



# ESHER CHURCH SCHOOL

*Christ at the Centre; Life to the Full*

## *Our Vision*

*To be a safe, happy, loving community where excellent teaching inspires children to learn and explore, care for each other and believe that they can make a difference.*

# Play Policy

**Ratified:** September 2019

**Review:** September 2020

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**Article 31 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child states that 'A child has the right to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts.'**

Esher Church School recognises that play is an essential part of a happy and healthy childhood. As a school, we aim to provide consistently high quality, sustainable play opportunities for all children. These inclusive opportunities in play are achieved by offering carefully considered outdoor spaces, equipment and toys that offer a rich choice of accessible play experiences for every child. We are committed to using our school vision of enabling every child to have life to the full, and this play policy, to guide our planning and actions in providing play opportunities for children. We believe play has a vital role in children's health, happiness and wellbeing. It creates children who are independent, confident, imaginative, adaptable, social and able to assess risks.

## 1. Rationale

Children spend up to 20% or 1.4 years of their time in primary school at play. This time needs to be coherent and planned for. Changes in society such as heavier traffic, busier lifestyles, fewer areas for play and awareness of risk have led to 'play deprivation' for many of today's children. This makes their play opportunities at school even more vital.

Better quality play leads to happier children and happier staff. With better quality play opportunities there are fewer behaviour problems, a more positive attitude to school and improved skills development and learning. As the children improve their quality of play and have more enriching play times, there are fewer accidents and classroom learning is enhanced as the children come in from play happy and ready to learn.

Play is recognised for the important contribution it makes to education and lifelong learning, a finding confirmed by many studies of early childhood. Research shows that play can enhance problem solving; it is also widely regarded as providing opportunities for social interaction and language development which is vital for all our children and in particular for EAL learners and those children with speech and language needs. The contribution of play to educational development is suggested through the inherent value of different play types eg through risk taking and exploratory play in formal and informal settings, allowing children to experiment and try new things in a safe environment.

## 2. Definition of Play

The Government's Play Strategy defines play as:

*'encompassing children's behaviour which is freely chosen, personally directed and intrinsically motivated. It is performed for no external goal or reward, and is a fundamental and integral part of healthy development – not only for individual children but also for the society in which they live'.*

High quality play activity meets the four components of a child's development:

Physical (direct impact on physical development, co-ordination and fitness);

Intellectual (cognitive development, imagination);

Educational (the knowledge and understanding of academic outcomes); and

Social (the development of values, beliefs and self-perception and the parallel communication skills, leadership and teamwork this enhances).

*At Esher Church School we believe that:*

- *play allows children to be creative and co-operative*
- *adults' role in great play is to be responsive to children's invitations and requests, and to carry out dynamic risk assessments to weigh up the risk and benefits of play activities and develop the children's risk awareness.*
- *play may be solitary or social*
- *play invites investigation and exploration which may test boundaries*
- *play makes children happy and happy children are healthier children who in turn can learn better*
- *children have a right to play with anything they choose from the playground resources and as long as it is safe regardless of age, gender, social or cultural background*
- *play is something you choose to do and that it is fun!*
- *play enables children to process their experiences of the world*

### **3. Risk and Benefit**

Many research studies have found that the social, physical and mental benefits to children of managed risks are vast. Children become more resilient, adaptable and are keen to try new experiences. Children should be provided with opportunities to challenge themselves and also to experience successes and failures. Risk and challenge is not limited to physical risk – it includes the uncertainties involved in making new friends, playing with children from different backgrounds and building emotional resilience through trying out new experiences with the possibility of failure.

*‘Without opportunities to take acceptable levels of risk, children’s development is inhibited, undermining their capability to deal with the wider unsupervised world’. (DCFS)*

At Esher Church School we are committed to providing these experiences for our children in a managed way. The Health and Safety Executive offer guidance on the provision of play in educational settings and state that:

**‘HSE fully supports the provision of play for all children in a variety of environments. HSE understands and accepts that this means children will often be exposed to play environments which, whilst well managed, carry a degree of risk and sometimes potential dangers’. (HSE, 2013)**

Esher Church School uses the Health and Safety Executive’s guidance on Managing Risk in Play and Leisure ([www.hse.gov.uk](http://www.hse.gov.uk)) (**Appendix 1**) as its principle guiding documents in making decisions relating to risk and play.

Our role as play providers is to facilitate the maximum amount of enriching opportunities for children to encounter. They need to learn to manage risk for themselves in an environment that is as safe as it needs to be, rather than completely devoid of risk. The benefit to children of challenging play opportunities should be balanced with any potential risk when carrying out risk assessments. We adopt a risk-benefit approach and use dynamic risk assessments (**Appendix 2**) to manage our duty of care to protect and provide for children's needs.

### **4. Adults’ Role in Play**

We, as an entire staff, are fully committed to working with children to provide the play experiences that they want and need in their school. We have an ongoing dialogue with children about the play provision in the playground which includes regular play assemblies, School Parliament involvement, surveys and other pupil voice outlets.

The key role of adults in the playground is to facilitate positive play and encourage children to assess the risks and benefits of activities within the play setting. The school has worked with OPAL ([www.outdoorplayandlearning.org.uk](http://www.outdoorplayandlearning.org.uk)) to guide a strategic approach to developing play at Esher Church School. In addition to this the ECS Play Team (Appendix 3) work in collaboration with children, staff and other stakeholders to ensure that the development of play remains a high priority at our school. Our Learning Support Assistants take on the role of Play Makers. They ensure that the broadest possible range of play opportunities are available to children: they observe, reflect and analyse the play that is happening and select a mode of intervention or make a change to the play space when needed. Play Makers ensure that the play space is inclusive, supporting all children to make the most of the opportunities available in their own way.

## **5.Children's Role in Play**

The children have developed their own version of the play policy. (Appendix 4), which will be reviewed annually by our School Parliament. It includes the rights and responsibilities of the children to

- Have ownership of their play and outdoor learning experiences
- Respect and look after each other their environment, equipment and toys.
- To be aware of sanctions surrounding purposely dangerous or unsafe behaviour
- Ensure that playtimes are fun for everybody

This children's policy will be shared and explained to all children regularly as part of ongoing assemblies, discussions and dialogue in class and with School Parliament.

## **6.Environment**

At Esher Church School we will:

- use the outdoor space as a natural resource for learning and playing, encouraging the children to value natural or found objects for play
- include the children when planning for playing and learning outdoors
- ensure that the outdoor area offers all children the opportunity to investigate, take risks and explore and use their imagination and creativity
- expect the children to respect and take pride in the outdoor environment and care for living things
- give children the opportunity to manage the space and freedom afforded by the outdoors
- enrich the quality of the environment to maximise variety of play types and increase play value
- ensure that the playground is integrated so children from Reception to Year 6 can play safely.
- Teach the children their responsibilities with regard to maintaining the quality of their outdoor space, and the equipment available and ensure they take an active part in doing this.

## Appendix 1

### CHILDREN'S PLAY AND LEISURE – PROMOTING A BALANCED APPROACH



Health and Safety  
Executive

#### CHILDREN'S PLAY AND LEISURE – PROMOTING A BALANCED APPROACH

1. Health and safety laws and regulations are sometimes presented as a reason why certain play and leisure activities undertaken by children and young people should be discouraged. The reasons for this misunderstanding are many and varied. They include fears of litigation or criminal prosecution because even the most trivial risk has not been removed. There can be frustration with the amounts of paperwork involved, and misunderstanding about what needs to be done to control significant risks.
2. The purpose of this statement is to give clear messages which tackle these misunderstandings. In this statement, HSE makes clear that, as a regulator, it recognises the benefits of allowing children and young people of all ages and abilities to have challenging play opportunities.
3. HSE fully supports the provision of play for all children in a variety of environments. HSE understands and accepts that this means children will often be exposed to play environments which, whilst well-managed, carry a degree of risk and sometimes potential danger.
4. HSE wants to make sure that mistaken health and safety concerns do not create sterile play environments that lack challenge and so prevent children from expanding their learning and stretching their abilities.
5. This statement provides all those with a stake in encouraging children to play with a clear picture of HSE's perspective on these issues. HSE wants to encourage a focus on the sensible and proportionate control of real risks<sup>1</sup> and not on unnecessary paperwork. HSE's primary interest is in real risks arising from serious breaches of the law and our investigations are targeted at these issues.

#### Recognising the benefits of play

*Key message: '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'.*

6. HSE fully recognises that play brings the world to life for children. It provides for an exploration and understanding of their abilities; helps them to learn and develop; and exposes them to the realities of the world in which they will live, which is a world not free from risk but rather one where risk is ever present. The opportunity for play develops a child's risk awareness and prepares them for their future lives.
7. Striking the right balance between protecting children from the most serious risks and allowing them to reap the benefits of play is not always easy. It is not about eliminating risk. Nor is it

<sup>1</sup> The Courts have made clear that when health and safety law refers to 'risks', it is not contemplating risks that are trivial or fanciful. It is not the purpose to impose burdens on employers that are wholly unreasonable (R v Chagot (2009) 2 All ER 660 [27])

## **Appendix 2**

### Benefit-Risk Assessment Record Sheet

Benefit/Risk Assessment Date : 4<sup>th</sup> May 2018

Assessed by: Salim Mohamed

**The play team will carry out daily, ongoing risk assessment and pass on any potential hazards to a member of SLT**

<b>Description of Activity</b>	<b>Benefit</b>	<b>Description of risk management and maintenance agreed</b>	<b>Nominated person</b>	<b>Action Date</b>
Scooter track	Co-ordination; learning to scooter; sense of speed and movement; speed control	Children to follow one way system; helmets compulsory; racing and overtaking prohibited; Daily check of scooters/helmets for damage. Children taught to report any damaged items or items that prove a hazard to staff members Scooters to be put away at the end of each session so as not to present a trip hazard.	DG/ playground team	Ongoing
Small world toys	Creativity; imagination play; simulate real world experiences with animals/cars etc; small group interaction	Ensure area is protected from disruption from other activities; toys checked for suitability and safety periodically. Children taught to identify toys which may pose a hazard and report to adult. Toys to be stored after use so as not to present a trip hazard.	DG/ playground team	Ongoing
Dressing up area	Acting; Mini theatre and show productions; role playing	Ensure area is covered so clothing does not get wet; clothes checked periodically for damage. Ensure that children are careful where clothing may provide a trip hazard	DG/ playground team	Ongoing
Mud kitchen	Imagination play; role play; cooking skills; team play; knowledge of different kitchen utensils and their purpose e.g. measuring, serving, stirring, sieving	Utensils checked for safety daily; children to wear wellies to minimize mess; Play Makers to ensure that utensils are used appropriately. Children taught to identify any objects that may prove a hazard. Children to finish playing in this area 5 minutes before the end of play so they can go and wash their hands in good time to start the afternoon session.	DG/ playground team	Ongoing
Digging tools	Imagination play; building skills e.g. holes, mud castles; tunnels; team work	Tools checked to ensure they are safe for children of all ages. Ensure that deep holes dug are safe, clearly marked and are filled in at the end of playtime	DG/ playground team	Ongoing
Sand pit	Creative and imaginative play opportunities; co-operation.	Digging tools checked to ensure they are safe. Holes dug filled in at the end of play. Children reminded regularly about not throwing sand.	DG/playground team	Ongoing
Gravel play	Sensory and creative play.	Children regularly reminded that they cannot throw gravel under any circumstances	DG/Playground team	Ongoing
Bucket swing	Sensory and collaborative play	Children take turns to use the swing taking note of limits of number of children on swing at one time. Children pushing swing to do so at a safe distance. Swing checked by Play Maker daily to ensure safety.	DG/Playground team	Ongoing
Tyres	Creative and collaborative play	Children cannot stand in piles of tyres above their arm height. Tyres to be returned to stack area at end of play. Tyres may only be rolled if system is in place to stop them from rolling into other children's games.	DG/Playground teams	Ongoing

## **Appendix 3**

### **Structure of adult roles in practice**

#### **Play Team**

This is the team working to ensure policy is in place and to develop play and outdoor learning at Esher Church School. It consists of:

Headteacher:	Cathy Bell
Play Leader:	Dally Gill
Lead Teachers:	Helen Brotherton/Barbara Hunter
Representative Governor:	Bob Lonnon

#### **Esher Church School Play Team**

All adults working at the school are part of the play team and have a responsibility to follow this policy. When on the playground at playtimes all staff take the role of Play Makers.

## Appendix 4



### Children's Play Policy – to be reviewed annually by School Parliament

We have the right to have fun at playtimes. We have the responsibility to make sure that everyone has fun and that our play does not stop this.

We have the right to make our own decisions about our play and choose what we do. We have the responsibility to make sure our decisions don't affect others in a negative way.

We have the right to choose who we play with. We have a responsibility to make sure that no one is left out of play or forced to do something they don't want to do.

We have the right to play with lots of different toys and have a well looked after environment. We have the responsibility to take pride in, respect and look after our environment and toys.

We have the right to explore be creative and take thoughtful risks. We have the responsibility to think about what we are doing and talk to a play maker about the risks we are taking if they ask us too.