

EYFS Play Policy (ISI E6 WS)

“Play is the highest form of learning in early childhood”

Tina Bruce Learning through Play 2001

Statement of Intent

At West Hill Park, we believe that play is the key way in which young children learn with enjoyment and challenge.

It is the primary means through which children learn about themselves, about others and about the world around them.

The Early Years Foundation Stage Guidance states that children of this age learn best through play.

“Play is a child’s life and the means by which he comes to understand the world he lives in”

Susan Isaacs ‘Social Development in Young Children’ 1933

“For children it is their serious work, not an alternative activity”

Article 44 in ‘The International Charter of Human Rights’ states that it is a child’s right to play.

It is crucial that children direct their own play and for this they need time and space in order to become deeply involved in their learning.

Members of staff work together to plan for indoor and outdoor play based on their ongoing observations of children and their interests. A range of appropriate materials and equipment is freely available to enable independent and active learning. Sometimes their play will be boisterous, sometimes quiet and reflective.

Staff work alongside children whilst they play, observing, supporting and extending the learning. (See Appendix 1 - ‘The Adults Role’).

Through their play, children will:

- make informed choices and become confident autonomous learners
- work at their own pace in a non-competitive environment
- achieve success and acknowledge failure as part of the learning process
- learn how to express and deal with their emotions and behaviour appropriately, express fears, take risks and make mistakes in a controlled and safe environment
- develop their self esteem and develop a sense of personal identity
- grow, develop and change
- increase their ability to understand and use language effectively
- explore, develop and represent learning experiences which help them to make sense of the world
- practice and build up ideas, concepts and skills
- learn to understand the needs of others, beginning to develop ideas about fairness and justice
- be alone, alongside others or co-operate as they talk and play
- think and act creatively and imaginatively
- investigate and solve problems

Play fosters positive attitudes so that children can:

- Imagine
- Show emotions
- Co-operate
- Share
- Communicate
- Negotiate

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- Be motivated
- Practice
- Consolidate
- Extend
- Reflect
- Draw conclusions
- Concentrate
- Persevere
- Explore
- Experiment
- Investigate
- Question
- Predict
- Have fun!

“In play, under a table or up a tree, alone or in groups, expressing themselves in words or with blocks, or music or miniature world materials, children think and feel and act in ways of the utmost importance for their learning”

Mary Jane Drummond ‘Play Learning and the National Curriculum – some possibilities’ 1996

Appendix 1: The Role of the Adult

Adults support children by becoming actively engaged in:

- listening to children and responding to their needs extending and supporting children’s learning through their own spontaneous play
- providing a wide variety of learning experiences including those from real life
- supporting and extending children’s responses through an environment planned and resourced for rich, exciting and challenging play
- using encouragement and positive feedback to enable children’s self confidence to grow and to enable them to develop ways of solving problems
- giving verbal feedback and using open-ended questions, thereby extending and developing children’s language and communication in their play
- interacting with children, when appropriate, to stimulate their imagination and to extend their thinking, reasoning, problem-solving and understanding
- sharing and respecting children’s creative thinking and feelings about their experiences and activities

Appendix 2: Monitoring and Evaluating the Policy.

- To review the policy as a whole staff regularly
- To monitor changes as they occur.
- To discuss the implementation and the effectiveness of the policy.

Appendix 3: Definitions of Play

- “Play is the highest expression of human development in childhood for it alone is the free expression of what is in the child’s soul.” (*Friedrich Froebel 1887*)
- “Play is pleasurable, enjoyable, - positively valued by the player.”
- “The process of play is important in itself – it need not have extrinsic goals.”
- “Play is spontaneous and voluntary – freely chosen by the player”
- “Play involves some active engagement on the part of the player”
- “Play is linked to lots of other areas of activity, like problem-solving, creativity, socialisation, etc.” (*Catherine Garvey 1991*)
- “I think play is a way of dealing with – experimenting with – the surrounding world, or parts of it. It is a way of exposing yourself and your surrounding world, to chance, trial and error – and seeing what happens. Maybe that’s a pompous way of describing children mucking around with bits of grass. But I do think that such a description lends dignity and seriousness to play, which is after all, central to effective learning.” (*Michael Rosen 1996*)
- “Play is an essential part of every child’s life and vital to the processes of human development. It provides the mechanism for children to explore to the world around them and the medium through which skills are developed and practised. It is essential for physical, emotional and spiritual growth, intellectual and educational development, and acquiring social and behavioural skills.”
- “Play is a generic term for a variety of activities which are satisfying to the child, creative for the child and freely chosen by the child. The activities may involve equipment or they may

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not, be boisterous and energetic or quiet and contemplative, be done with other people or in one's own, have an end product or not, be light-hearted or very serious." (*National Voluntary Council for Children's Play*)

- Play is the freely chosen and personally directed enactment of a group of non-goal-orientated behaviours which become increasingly more complex with experience and which in themselves facilitate the development of an equivalent range of tools, without which personal and species evolution cannot continue. Thus any behaviour must satisfy the criteria of free choice, personal direction and intrinsic motivation to fall within the category of play." (*Bob Hughes*)
- "Play is children's work." "Play is learning without being taught." (*Anon*)
- "Play is feeling." (*Brenda Crowe*)
- "If the doctor looks down a child's throat or carried out some small operation on him, we may be quite sure that these frightening experiences will be the subject of the next game." (*Sigmund Freud*)
- "Play involves testing our limits physically and socially." (*Steven Chown – Playlinks*)
- "Playing was a serious business, without knowing it we were preparing to join the adult world. We were completely in tune with the elements: air – as we swung from a rope on a tree branch; fire – when we crouched over our autumnal burn; water – when we damned the brook; and earth – when we dug ourselves an underground den. In other areas, our lives were difficult and sometimes harsh, but our playing lives were glorious in comparison." (*Sue Townsend*)
- "People don't stop playing because they grow old. They grow old because they stop playing." (*George Bernard Shaw*)
- "Normal play behaviour was virtually absent throughout the lives of highly violent, anti-social men." (*Stuart Brown*)
- "... a ditch somewhere, or a creek, meadow, woodlot or marsh...these are places of initiation, where the borders between ourselves and other creatures break down, where the earth gets under our nails and a sense of place gets under our skin. Everybody has a ditch, or ought to. For only the ditches and the fields, the woods, the ravines – can teach us to care enough for all the land." (*Robert Pyle*)
- "Sitting up a tree on your own and looking out – you feel big inside like nothing can knock you down ever again." (*Child*)

Appendix 4: Dictionary definitions

(Verb) To move with light or irregular motion, to frolic, to flutter, to flicker, to amuse oneself, to take part in a game, to engage in sport, to contend in a game, to act a part on stage, to perform on a musical instrument, to put in action or motion, to operate, to trifle with, to delude. (Noun) A brisk or free movement, activity, action, amusement, fun, frolic, sport, exercise, pastime, a contest, a dramatic piece of performance, performance on a musical instrument, conduct, behaviour.

- "Play has been man's most useful preoccupation." (*Frank Caplan*)
- "Play is uniquely an adaptive act, not subordinate to some other adaptive act, but with a special function of its own, in human experience." (*Johan Huizinga*)
- "Play is...Freely Chosen – Children choose what they do. Personally Directed – children choose how they do it. Intrinsically Motivated – children choose why they do it – they do it for no external goal or reward." (*Bob Hughes*)
- "Play is vital to a child's ability to evolve and to our continued existence as a species."
- "Play is vital to a child's neurological development and to their brains plasticity and neuro-chemical activity." (*Bob Hughes*)
- "Play can discover more about a person in an hour of play than a year of conversation." (*Plato*)
- All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy." (*Proverb*)

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