



*'Doing our best to achieve our best'*

**Clarendon Primary School & Nursery**

## **The Haven Play Policy**

### **What is play?**

'Play is what children and young people do when they follow their own ideas and interests, in their own way and for their own reasons.' Play England (2019)

### **Introduction**

We believe that play is key to children's well-being and development. Children need challenging and exciting environments to play in that satisfy their need for risk taking. We believe that learning to risk assess is an important life skill, therefore, in the Haven we aim to provide, through play, opportunities to develop children's risk awareness in a safe and meaningful way. Based on extensive research into children's play, we also believe that play is a process that doesn't always have or need an end product.

### **Playwork Principles**

In the Haven our play work principles are displayed on the notice board for everyone to see and are at the core of all play within this environment. They encompass the philosophy of children being in charge of their own play, with playworkers there to help facilitate this. These principles are based on advance from Play England UK (2004) and include:

- All children and young people need to play.
- The impulse to play is innate.
- Play is a biological, psychological and social necessity.
- Play is fundamental to the healthy development and well-being of individuals and communities.
- 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.
- 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.

### **To facilitate this playworkers:**

1. Understand the play process takes precedence and playworkers act as advocates for play when engaging it with adult-led agendas.
2. Support all children and young people in the creation of a space in which children can play.
3. Endure their response to children and young people's play is based on a sound up to date knowledge of the play process and reflective practice.
4. Recognise their own impact on the play space and also the impact of children and young people's play on the playworker.
5. 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.

## **Planning for play opportunities**

Within the Haven we aim to ensure that the setting extends the choice and control that children have over their play by responding to their requests for activities, games, toys and, where possible the 'Little Amazon', throughout the session.

We provide a loose parts box for children to use in whichever way they choose. Our indoor box contains items such as materials for collage, natural materials, sticky tape, recyclable materials and appropriate tools. Our outside box includes natural items such as logs: sticks, leaves, cones and stones as well as crates, tyres, planks of wood and fabrics.

## **Planning for all types of play**

To ensure that children have the opportunity to experience all types of play we have a variety of activities and toys available that provide for each area of play. (See appendix 1.)

## **Fostering children's independence**

We strongly believe in encouraging children to be independent. This includes:

- Choosing play
- Making and clearing away snacks
- Problem solving
- Decision making
- Giving opportunities to try new things – being able to explore challenges in their own way

## **Observations**

In order to understand each child's play preference, independence and well-being, children are observed at play. We make observations informally in order to assess the use of toys and equipment and to reflect on further equipment needed. Written observations are made in order to share and evaluate play.

## **Ensuring each child feels valued**

At the beginning of each session, children are invited to talk about their day and how they are feeling. They are then encouraged to suggest ideas for their play. We endeavour to answer positively to all reasonable play requests as this builds children's confidence in leading their own play ideas.

Play practitioners support children's play throughout the session taking into account their age, interests and individual needs. By getting to know each individual child we are able to respond to their interests and needs. Throughout sessions:

- Children are encouraged to develop their sense of playfulness.
- Staff acknowledge positive behaviour which is rewarded.
- Children are supported in organising their own activities, which may include the whole setting. For example through competitions, games and challenges.
- Children are encouraged to suggest their own healthy snacks, which are incorporated within the weekly snack menu.
- The Haven fosters respect for each child's unique combination of qualities, capabilities, opinions and reactions.

- Achievements are acknowledged and shared with the whole group.
- Adults are available throughout the session to listen and respond to needs.

### **Enjoying the out of doors**

When weather permits, we encourage children to use the outdoor spaces available within the school.

### **Allowing children to test their own boundaries**

Whilst we ensure the children's play environment is safe, we also endeavour to create an atmosphere where children can learn to take risks in a controlled environment. As a result 'risky play' is permitted as this leads to children understanding their own capabilities which subsequently helps build their self-confidence and ability to overcome personal boundaries, *(from HSE, [no date])* for example allowing children to climb trees, but only going as high as they feel comfortable and after testing the branches for safety.

Children are also encouraged to resolve conflicts themselves and to only involve practitioners if/when necessary. Children who learn to make their own reasoned decisions, rather than simply doing what they are told by others, will be in a stronger position to resist the pressure they are likely to experience in future life by making informed decisions. Research has shown that 'this helps strengthens their emotional wellbeing.' *(Somerset County Council [no date])*

### **Ensuring safety:**

Within the Haven practitioners make the environment safe by:

- Supporting children to develop a sense of their own boundaries and manage personal risk.
- Having discussions with children to develop their safety awareness.
- Distinguishing between acceptable and unacceptable risk and removing any hazards.

*"Managing risk in play provision: Summary statement '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 or hazards.'" Play England.*

### **Promoting positive images and diversity**

Within the Haven we promote positive images and diversity by:

- Ensuring children have access to small world toys, puzzles and books that portray a range of positive images of people and diverse families.
- Encouraging children to develop their sense of playfulness by providing items they request for their play, allowing children to choose how and where to play with equipment, by not interrupting play unnecessarily and by providing open ended resources that can be used how the children wish.

### **Providing opportunities for rest**

Within the Haven we provide beanbags and blankets for those children who wish to rest or sleep. There is also a book corner and mindfulness colouring activities for those who just want a quiet space.

## **Children's access to resources**

Within the Haven we provide a large range of activities, (see appendix 1) and have access to both indoor and outdoor environments for children to experience learning through play.

Children have access to resources in the Haven, which are labelled, and can also choose items from the toy shed throughout the session.

## **Parents**

Parents are verbally kept informed about the care and play experience of their child at the end of each session. Text messages are also sent for specific activities such as when the paddling pool will be available and swimwear is suggested.

## **Staff**

All staff working in the Haven hold a valid DBS certificate undertaken by the school and reference checks are sought before the commencement of employment. Furthermore all staff undertake regular safeguarding training.

Within the Haven we always ensure that there is an appropriate level of trained staff as it is important that staff are aware of the adult role within play. Furthermore, we also make sure that any staff employed or covering staff absence have experience of working with children and understand that there are different types of play.

To ensure continuity of care information about children is shared with other staff as required.

## **Policy monitoring and Review**

This policy will be monitored and reviewed by the Haven supervisor in partnership with the School's Leadership Team (SLT).

Date reviewed by governing body: Autumn term 2019  
Date due for review: Autumn term 2022

## **References:**

- Play England, (2019) *Play is important*, available at: <http://www.playengland.org.uk/> accessed 25.03.2019
- Kennair, Sandseter (2011) *Children's Risky Play from an Evolutionary Perspective: The Anti-Phobic Effects of Thrilling Experiences*, available at: <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/147470491100900212> accessed 25.03.2019
- Health and Safety executive, [no date] *Children's play and leisure: promoting a balanced approach*, available at: <http://www.hse.gov.uk/entertainment/childs-play-statement.htm>
- Accessed: 25.03.2019