




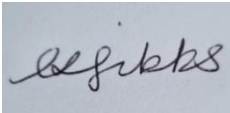
Play Policy

Date: January 2024

Review date: January 2025

Signed:  (Chair of Governors)

Val Male

Signed:  (Headteacher)

Claire Gibbs



Commitment.

This policy sets out Margaret Wix Primary School's commitment to ensuring that play opportunities and quality environments for play are available to all its children and aims to improve the way we think about and provide opportunities for play. We believe that play is essential for physical, emotional, social and intellectual development. In a time where outdoor play environments and opportunities are on the decline and many children may now spend most of their time indoors, we recognise that our school grounds provide a crucial place for children to experience and explore self-initiated play and the benefits this brings.

Rationale.

'Children attend primary school for seven years. Of those seven years, around 1.4 years will be spent outside actively playing, making `playtime` by far the most dominant element within the curriculum. Unlike sport and PE lessons, children's active play can claim 100% engagement, provided it is delivered with the right expertise, consistency and understanding of children's social, emotional and environmental needs.' Outdoor Play And Learning (OPAL)

A considerable amount of potentially valuable time is spent on play at school, which needs careful planning. Better play means happier children. Happier children mean fewer behaviour problems, a more positive attitude to school, more effective learning, fewer accidents and a happier school.

In 1992, Play England drew up 'The Charter for Children's Play' which sets out a vision for play that we believe is still relevant today. It states that:

- Children need time and space to play at school;
- Adults should let children play;
- Children value and benefit from staffed play provision;
- Children's play is enriched by skilled playworkers;
- Children sometimes need extra support to enjoy their right to play.



The Value of Play.

Play enables children to learn through experiences that simply cannot be taught. Free play can also have a direct positive impact on a child's ability to meet formal educational goals. Through play, children can:

- Make new friends and develop their communication skills.
- Learn how to play new games.
- Develop their fine and gross motor skills.
- Learn how to get along with other people, sharing and working as a team.
- Learn to take risks and keep safe.
- Develop their problem solving skills.
- Learn about themselves as a person and the physical world around them.

The Adult's Role in Play.

The adults in school have all received training from Learning Through Landscapes, which covered:

- The power and importance of play;
- How to involve the children in meaningful, practical play;
- Playground supervision;
- Risks and benefits.

We are fortunate to have extensive grounds and play areas at Margaret Wix and acknowledge that we may not be able to see every child all of the time, especially when the children are playing amongst the trees, on the field or on the stage area. It is expected that staff will move around throughout playtimes, finding out what the children are doing and where they are playing. Staff can then 'check in' on children's play throughout playtime and support where needed.

Risk Benefit and Assessment in Play.

'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

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unacceptable risks of death or serious injury.' - Department for Children, Schools and Families: *Managing Risk in Play Provision Summary Statement, Nottingham 2008.*

Learning Through Landscapes' risk benefit assessment considers the benefits to children as well as the risks. The approach allows us as a school to address two important objectives of play provision; providing challenge whilst offering protection from unacceptable harm. These objectives are necessarily in tension with each other - children actively seek out chances to test themselves and develop their abilities; they are eager to get to grips with the world around them, so they will inevitably encounter some risk of harm, in any environment. Furthermore, adventurous play experiences help children learn how to deal with many of the everyday risks they will encounter throughout their lives.

As play providers at Margaret Wix School, we are responsible for effective risk management and are ultimately responsible, ethically and legally, for the judgements made about play in our school. Considering benefits alongside risk is essential if we are to create and manage a play provision that genuinely challenges, engages and meets the needs of our children.

'Play is great for children's well-being and development. 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' - *Children's Health and Leisure: Promoting a Balanced Approach, HSE.*