

All children have a right to relax and play and to join in a wide range of activities (Article 31).

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Commitment

At Hardwicke Parochial Primary School we are committed to using this play policy to guide our planning and actions in delivering play opportunities at lunch times to ensure the environments for play are engaging and of good quality. We believe that play has a vital role in promoting children's independence, happiness and wellbeing and therefore should be planned collaboratively with children. Our play policy encourages our children to be respectful of each other, the resources and the environment in which they are playing which fully embraces our Mission Statement, 'Love your neighbour as yourself' as we promote 'engagement, enjoyment and enthusiasm to gain excellence'.

Rationale

Our school believes that all children need opportunities to play which allow them to explore, be creative, take acceptable levels of risk, express themselves, build confidence, challenge themselves, develop resilience and acquire good social and behavioural skills. Children spend up to 20% or 1.4 years of their time in school partaking in play time and as a school we believe that this time needs coherent planning, especially as changes in society such as less freedom for children to play outdoors and the increase in digital technology have led to 'play poverty' for today's children. This makes their play opportunities at school even more vital. We believe that 'rich' play opportunities are a child's right, irrespective of gender, sexual orientation, economic or social circumstances, ethnic or cultural background or origin, or individual abilities.

Our school acknowledges and supports the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) (Appendix 1), especially article 31 which focuses on the child's right to play and Article 12 which focuses on the right of children to be listened to on matters important to them.

Our school acknowledges and supports the Play England Charter for Children's play (Appendix 2) which underpins some key principles for play:

1. Play is an essential part of every child's life – vital to his or her development. It is the way that children explore themselves the world around them; the way that they naturally develop understanding and practise skills.
2. Play is essential for healthy physical and emotional growth, for intellectual and educational development, and for acquiring social and behavioural skills.
3. 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.
4. Children's own culture is created and lived through their play.

Our school acknowledges and supports the Outdoor Play and Learning (OPAL) principles which promote ' more active and creative playtimes which mean happier and healthier children, and having happier, healthier, more active children usually results in a more positive attitude to learning in school, with effective classroom lessons, less staff time spent resolving unnecessary behavioural problems, fewer playtime accidents, happier staff and a healthier attitude to life.'

The Value of Play

Play is recognised for the important contribution it makes to education and lifelong learning which is a finding confirmed by many studies of early childhood. Research has shown that play can enhance problem solving; it is also regarded as providing opportunities for social interaction and language development which gives EAL learners a chance to practice. The contribution of play to educational development is suggested through the inherent value of the different types of play (Appendix 3). For example through taking risks, exploring play in informal and formal settings and by allowing children to try new things and push their own boundaries.

The other area of focus is how play impacts on children's learning and behaviour in class.

As a result of implementing this Play Policy within school we believe that our children will:

1. Be happier
2. Have improved self esteem and social skills by understanding of others through freely chosen interactions e.g. within peer groups, with individuals, with groups of different ages, abilities, interests, gender, ethnicity and culture
3. Improve concentration
4. Improve their negotiation skills
5. Improve their imagination, independence and creativity
6. Improve their resilience, confidence and problem solving skills
7. Develop life skills
8. Improve physical development, co-ordination and fitness
9. Improve their language, communication and negotiation skills

Adults' 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 Hardwicke. We will have a continuing dialogue with children about the play provision in the play ground which will include regular play assemblies, School Council Involvement, surveys and other pupil voice outlets.

Staff will use and refer to 'Playwork Principles' (Appendix 4) when appropriate interventions are needed, but ultimately will strive for facilitating an environment which nurtures self-directed play.

The role of adults will be to facilitate play and encourage children to assess the risks and benefits of activities within the play setting. The adults will create an environment which will stimulate children's play and maximise their opportunities for a wide range of play experiences. The MDSA's will take on the role of Play-workers and 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. The Play-workers will ensure that the play space is inclusive – supporting all children to make the most of the opportunities available in their own way. Play-workers are a

channel of access to new materials and tools and they can act as a stimulus to children to explore and learn. They are available to participate in play if children invite them into their play.

Risk and Benefit

'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.' Managing Risk in Play Provision: Implementation guide published for Play England 2012

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 encouraged and supported to encounter and manage risks for themselves in an environment that is as safe as it needs to be rather than completely devoid of risk. The children need to be provided with opportunities to challenge themselves and also to experience successes and failures.

'Without opportunities to take acceptable levels of risk, children's development is inhibited, undermining their capability to deal with the wider unsupervised world.' (Department of Children and Family Services)

The benefits to children at Hardwicke by taking risks in their play are:

- Enables children to develop their own boundaries, knowing where and when to take a risk
- Building their confidence
- Developing their independence
- Promotes peer interaction and reciprocity
- Extending their experiences that develop life skills for the future

At Hardwicke it is our responsibility to strike the balance between risks and the benefits of play. 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:

‘HSE fully supports the provision of play for all children in a variety of environments. HSE understands and accepts that this means children will often be exposed to play environments which, whilst well managed, carry a degree of risk and sometimes potential dangers.’ (HSE 2013)

To manage the level of risk within our play provision Hardwicke Parochial Primary Academy will adopt the Health and Safety Executive’s ‘Children’s Play and Leisure – Promoting a Balanced Approach’ (2012) (Appendix 5) as its primary guidance source in decisions related to risk and play. The school will use a ‘risk benefit’ approach to balance its duty of care to protect and its duty of care to provide.

Play provision at Hardwicke aims to offer children and young people the chance to encounter acceptable risks as part of a stimulating, challenging and controlled learning environment. In the words of the play sector publication Best Play, play provision should aim to ‘manage the balance between the need to offer risk and the need to keep children and Young people safe from harm’.

In additions to standard risk/benefit assessments Hardwicke will practice dynamic risk management with children encouraging them to identify and manage risks in an environment where adults are present to support them.

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

Children’s Role in Play

The children will all have access to the ‘Play Charter’ (Appendix 6) which was a whole school agreement on behaviour and expectations of play. This includes the rights and responsibilities of the children to:

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

The 'Play Charter' will be shared and explained to all children on a regular basis as part of ongoing assemblies, discussions and dialogue in class and with School Council.

Environment

At Hardwicke Parochial Primary School we believe that a rich play setting should ensure that all children have access to a stimulating environment that is free from unacceptable risk and thereby offers the opportunity to explore themselves, through their freely chosen play.

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 EYFS 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.

APPENDIX 1

UNITED NATIONS CONVENTION FOR THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD (UNCRC)

APPENDIX 2

PLAY ENGLAND CHARTER FOR CHILDREN'S PLAY

APPENDIX 3

PLAY TYPES

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Communication play

Play that involves words, signals and body language – for example joke telling, name-calling and mime.

Creative play

Play which involves experimenting and creating with a range of materials or tools where there is plenty of time and where getting messy is not a problem.

Deep play

Play which enables children to encounter risk, challenge and dangerous experiences, for example balancing on a high wall, jumping over a stream and riding a bike with no hands.

Dramatic play

The playing of dramatic events that the child has not been a participant in, for example pretending to be a footballer or a pop star at a concert, presenting a television show or enacting a funeral.

Exploratory play

Play which involves finding out information through manipulation of an object, for example handling or throwing clay, or taking a bicycle apart to see how it works and 'fixing it'.

Fantasy play

Play at pretend in ways that are unlikely to occur in real life, for example being a superhero or sitting on a cloud.

Imaginative play

Play based on reality but not real, for example pretending to be a leopard, having a make-believe friend or being a plant.

Locomotor play

Movement for its own sake, for example playing chase, running, jumping, skipping and climbing trees.

Mastery play

Control of the natural environment, for example making a dam in a stream, building a bonfire, digging holes and making mounds in earth and sand.

Object play

Hand-eye manipulations of objects, for example examining shells, looking in them and turning them over and around.

Recapitulative play

Play which involves engaging in rituals, making and using weapons, building shelters, and creating mystical languages.

Role play

Play that explores trying out roles not normally experienced, for example driving a car or doing the washing.

Rough and tumble

Play that involves play fighting, tumbling, tickling, play with body contact, but no deliberate hurting where children involved are laughing and squealing and from their facial expressions obviously enjoying themselves.

Social play

Playing with others where the rules for social engagement can be explored, for example conversations, making things together or creating a club.

Socio-dramatic play

The recreation of scenes from children's lives for example playing at mothers and fathers or house.

Symbolic play

The use of objects or signs to represent other things, for example a stick to represent a sword or a piece of fabric to represent a room.

APPENDIX 4

PLAY WORK PRINCIPLES

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1. All children and young people need to play. The impulse to play is innate. Play is a biological, psychological and social necessity, and is fundamental to the healthy development and well-being of individuals.
2. Play is a process that is freely chosen, personally directed and intrinsically motivated. That is, children and young people determine and control the content and intent of their

play, by following their own instincts, ideas and interests, in their own way for their own reasons.

3. The prime focus and essence of playwork is to support and facilitate the play process and this should inform the development of play policy, strategy, training and education.
4. For playworkers, the play process takes precedence and playworkers act as advocates for play when engaging with adult led agendas.
5. The role of the playworker is to support all children and young people in the creation of a space in which they can play.
6. The playworker's response to children and young people playing is based on a sound up to date knowledge of the play process, and reflective practice.
7. Playworkers recognise their own impact on the play space and also the impact of children and young people's play on the playworker.
8. Playworkers choose an intervention style that enables children and young people to extend their play. All playworker intervention must balance risk with the developmental benefit and well-being of children.

Source: Skills Active

APPENDIX 5

HEALTH AND SAFETY EXECUTIVE CHILDREN'S PLAY AND LEARNING – PROMOTING A BALANCED APPROACH (2012)

APPENDIX 6

CHILDREN'S PLAY CHARTER