

St. Joseph's R.C.V.A Primary School, Coundon

Statement of policy for play



St Joseph's RCVA Primary School
POLICY FOR PLAY

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This policy sets out the philosophy and ethos of St. Joseph's RCVA Primary School in relation to play and its importance in the development of young children.

Definition of play

According to the Oxford English Dictionary, the word 'play' has a number of meanings. Put into context in the Early years Foundation Stage and in connection with children and their development, play can be defined as

“To occupy oneself in a game or other recreational activity”

Play is a central tool for learning; it is a key way in which young children learn with enjoyment and challenge. Structured play where the learning outcome has been clearly identified through careful planning and support is very important in the Foundation Stage classroom

The Early Years Foundation Stage statutory documentation, places the utmost importance on play.

“Play is essential for children's development, building their confidence as they learn to explore, to think about problems, and relate to others. Children learn by leading their own play, and by taking part in play which is guided by adults“

The Importance of Play

Play is an entitlement for all children, under Article 31 of the United Nations Rights of the Child.

‘All children have the right to relax, to play and to join in a wide range of activities.’

Play is important for children and young people's health and wellbeing, their relationships, their development and their learning. It can involve thoughts and feelings, fantasy and creativity, friendships and communities, as well as physical activity. It is the main way children and young people explore, experiment, understand, and so develop a sense of identity. Children and people of all ages play, although young people may not consider what they do in their free time to be play.

Play provides children with the opportunity to - ☑ Have fun

- Learn
- Co-operate
- Develop physical skills
- Use their imagination
- Become builders and makers
- Explore the adult world
- Interact with others

The EYFS guidance backs up this thinking of the importance of play, exploring, finding out...

“ Four guiding principles should shape practice in early years settings. These are: • every child is a unique child, who is constantly learning and can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured • children learn to be strong and independent through positive relationships • children learn and

develop well in enabling environments with teaching and support from adults, who respond to their individual interests and needs and help them to build their learning over time. Children benefit from a strong partnership between practitioners and parents and/or carers. (See “the characteristics of effective teaching and learning” at paragraph 1.15) • importance of learning and development. Children develop and learn at different rates. The framework covers the education and care of all children in early years provision, including children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND)

The Learning Environment

Children want and need to progress in all areas of their development and adults are responsible for giving them the opportunity, resources, support, time and space they need to do it. At St Joseph’s we aim to facilitate good, structured, play opportunities, both indoors and outdoors, in EYFS.

Staff will aim to ensure that the play opportunities

- Are purposeful and pleasurable to the child.
- Give ownership of learning and activity to the child.
- Encourage spontaneous learning.
- Develop the skills of the 'whole' child.
- Enable practise and mastery of skills and concepts.
- Engage the child in complex mental activity.
- Provide an outlet for emotional needs.
- Make trial and error learning acceptable and normal.
- Ensure that childhood is valued.
- Stimulate creativity.
- Develop social skills.
- Enable children to use resources which are interesting and exciting.
- Ensure that children have a choice.
- Allow children to bring their own culture to school.
- Develop problem solving skills and processes.

We endeavour to provide adequate space and time for the children to develop their play, a range of materials to enable acquisition of skills across the areas of learning Personal, social, and emotional; Communication and language, Physical development; Mathematics; Literacy; Understanding the world; Expressive arts and design.

Provision will be through a wide variety of resources e.g. water, sand, role-play etc, both indoors and outdoors; structured play activities planned by adults, and opportunities for child initiated activities.

Children do not make the distinction between 'play' and 'work' and neither should practitioners. Children need time to become engrossed, work in depth and complete activities. Play can be free, directed or structured.

- Free play is child initiated, using the available resources, sometimes supported by an adult interacting in the play, which can be solitary, parallel, social, or cooperative play.
- Directed play is where children work either individually or in groups with an adult to the adult's agenda.
- In structured play, the adult provides the resources e.g. in the sand area, which will provide a specific learning objective, it may involve a task, however, unless supported by an adult, the children may use the resources in ways that were not planned.

Role of the adult

The role of the adult is crucial in developing play opportunities in the learning environment using their understanding of how children develop by:

- Observing and reflecting on children's spontaneous play.
- Planning and resourcing a challenging environment.
- Supporting and extending specific areas of children's learning.
- Extending and developing children's language and communication in their play.

Practitioners should also ensure that all children feel included, secure and valued, that no child is disadvantaged or excluded and that there is equality of opportunity. (See also the School policy on Equal Opportunities).

Practitioners need to be sensitive to the needs of the child and make a valued judgement about when to intervene in children's play, either to enforce health and safety issues or to enhance the value of the play. It is necessary to have rules for the children to conform to e.g. no running indoors, in order to provide a safe environment, however these rules need to be flexible and reviewed regularly to reflect changing situations.

Another vital role of the adult is to monitor, observe and record development of the individual child to ensure progression and plan activities that will move the child's learning on. Observations and samples of work, along with assessments of planned activities are kept as a record of developmental progression.

Parents as partners

A principle of early education is that parents and practitioners should work together, where the school recognises the importance of the parents being their child's first educators and building on prior attainment and experiences to promote future learning. Parents are also encouraged to reinforce the learning taking place in school.

In school we are using the 'evidence me' system as an ongoing informative system for parents, showing day to day evidence and observations of their child in our setting. Parents can also contribute to this from home, therefore contributing to their learning journals.

In conclusion, the learning environment, curriculum and support in the Foundation Stage is based on play and play activities in order to maximise the learning potential.

'There are no failures in play' (Manning and Sharp)