



Hindhayes Infant School

Play Policy

April 2025

At Hindhayes, we believe success is based on the partnerships between pupils, staff and the parent community. We endeavour to enrich and develop each child to be a successful individual that will become an active community citizen of the future.

Approved on: _____

Signed: _____

Role: _____

Hindhayes Commitment to Play

Play is freely chosen, personally directed, intrinsically motivated behaviour that actively engages the child. Play can be fun or serious. Through play, children can explore social, moral and imaginary worlds and their relationships with them, elaborating all the while a flexible range of responses to challenges they encounter. By playing, children learn and develop as individuals and as members of the community. At Hindhayes we want our children to have the opportunities to imagine, construct, test out ideas, develop social skills and perseverance as well as take beneficial risks in their play. We understand that play and learning go hand in hand for young children and that through play opportunities children can practice and reinforce their learning in multiple areas.

“....play and learning are not separate; play is part of learning and learning is part of play,”
The Children’s Play Council.

Policy rationale:

Our children spend 20% of their school attendance in play and it is vital for their overall development and wellbeing. Given the importance of play in children’s lives, and all our current concerns about children’s health and opportunities for them to access time and space to initiate their own play outdoors, Hindhayes will address play through the School Development plan, decision making and through allocation of planning time and resources. A Hindhayes Play team has been created to facilitate this.

Rights

Under the obligations of the UN Convention on the Rights of the child we have a clear duty to honour Article 31 – The Child’s Right To Play.

The Role of Practitioners and other Adults

All adults involved in children's play should:

- Welcome and value children as individuals
- Support and enable children's play
- Recognise that play is something which children do very well on their own and that their control of their own play activity is a crucial factor in enriching their experience and enhancing their learning and development
- Be able to support children in creating and determining their own goals and outcomes where appropriate
- Undertake benefit / risk assessments as necessary
- Encourage children to manage risk through scaffolding conversations
- Ensure the safe storage of loose parts

Method of Achievement

Children will be offered a high standard of provision which:

- Extends the choice and control they have over their play, the freedom they enjoy and the satisfaction they gain from it
- Recognises their need to test boundaries and which responds positively to that need (see appendix a managing risk)
- Effectively manages the balance between the need to offer risk and the need to keep children safe from harm
- Maximises the range of play opportunities both within planned and structured contexts and in children's undirected time
- Fosters independence and self-esteem
- Fosters their respect for others and offers opportunities for social interaction
- Fosters their well-being, healthy growth and development, knowledge and understanding, creativity and capacity to learn

Equality and Access

To ensure that every child at Hindhayes School, irrespective of gender, background, cultural or racial origin, or individual ability, has equal access to good play opportunities within and beyond the Curriculum.

To ensure that the voice of the child, their opinions and responses are taken into account to the maximum degree, consistent with health and safety and with respect for the needs of others.

All practitioners should:

All adults involved in children's play should

- Significantly enhance the opportunities for children to play creatively through the provision of an appropriately enriched human and physical environment
- Understand that children can sometimes unleash powerful feelings in their play and be sensitive and responsive to cues that they may need comfort and reassurance
- Use a range of strategies for monitoring and evaluating the quality of plan provision and for reviewing its impact upon children's personal, social and intellectual development

These strategies should include regular monitoring and observation of:

- The types of play expressed by children
- Relationships between children and between children and adults
- The play environment in use, including the range of environmental and resource features
- Children's spontaneous expression of enjoyment and achievement
- Children's changing use of the space and resources from day to day
- Policies and working procedures, including lines of accountability on safety, behaviour and risk management
- The expression of Hindhayes Commitment to Play in the provision offered
- Consultation processes undertaken with children

The process of evaluation and review should include:

- Listening to what children say about the physical environment
- Listening to what children say about the rules for play and their views on why rules exist
- Assessing the influence of children on play provision and the extent to which planning reflects this
- Evaluating the impact of policies and procedures, such as risk assessment, behaviour and health and safety on the quality of provision
- Interpreting and explaining observations of children's relationships with others in the context of modifying and improving provision
- Discussing and evaluating differences observed in children over time in the context of modifying and improving provision

Conclusion

Play is a vital part of the cultural life of children. We will strive to ensure that the value of play is fully understood and acknowledged by everyone and that we offer every child the best possible provision for play throughout their time at Hindhayes School.

Benefit and Risk

For many children today, playgrounds are some of the few spaces that have the potential to offer interesting opportunities for play. The lives of children have become much more restricted and controlled over the last 30 years or so, as a result of cultural, social and economic factors. Hence, children's opportunities to play and explore their neighbourhoods on their own have decreased noticeably and they spend more time under adult supervision at home, at school and in out-of-school services and activities. Many people argue that the built environment as a whole needs to be made more child-friendly if children are to be free to play outside as much as they would like to. However, play provision today has an important role in offering places where children can enjoy the kind of challenging, self-directed everyday play experiences that previous generations took for granted.

"Striking the right balance between protecting children from the most serious risks and allowing them to reap the benefits of play is not about eliminating risk. Nor is it about complicated methods of calculating risks or benefits. In essence, play is a safe and beneficial activity. Sensible adult judgements are all that is generally required to derive the best benefits to children whilst ensuring that they are not exposed to unnecessary risk."

Children's Play and Leisure: Promoting a balanced approach (Joint HSE/Play Safety Forum High Level Statement) Forum High Level Statement)

"Playground risk in terms of lesser injuries is far lower than for most traditional sports which children are encouraged to engage in, and in any case is about the same as the risk encountered at home". (Ball, 2007)

At Hindhayes we aim to create a stimulating play environment with a combination of traditional playground equipment, natural areas, loose parts, enclosures and journeys. We understand that to get the best from play children need to be accessing as much as the school grounds as possible and engaging in the play opportunities provided for them there. This will include trees, walls, logs, domes and other features of the school grounds. Our play leaders, play supervisors, teachers and support staff will decide what level of risk is appropriate in our provision, because the type and style of provision must be responsive to the needs of our children in our village.

Staff will work together to check loose parts provision for its suitability. Loose parts equipment will also be monitored for wear and tear as it is used and children will be encouraged to take part in conversations about when it is no longer safe to use a specific item, hopefully learning to be able to make these decisions for themselves and begin to manage their own risk as they move through the school. Staff will consider when weather needs to become a factor for risk management and will engage the children in conversations about changes to their access to play e.g. trees in wet weather.

Play assemblies will be used to help the children develop and understand benefit and risk as they are invited to talk about their own play practices. These assemblies will also be used to talk about situations where accidents have happened and what we can all learn from them. Children will also be rewarded for good playing skills.

For particular planned outdoor play activities that may have a great benefit but a higher risk the members of staff involved will use a risk management form. A risk assessment for the use of walls, trees and loose parts will be completed by the Play Team using OPAL recommended recording sheets.