

Bromley Heath Infant School

Outdoor Play Policy

Rationale

Play encompasses children's behaviour which is freely chosen, personally directed and intrinsically motivated. By ensuring outdoor play is an integral part of the school routine we consciously seek to transmit a positive attitude to the outdoors and enrich children's understanding of the world around them. Active learning experiences outdoors are essential for young children. They give children opportunities to practise their developing skills, make them feel good and to explore their world. It creates meaning from direct experience: through such individual, personal experiences they are learning what cannot be taught. It is also important for children's physical, mental and emotional development. We believe that children should begin to take risks and face challenges outdoors. Play has no external goal or reward, and is fundamental to healthy development.

This policy sets out the school's commitment to ensuring that quality environments for play and informal recreation are available to all its children, and aims to improve the way we think about, and provide, opportunities for play. In line with South Gloucestershire Council policy, the school believes that all children need opportunities to play which allow them to explore, manipulate, experience and affect their environment.

Guidelines

- Freely chosen play is central to young children's learning and allows them to have experiences which cannot be taught.
- The outdoor area receives planning, management, evaluation, resourcing, staffing, and adult interaction.
- Outdoor design and layout is given careful consideration.
- Children should be given a wide range of open-ended equipment and environments.
- Children should be able to control, change and modify their environment.

Aims

As a school we recognise the value of play and aim to develop a wide range of outside play environments to meet the needs of all of our children.

- ❖ To ensure a challenging and stimulating environment for outdoor play by providing a wide range of open-ended equipment.
- ❖ To provide opportunities for children to develop their social skills.
- ❖ To motivate children to learn by following their own intent, interests and ideas.
- ❖ To promote curiosity and exploration of the world.

- ❖ To use and stretch children's creativity and imagination.
- ❖ To support children's physical, emotional, social, spiritual and intellectual development.
- ❖ To allow children choice over their experiences outside.
- ❖ To provide a range of environments which will encourage children to explore and play imaginatively.
- ❖ To provide a range of environments which will support children's learning across the curriculum and learning about the world around them.
- ❖ To promote independence, persistence and team work within children.
- ❖ To allow children to take risks.

Learning Opportunities

We will endeavour to provide a range of stimulating learning opportunities which will include:

- * Man made and natural materials
- * Challenge in relation to the physical environment
- * Movement e.g. running jumping, climbing, balancing
- * Emotions e.g. learning about oneself and others, sadness/gladness, rejection/acceptance, frustration/achievement, boredom/fascination, fear/confidence.
- * The operation of the five senses through sounds, textures, tastes, smells and sights
- * Social interactions - enhancing self esteem and understanding of others through freely chosen interactions e.g. within peer groups, with individuals, with groups of different ages, abilities, interests, gender, ethnicity and culture.
- * Making choices, problem solving, being creative,
- * Achieving and also coping with failing,
- * Communication and negotiation skills,
- * Change e.g. building/demolishing, transforming the environment and experiencing the seasons.

Play and Risk

Managing Risk in Play Provision

'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 of death or serious injury'.¹

An essential element of exploration within the medium of play is the opportunity for children to experience freely-chosen activities, where they can take

¹ South Gloucestershire Council Managing Risk in Play Provision 'Summary Statement' 2006

acceptable risks and challenge themselves beyond their existing capabilities. Allowing children to take acceptable risks develops their ability to independently judge risks and learn new skills.

*'Without opportunities to take acceptable levels of risk children's development is inhibited, undermining their capacity to deal with the wider unsupervised world.'*²

It is the school's responsibility to strike a balance between the risks and the benefits. The school recognises the challenge that this new thinking brings and follows the guidance provided by South Gloucestershire.

Carefully considered and comprehensive risk assessments of all play provision within the school should be reviewed on an annual basis, or whenever significant change/development in play provision/equipment or child circumstances takes place.

A full risk assessment of the outdoor area will be carried out when outdoor play provision is ready for use.

Agreed by: The Governors Curriculum Committee

Date: 7th October 2009

Review date: September 2010

² South Gloucestershire Council Play Policy: Play Safety Forum Position Statement (8)