

Play Policy

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1. The Definition of Play

Play is often described as challenging to define. We know it when we see it or feel it, but it is hard to frame.

Within modern play work studies it is framed as: 'encompassing children's behaviour which is freely chosen, personally directed and intrinsically motivated. It is performed for no external goal or reward, and is a fundamental and integral part of healthy development – not only for individual children but also for the society in which they live'. Play is what children do when they follow their own ideas and interests in their own way and for their own reasons.'

It can be physically active or creative, it can be very social or quietly reflective. Through play, children learn for themselves what cannot be taught directly – "the unteachable curriculum" such as working in a group, problem solving, emotional regulation, grit, determination, resilience, imagination.

An adult's role is not to facilitate the play, foster the play or teach children what to play. At heart the adult's role is to create the opportunities for play to happen – to give children sufficient time, space and permission, as well as facilitating a playground that offers play across all the play types such as social play or dramatic play (see: <https://www.playscotland.org/resources/play-types-poster/> for a complete list of play types).

It offers children as much choice, control and freedom as possible within reasonable boundaries. Making provision for play does not just mean fixed equipment, it also includes 'loose items' such as fabric for make believe, sticks and gravel for environmental play and other artefacts for whatever the children conjure up.

We aim for children to have approximately 20% of their day taken up with rich play. This will be done by enabling play outside in most weathers – except heavy rain and not giving children consequences of reduced playtime.

2. Rationale

Changes in society such as: heavier traffic; busier lifestyles; less areas for play; technological advancements and awareness of risk have led to 'play poverty' for today's children. This makes their play opportunities at school even more vital.

Children spend up to 20% of their time in school at play so this time needs to be coherent and planned for to enable rich play opportunities. This policy frames what, why and how Brentfield will support increasing opportunities for play across the school day.

3. The Value of Play

As a result of implementing this policy within school we believe that children will:

- be happier
- have increased self-awareness and self-esteem
- greater understanding of their own emotions (sadness, rejection, frustration, boredom, fear)
- improved language and communication skills
- improved concentration

- improved imagination, independence and creativity
- improved social skills
- greater resilience, confidence, grit
- be ready for anything as a result of negotiation and independence of thought
- be better at problem solving
- improved physical development, co-ordination and fitness
- improved mental well-being.

4. Links to the BRAVE values of our school

We believe that play links directly with our BRAVE values in the following ways:

- Play provision is welcoming and accessible to every child, irrespective of gender, sexual orientation, economic or social circumstances, ethnic or cultural background or origin, or individual abilities. (Belonging)
- Play fosters social inclusion as it helps children understand the people and places in their lives, learn about their environment and develop their sense of community. (Belonging and Valuing others)
- Play is essential to healthy development from birth to adulthood, contributing to capacity for learning, resilience and the development of physical, cognitive, social and emotional skills. (Empowered)
- Play allows children to make mistakes and learn through trial and error. Children need these opportunities to learn about the world in ways that provide challenge and excitement. (Aspirational)
- Children develop imagination and the ability to sustain concentration through play. (Empowered)
- Play allows children to find out about themselves, their abilities and their interests. (Aspirational and Empowered)
- Play can help build emotional skills (for example understanding others' points of view), and intellectual skills (such as holding a reasoned discussion). (Valuing & Belonging)
- The children's views on play should be sought and they should be involved in creating a space that is exciting, engaging and enthuses children. (Valuing and empowerment)

5. The Adults Role in Play

We recognise that in order to play children may need to make a noise, get dirty, make a mess and sometimes be out of the direct gaze of adults and we aim to support the play through positively managing these needs.

The school will help children maximize the benefits they can gain from play by provision of trained staff who are informed by and work to the Play work Principles which are:

- Play is essential for physical, emotional, social, spiritual and intellectual development
- Play enables children to explore the physical and social environment, different concepts and ideas
- Encourages self-confidence and the ability to make choices

- Play is critical to children’s physical and emotional health, and enables them to explore and develop the balance between their right to act freely and their responsibilities to others
- Free play can have a direct positive impact on a child’s ability to reach their potential.

The law requires that children in school have supervision but for primary school playtimes there are no stated ratios. During the school day there should be one or more adults present outdoors. The school recognizes OPAL’s three models of supervision Direct, Remote and Ranging. Except for new children in reception, the school does not believe direct supervision is possible or beneficial. Supervision will take remote and ranging models, so that children can quickly find an adult, and adults can patrol large sites to gain an awareness of the kinds of play and levels of risk likely to be emerging.

It is important that staff know and adhere to the school’s policy in relation to confidentiality and child protection issues. Staff need to be clear they cannot offer unconditional confidentiality to pupils and that the boundaries agreed by the school in relation to sensitive issues are adhered to.

6. Benefit and Risk

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. 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 is published for Play England, 2012.

The school will use the Health and Safety Executive guidance document ‘Children’s Play and Leisure – Promoting a Balanced Approach’ (September 2012):

<https://www.hse.gov.uk/entertainment/childrens-play-july-2012.pdf> as the principle value statement informing approach to managing risk in play.

It will adopt a benefits/risk approach as detailed in ‘Managing Risk in Play Provision’ Implementation Guide. Managing Risk in Play Provision Risk-taking is an essential feature of play provision, and of all environments in which children and young people legitimately spend time at play. Play provision 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 the school will practice dynamic risk management with children encouraging them to identify and manage risks in an environment where adults are present to support them.

See the school’s Safeguarding of Children/Child Protection Policy for more information.

7. Environment

We believe that a rich play setting should ensure that all children have access to a stimulating environments that are free from unacceptable risk and thereby offer the opportunity to explore by themselves, through their freely chosen play.

This policy links with the following policies:

Safeguarding
Health and Safety
Behaviour Policy
Equality and Diversity
PE
Maths
Literacy
Art & DT
PSHE