



## **062 – Play Policy**

### **Commitment**

The Milestone School is committed to providing high quality play provision to all pupils. At the Milestone School it is recognised that opportunities to access child-led times extend beyond the traditional break and dinner times, and are interwoven throughout the school day for many of our children. This play policy is the foundation from which we give consideration to all decisions that could influence children's access to play opportunities.

### **Rational**

On average, the children spend 20% of their school week accessing self-directed time or play opportunities. At The Milestone School this figure can be higher dependant on the individual needs of the pupils. It is therefore imperative that a rigorous policy is place to guide decisions that influence play provision and to ensure child-led times provide access to rich and varied opportunities to explore and learn through play.

The Milestone School is an OPAL (Outdoor Play and Learning) School. This policy follows guidance and principles from both OPAL and Play England. It aims to influence the way we think about children and their opportunities for play. It recognises that play is integral to children's development, health and enjoyment of their lives.

'Children and young people-disabled and non-disabled-whatever their age, culture, ethnicity, social and economic background, need and want to play, indoors and out, in whatever way they can'

Play England 2009

The Milestone School recognises that children's play must be *facilitated*, meaning consideration must be given to the way opportunities are provided for the children to explore, manipulate, create, reflect, rest affect their environment, take risks and challenge themselves. Wherever possible, play must not be restricted by weather conditions, age or ability.

### **Definition**

Play is freely chosen. Play is interesting to the child. Play can involve other people or it can be solitary activity and it may, or may not involve equipment. Play may be messy, noisy or dirty.

### **Rights**

The Milestone School recognises that children have the right to rest and leisure, play and recreational activities and to participate freely in cultural life

and the arts, as defined under Article 31 of the UN convention on the rights of the child.

In addition, The Milestone School recognises that children have a right to have opinions, and for these opinions to matter when people make decisions about things that involve them. Therefore, every effort will be made to involve children through direct communication and observations when planning the types of play equipment, facilities and opportunities that will be made available to them.

### **Equality and access**

Play should not be limited to play and dinner times. Access to play should not be restricted by adverse weather conditions and every effort must be made to work with parents to provide suitable clothing for all types of play that children seek to experience at The Milestone School.

All children are entitled to welcoming and accessible play provision irrespective of their gender, ability, economic or social circumstances, ethnic or cultural background or age. Children will be free to define for themselves what is 'age appropriate' in their play.

### **Benefit and Risk**

Play is essential for physical, emotional, social, spiritual and intellectual welfare and development. It enables children to develop different concepts and ideas and explore different aspects of their environment. Play encourages self-confidence and decision making, team work and supports children to develop their understanding of the need to balance their right to act freely with their responsibilities to others.

Play offers children the opportunity to rest, reflect, relax and recuperate.

Play times offer opportunities to observe different skills and learning and development goals that children may not have opportunities to demonstrate inside the classroom setting.

Children must be allowed to take risks and challenge themselves beyond their existing capabilities. Allowing children to take acceptable risk develops their ability to judge and respond to risks independently and to learn new skills.

'All children both need and want to take risks in order to explore limits, venture into new experiences and develop their capabilities, from a very young age and from the earliest play experiences. Children would never learn to walk, climb stairs or ride a bicycle unless they were strongly motivated to respond to challenges involving a risk of injury.'

Comprehensive risk assessments will be reviewed and amended at least annually, and more regularly as appropriate. Responsibility for ensuring children's safety extends to all staff taking appropriate action in the event of broken, dangerous or defective equipment being identified. The document *Children's Play and Leisure Promoting a Balanced Approach* produced by

the Health and Safety Executive (2012) will inform decision making and the OPAL document Risk Assessment of Free-Range Play will guide how this is implemented.

Children should be supervised appropriately. This means allowing children access to move around, explore different opportunities and have the time away from adults. It is not appropriate to 'helicopter' around children when supervising them and The Milestone School recognises this can in fact increase children's anxiety and associated negative behaviours. Adults should consider their role in children's play and that this is not defined by supervision alone. Adults can actively facilitate children's play through offering support and encouragement, asking questions and guiding children toward new ideas and concepts, demonstrating new ways to play with equipment, mediating between children and organising and leading playground games.

### **Environment**

The Milestone School, is committed to offering an inviting and enriching play environment. This includes consideration of the equipment offered, children's ability to roam freely and access different provisions and offering access to additional activities as required. Ongoing consideration will be made to providing access to quality play provision for children who may not be able to access play environment in a typical way.

### **Parents**

Parents will be kept informed of The Milestone's School play provision through the website and newsletters as appropriate. Parents will be invited to contribute to enhancing the play provision available at The Milestone School through donations of time, money or equipment as befitting each situation.

January 2019

Next Review: January 2020