



Whole School Policy for Outdoor Play and Learning

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Commitment

Seascope Primary recognises that play is an important part of a happy and healthy childhood and as a school we should provide high quality, sustainable play opportunities for children regardless of their age, needs and abilities. These inclusive opportunities in play are achieved by offering carefully considered outdoor spaces that offer a real choice of accessible play experiences.

We believe play has a vital role in children's happiness and wellbeing. It creates children who are independent, confident, imaginative, adaptable, social and able to assess risks.

At Seascope we aim to:

- Implement the changes set out in this policy gradually and systematically.
- Be informed by the children and work with the children to create a space that is exciting and engaging. They will feel safe to take risks and explore their world.
- Work in partnership with parents and the community making use of local expertise.
- Build projects collaboratively, respecting existing boundaries.
- Facilitate and encourage play.

Rationale

Children spend up to 20% of their time in school at play. Therefore this time needs to be coherent and planned for. Changes in society such as heavier traffic, busier lifestyles, less areas for play and awareness of risk have led to 'play poverty' for today's children. This makes their play opportunities at school even more vital.

Better play leads to happier children and in turn fewer behaviour problems, a more positive attitude to school, skills development, fewer accidents and more effective learning in the classroom as less staff time is spent resolving issues.

In addition to these reasons to prioritise play in school, Article 31 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child states that *'all children have a right to relax and play and to join in a wide range of activities'*

In addition to all the policy guidance on the importance of play, the children have been surveyed about their views on play time. Many were positive about the playground but some children's comments included; *'there is not enough to do'*, *'we need more things to play with'*, *'different adults tell us different things'*, 'These comments by children highlight the need to improve our play resources and opportunities at Seascope.

As a result of implementing this policy within school we believe that children will:

- be happier;
- increase self-awareness and self-esteem;
- improve language and communication skills;
- improve concentration;

- improve their imagination, independence and creativity;
- improve social skills;
- be resilient, confident, good problem solvers;
- be ready for anything as a result of negotiation and independence of thought;
- be better at problem solving;
- develop life skills; and
- improve physical development, co-ordination and fitness.

Definition

- 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.’ (DCMS, 2004)
- Play is the fundamental way that children enjoy their childhood. It is essential to their quality of life as children.
- Playing is fun: it is how children enjoy themselves.
- Play promotes children’s development, learning, imagination, creativity and independence.
- Play can help to keep children healthy and active.
- Play allows children to experience and encounter boundaries, learning to assess and manage risk in their lives; both physical and social.
- Play helps children to understand the people and places in their lives, learn about their environment and develop their sense of community.
- Play allows children to find out about themselves, their abilities, their interests and the contribution they can make.
- Play can be therapeutic. It helps children to deal with difficult or painful circumstances such as emotional stress or medical treatment.
- Play can be a way of building and maintaining important relationships with friends, carers and family members.

Rights

The children at Seascapes have the right to play and need to play: free to choose what they do – lively or relaxed, noisy or quiet – with the chance to stretch and challenge themselves, take risks and enjoy freedom. The right to play is enshrined in Article 31 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the right of children to be listened to on matters important to them (Article 12).

Children have the right to be happy, therefore to respect this right the children must follow instructions, use equipment without hurting others and have fun. Play Leaders respect this right by providing opportunities for creative, exciting play, use conflict resolution to support children and supporting children who have additional needs at playtime.

Children have the right to be safe, therefore to respect this right children must follow instructions, use equipment without hurting others, assess risk and tidy equipment away. Play Leaders respect this right by assessing risk daily, encouraging children to assess risk also and helping children to tidy up.

Children have the right to play and relax, therefore to respect this right the children must follow instructions, use equipment without hurting others and help others who need it. Adults respect this right by developing new opportunities for play, listening to children's ideas about play and supporting children who have additional needs to access play.

Equality and Access

All children, whatever their age, culture, ethnicity or social and economic background, need time and space to play freely and confidently with their peers, free of charge, indoors and outdoors, somewhere they feel safe. Play provision should actively include the widest range of children and seek to engage with those from minority groups. Play opportunities will hold no barriers to any of our children within our school.

Benefit and Risk

The Health and Safety Executive document states that '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.'

Our school extends the choice and control that children have over their play, the freedom they enjoy and the satisfaction they gain from it. We recognise the child's need to test boundaries and responds positively to that need. We will manage the balance between the need to offer risk and the need to keep children safe from harm. Our school maximises the range of play opportunities, utilising all areas of the outdoor provision. We aim to promote and foster independence and raise self-esteem of all children. At the heart of our play opportunities, we foster and promote children's respect for each other and offer opportunities for social interactions across all age groups.

All fixed equipment will be risk assessed by ROSPA overseen by the school caretaker and headteacher.

Adults' Role in Play

Play Leaders are designated to an 'area'. It is expected that adults play alongside the children and model good behaviours in play to them. All staff are aware of their areas and school lead a focus area weekly to develop the play skills and resources in each area.

Remote/ranging supervision

Play Leaders may not be able to see every child all of the time, especially when the children are playing amongst the trees. It is expected that Play Leaders will move around throughout lunchtime in their designated area, finding out what the children are doing and where the children are playing. Play Leaders can then check in on the children's play throughout lunchtime. Regular assemblies are held with the children about the designated adults and how to behave responsibly and independently.

Conflict Resolution

All staff will follow the schools good behaviour policy over lunchtimes and playtimes with the aim to solving conflict by working alongside the children where possible. At times children may need time out but this is encouraged to be outdoors so the children can continue to have time outside.

Environment

To be able to enjoy the vast space and activities children should always come to school with a coat as our yard is exposed to the wind even in the summer. We try to keep all of the school play zones open all year so the children will play on the field even in the winter months. In the winter, they are expected to wear wellington boots and waterproofs on the field, particularly in poorer weather. Welly stores have been created in each of the wet rooms and children have been asked to provide wellies or old outdoor shoes for use at playtimes. Children then return to their welly stores and place their shoes back on. Hand washing facilities are provided both in classroom bathroom areas and wetrooms.

Part of our children's learning experiences involve playing out in all weather types and conditions so we try to avoid wet playtimes although we always keep a classroom open in poor weather for the children who do not want to go outside.

All risks are monitored and approved through Durham County Council Health and Safety procedures and all equipment is checked thoroughly. The grounds are checked daily by the school caretaker and inspections of play equipment are carried out through ROSPA.