled professional working with children and should be respected and rewarded accordingly.

Children need time and space to play at school

The school day should allow time for children to relax and play freely with their friends. Young children learn best through play and, as they get older, play supports and enriches their learning. Children learn best if teaching is creative and enjoyable. In school, time and space for play and outdoor learning is as important as formal teaching. School grounds should be good places to play.

Children sometimes need extra support to enjoy their right to play

Children and young people living away from home or visiting unfamiliar or controlled environments such as hospital, prison, immigration centres, and residential homes and schools, sometimes experience fear, anxiety and discomfort. For these children it is especially important to ensure they have good play opportunities facilitated by trained staff and volunteers.

Supporting documents

The *Charter for Children's Play* should be used alongside other key play sector documents.

Best Play

Best Play – what play provision should do for children (NPFA, 2000), a fundamental document for the play sector, describes how children benefit from a variety of play opportunities and how play services and spaces can provide these benefits. The seven objectives described in *Best Play* apply to all play provision. The objectives are broad statements, intended to set out how play values and principles can be put into practice.

The seven play objectives

1. The provision extends the choice and control that children have over their play, the freedom they enjoy and the satisfaction they gain from it.
2. The provision recognises the child's need to test boundaries and responds positively to that need.
3. The provision manages the balance between the need to offer risk and the need to keep children safe from harm.
4. The provision maximises the range of play opportunities.
5. The provision fosters independence and self-esteem.
6. The provision fosters children's respect for others and offers opportunities for social interaction.
7. The provision fosters the child's well-being, healthy growth and development, knowledge and understanding, creativity and capacity to learn.

Playwork Principles

Playwork Principles (Playwork Principles Scrutiny Group, 2004), establish the professional and ethical framework for playwork. They describe what is unique about play and playwork, and provide the playwork perspective for working with children and young people. They are based on the recognition that children and young people's capacity for positive development will be enhanced if given access to the broadest range of environments and play opportunities. SkillsActive, the Sector Skills Council for playwork, endorses *Playwork Principles*.

KIDS Inclusion Framework

'Inclusive provision is open and accessible to all, and takes positive action in removing disabling barriers so that disabled and non-disabled children can participate' (KIDS, 2005). In the charter, inclusive provision refers to play provision that removes barriers to children often excluded from local mainstream provision because of disability, ethnicity, social or economic background, or any other reason.

Managing Risk in Play Provision

Managing Risk in Play Provision: Implementation guide (Ball and others, 2008) shows how play providers can replace current risk assessment practice with an approach to risk management that takes into account the benefits to children and young people of challenging play experiences, as well as the risks. The guide is based on the Play Safety Forum's position statement *Managing risk in play provision*, first published in 2002. The guide is endorsed by the Health and Safety Executive and RoSPA.

Managing risk in play provision: Summary statement

'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.'

Planning for Play

Planning for Play (CPC, 2006), is the guide to developing and implementing local play strategies; produced to support the Big Lottery Fund's Children's Play programme. It sets out recommended principles and processes for a cross-cutting approach to planning for children's play provision and to consider children's need to play throughout the public realm. *Planning for Play* is consistent with the *Charter for Children's Play*.

Guidance, entitled *Embedding the Play Strategy*, was published in autumn 2009 by Play England to support the delivery of the government's Play Strategy. This guide updates *Planning for Play*.

References

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Play England promotes excellent free play opportunities for all children and young people.

Play England provides advice and support to promote good practice, and works to ensure that the importance of play is recognised by policy makers, planners and the public.

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