

Pocklington Community Junior School

Play Policy 2019

Policy statement

Our policies have been written with care to ensure that the reasoning behind the policies can be understood by all practitioners. We have an expectation that all staff adhere to school policy in all their work, and therefore the expectations set out in this policy should be demonstrated in practice. However, we also acknowledge that our staff are professionals and that no policy can account for every possible scenario or variable, therefore we operate an approach which can be summarised as “Faithful adoption, Intelligent enhancement”. What this means is that everything which is outlined in this policy should be faithfully adopted; no element can be removed. However, when the practice can be enhanced by adding to it or supporting access to it, our staff have the approval to do so.

Commitment

Our fundamental purpose as a school is to prepare the children in our care for the rest of their lives. In order to achieve this, we have a moral purpose to use every tool available to us to support every area of need. We know that for young people and adults to flourish, personal and social skills, as well as academic knowledge, need to be well developed. It is for this reason that we value play in our school.

Enshrined in Article 31 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, all children have “the right 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”. However, we recognise that not only is play a right, it supports learning in all its forms, and it is in the interests of both the child and the school to make sure quality play is accessed daily.

Rationale

During their time in our school, children will spend 20% of their time at play. It is for this reason that we do not leave quality play to chance. This time needs to be coherent and well planned, with as much care and attention given to play as to other subject areas in school.

Feedback from parents and staff demonstrate the impact that societal changes have had on play: more traffic, busier lifestyles, fewer play spaces, and a perception of increased risk have all impacted on the quality and quantity of play experienced by children. Schools are a last refuge of guaranteed play.

Play benefits the child. Social interaction during play supports language development, turn taking, imagination and collaboration. Physical play improves fine and gross motor skills which transposes directly into handwriting and sustained writing capacity. Play is also fun and supports a healthy work-life balance and opportunities to destress and unwind.

Play also leads to benefits for the school. With better quality play comes fewer negative issues, reducing time for all staff to manage these. Pupils who have a rich playtime return to learning refreshed and ready to learn. Additionally, play allows learning to ‘cut across’ domains and be reinforced through experience. Most skills are taught in discrete chunks, and although in-lesson opportunities are provided to enrich and embed this new learning, play affords child-led opportunities to try out this new learning in a variety of contexts.

Defining play

Johan Huizinga, in his book *Homo Ludens*, states that play is "a free activity standing quite consciously outside 'ordinary' life as being 'not serious' but at the same time absorbing the player intensely and utterly. It is an activity connected with no material interest, and no profit can be gained by it. It proceeds within its own proper boundaries of time and space according to fixed rules and in an orderly manner. It promotes the formation of social groupings that tend to surround themselves with secrecy and to stress the difference from the common world by disguise or other means."

There are four components of a child's development:

- Physical (direct impact on physical development, co-ordination and fitness);
- Intellectual (cognitive development, imagination);
- Educational (the knowledge and understanding of academic outcomes); and
- Social (the development of values, beliefs and self-perception and the parallel communication skills, leadership and teamwork this enhances).

At Pocklington Community Junior School, the children, staff and parents think that:

- Play is self-directed and exists for no other purpose other than recreation, enjoyment or amusement
- Play evolves and adapts and is often 'unstable' – shifting rapidly from one thing to another
- Play is essential and is the right of every child
- Play develops undefined abilities – movement, strength, imagination, proprioception, balance
- Play is free.

Risk and benefit

Many research studies have found that the social, physical and mental benefits to children of managed risks are vast. Children become more resilient, adaptable and are keen to try new experiences. Children should be provided with opportunities to challenge themselves and also to experience successes and failures. Risk and challenge is not limited to physical risk – it includes the uncertainties involved in making new friends, playing with children from different backgrounds and building emotional resilience through trying out new experiences with the possibility of failure.

Parents have identified that unacceptable risk is seen as one of the barriers to play outside of school, however these risks are external to play, such as traffic, issues with strangers or unknown environments. In this way, school becomes the perfect place for children to experience managed risk; the external risks are removed through effective safeguarding and site management, and any remaining risks inherent in the play itself can be supported and responded to rapidly and effectively by trained professionals.

At Pocklington, we are committed to providing these experiences for our children in a managed way. The Health and Safety Executive offer guidance on the provision of play in educational settings and state 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'* (HSE, Children's play and leisure – promoting a balanced approach, 2012)

Pocklington Community Junior School will use the Health and Safety Executive's guidance on Managing Risk in Play Provision (www.hse.gov.uk) (Appendix 1) as its principle guiding documents in making decisions relating to risk and play.

Our role as play providers is to facilitate the maximum amount of enriching opportunities for children to encounter. They need to learn to manage risk for themselves in an environment that is as safe as it needs to be, rather than completely devoid of risk. The benefit to children of challenging play opportunities should be balanced with any potential risk when carrying out risk assessments. We will adopt a risk-benefit approach and use dynamic risk assessments (Appendix 2) to manage our duty of care to protect and provide for children's needs. In addition to written risk assessments the school will use dynamic risk management in order to respond to the fluid nature of risk and challenge in the play environment. The school will also manage risk by building children's skills in identifying and managing appropriate risk themselves.

Adult's role in play

We, as an entire staff, are fully committed to working with children to provide the play experiences that they want and need in their school. We will have a continuing dialogue with children about the play provision in the playground which will include regular play assemblies, School Council involvement, surveys and other pupil voice outlets. Each adult's role will also be to facilitate play and encourage children to assess the risks and benefits of activities within the play setting. The school is working with OPAL (www.outdoorplayandlearning.org.uk) to help guide a strategic approach to developing play at Pocklington. In addition to this the Pocklington Play Team will work in collaboration with parents, teachers, teaching assistants, MSAs and all other staff as well as the children to implement the changes highlighted in this policy. Teaching assistants and MSAs will take on the role of Play Makers. They will ensure that the broadest possible range of play opportunities are available to children: to observe, reflect and analyse the play that is happening and select a mode of intervention or make a change to the play space if needed. Play Makers ensure that the play space is inclusive – supporting all children to make the most of the opportunities available in their own way.

Children's role in play

The children will all have access to their own version of the play policy (Appendix 3). It will also include the rights and responsibilities of the children to;

- Have ownership of their play and outdoor learning experiences
- Respect and look after each other, their environment, equipment and toys
- To be aware of sanctions surrounding purposely dangerous or unsafe behaviour
- Ensure that playtimes are fun for everybody

This children's policy will be shared and explained to all children regularly as part of ongoing assemblies, discussions and dialogue in class and with School Council.

Environment, Equality and Access

At Pocklington Community Junior School we will:

- use the outdoor space as a natural resource for learning and playing, encouraging the children to value natural or found objects for play
- include the children when planning for playing and learning outdoors
- ensure that the outdoor area offers all children the opportunity to investigate, take risks and explore and use their imagination and creativity
- expect the children to respect the outdoor environment and care for living things
- give children the opportunity to manage the space and freedom afforded by the outdoors
- enrich the quality of the environment to maximise variety of play types and increase play value
- ensure that the playground be an integrated area where all children from Years 3 to Year 6 can play safely
- teach the children their responsibilities with regard to maintaining the quality of their outdoor space, and the equipment available and ensure they take an active part in doing this
- promote children's pride for the outdoor space that belongs to them
- plan a rigorous induction for new Year 3 pupils as part of their transition

Further specialist guidance will be followed from Play England, including using the 'Criteria for a rich play environment' document (<http://www.playengland.org.uk/resource/best-play/>).

All adults engaged in providing play are committed to providing equal access to all children. This means that all activities will be considered to ensure that all children who wish to take part can do so, and there are no barriers – physical, emotional, social, or behavioural – which will inhibit children from playing the things they want to play. Further specific detail is found in our Equal Access policy.

What parents want:

All parents were invited to respond to share their desires for what play should be like at our school. Collectively, parents want:

Appendix 1

<http://www.playengland.org.uk/media/172644/managing-risk-in-play-provision.pdf>

A printed version of this document is available in the school office.

Appendix 2

Benefit-Risk Assessment Record Sheet



Assessor and date of assessment	Description of Activity, Principle or Object, who might be at risk and what kind of harm.	Benefit or Utility Or Related Policy	Description of risk management and maintenance agreed	Nominated person	Action Date

Appendix 3
Children's Play Policy

Our two play rules:

1. Play!
2. Our play should not stop someone else's play, now or in the future.

Our rights and responsibilities:

1. We have the right to have fun at playtimes. We have the responsibility to make sure that everyone has fun and our play does not stop this.
2. We have the right to make our own decisions about our play and choose what we do. We have the responsibility to make sure our decisions don't affect others in a negative way.
3. We have the right to choose who we play with. We have the responsibility that no one is left out of play or forced to do something they don't want to.
4. We have the right play with lots of different toys and have a well looked after environment. We have the responsibility to take pride in, respect and look after our environment and toys.
5. We have the right to explore be creative and take thoughtful risks. We have the responsibility to think about what we are doing and talk to a play maker about the risks we are taking if they ask us to.