

31. Play

Statement of intent

The play intentions, experiences and the atmosphere at Polesden Lacey Playschool is to encourage children's confidence, independence and enjoyment. Enabling children to develop their emotional, social, cognitive, interpersonal and physical skills, and their desire to explore, discover and be creative. We recognise that children's capacity for positive development will be enhanced if given access to the broadest range of environments and play opportunities.

Aim

Polesden Lacey Playschool provides a stimulating environment where playing and learning go hand in hand. Research shows that play has many benefits for children and families as well as improving health and quality of life; suggesting that children's access to good play provision can:

- increase their self-awareness, self-esteem, and self-respect;
- improve and maintain their physical and mental health;
- give them the opportunity to mix with other children;
- allow them to increase their confidence through developing new skills;
- promote their imagination, independence and creativity;
- offer opportunities for children of all abilities and backgrounds to play together;
- provide opportunities for developing social skills and learning;
- build resilience through risk taking and challenge, problem solving, and dealing with new and novel situations; and
- provide opportunities to learn about their environment and the wider community.

Practice

Indoor play

We carefully plan the indoor environment to be flexible and accommodate children's changing interests and needs. Our resources are of a high quality; the books are attractive and well maintained and reflect children's fascinations.

Other resources such as blocks for building, felt pens, chalks or pencils for mark-making, clothes for dressing up and small items such as cars, dolls and jigsaws can be easily accessed by children themselves. Sand and water play provide opportunities for early scientific and mathematical concepts. Tactile and imaginative experiences are offered through an extensive range of messy play.

Outdoor play

We are committed to the importance of daily outdoor play and physical development in all children. All activities will be made accessible; dependent on their age and stage of development, to ensure inclusive use of the outdoor area.

The outdoor areas, have a wealth of resources which help children to develop their independence, exploration and investigative skills, risk taking and self-esteem all of which support children to develop skills for now and the future.

The Playschool will ensure all areas are safe and secure through close supervision and the use of risk assessments and safety checks. Staff are informed of the importance of these procedures and are trained appropriately to ensure they are followed effectively.

All outdoor play opportunities and outings will complement the indoor activities and provide children with both adult-led and child-initiated play to enable children to learn and practice new skills, knowledge and behaviours. Outdoor play is a vital part of a child's development and children will be given every opportunity to explore and experience this throughout the year.

Weapon & Superhero play

Most children enjoy engaging in imaginative play that relates to, and makes sense of, the world that they live in. For lots of children (particularly boys) imaginative play contains an element of weapon and superhero re-enactment. Re-enacting weapon use is a universal language of play for children and usually results in high levels of engagement for those actively involved in it.

We feel it is important to create a whole Playschool approach of which staff, children and parent/guardians have a clear understanding. Approaches to teaching and learning in role play should reflect the interests of the children and not exclusively those of the adults. Whilst all children's emotional welfare, wellbeing and involvement should be assessed in relation to this style of play.

We acknowledge the positive aspects of the character of the superhero and highlight the negative aspects of weapon use and physical violence at a level that is appropriate to the age and needs of the children. This will be mainly done through story, drama and appropriate discussion. Ongoing opportunities for quality imaginative play are not overlooked or left to chance, but thought about and planned in advance. Parent/guardians need to feel well informed about, and comfortable with, the approach to weapon/superhero play and the principles that underpin it.

If children wish to make a weapon then this will be supported by a practitioner, as it may be an ideal learning opportunity to follow their interests. Children will also be allowed to be creative with props they use during this play, providing it will not break, hurt others and is observed by a practitioner.

When superhero or weapon play is taking place, a practitioner will be nearby to observe and extend play. The practitioner may introduce other storylines or characters to develop this in a creative way. Superhero costumes are available and allowed to be brought in from home, similar to princesses. This will help practitioners to plan for individual children interests.

Disagreements are inevitable, as in any play, and this will be dealt with a practitioner listening, discussing, compromising and resolving the conflict.

Policy Review

As part of Polesden Lacey Playschool monitoring of play this policy will be subject to periodic review.

Policy adopted by: Ellie Pragnell (Chair), Caroline O'Leary (Manager)

Date: September 24

Policy Review Date: September 25