

Whole School Policy on Play

Mission Statement

Think back to your childhood. Who did you play with? Where were you allowed to play? What did you play? Who was 'in charge' of your play? Now compare your experience to that of children today where, for most, there are increased restrictions, structure and involvement of adults. Recently both the Government and South Gloucestershire have recognised that children are simply not playing in the way that they used to and are trying to improve public play spaces as a benefit not just to children but to families and communities. Bowsland Green School recognises that the impact of modern society on children's lives has significantly restricted their opportunity to play freely and wishes to help address this, alongside national and local government initiatives. It is therefore committed to encouraging the creation of high quality play opportunities within the school environment that are appropriate, accessible, stimulating and challenging for all of our children.

Play is important because it is the elemental learning process by which human kind has developed. Children have an instinctive desire to play whatever culture they are born into. Play encompasses 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. Physical, social, mental, emotional and creative skills, all of which underpin academic development, are all developed through play. It also allows the beneficial exposure of children to some levels of risk and challenge, giving them the chance to learn about the real consequences of risk taking. Play is such a vital component of a child's life that the child's capacity for positive development could be inhibited or constrained if denied free access to the broadest range of environments and play opportunities. Bowsland Green will seek every opportunity to support play and create an environment that fosters it.

To meet our objectives Bowsland Green School will establish an effective and efficient system of communication with pupils, parents and appropriate agencies to provide mutual information, advice and support.

Definition of Play

At Bowsland Green we define play in the following way:

Children following their own ideas and interests, in their own way and for their own reasons, and having fun while respecting themselves, others and the environment.

Aims

- 1. To improve the quality of play provision at school we will**
 - Apply whole school play policy consistently
 - Establish and maintain a high profile for play
 - Relate play issues directly to the school's values and ethos
 - Ensure decision making at all levels within the school includes consideration of the impact of those decisions on children's opportunities to play

- 2. To make play a priority for all those associated with the school including pupils, parents, teachers and governors we will**
 - Appoint a member of the Senior Leadership Team to devise a play strategy, lead improvement work and monitor progress -currently it is Mrs Whitaker
 - Involve children, staff and parents in play development work
 - Use the school prospectus to promote our play strategy
 - Keep the whole school community informed of play issues in newsletter items
 - Keep Governors up to date through regular feedback from the Headteacher

- 3. To develop a framework which defines expectations, roles and responsibilities and promotes consistency in carrying out designated tasks we will**
 - Structure our play strategy in line with that of South Gloucestershire focusing on the following priorities:
 - Better knowledge of play and informed decision making e.g. staff training, consulting children
 - Improved quality of the play environment e.g. improving natural environment, staffing
 - Providing greater access to play e.g. extend access to grounds in bad weather and after school/holidays
 - Maintain unambiguous play procedures that the whole school community are aware of

- Ensure our children encounter challenge, stimulation and **acceptable** levels of risk in their experience of play by adopting the Play Safety Forum (PSF) Statement on Managing Risk in Play Provision as follows:
 ‘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 risk of death or serious injury’ (PSF 2002)

4. To manage the level of risk within our play provision we will

- Adopt the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) Principles of sensible risk management as follows:

(I). Sensible risk management **is** about:

- Ensuring that workers and the public are properly protected
- Providing overall benefit to society by balancing benefits and risks, with a focus on reducing real risks- both those which arise more often and those with serious consequences
- Enabling innovation and learning, not stifling them
- Ensuring that those who create risks manage them responsibly and understand that failure to manage real risks responsibly is likely to lead to robust action
- Enabling individuals to understand that as well as the right to protection, they also have to exercise responsibility

(II). Sensible risk management **is not** about:

- Creating a totally risk free society
- Generating useless paperwork mountains
- Scaring people by exaggerating or publishing trivial risks
- Stopping important recreational and learning activities for individuals where the risk are managed
- Reducing protection of people from risks that cause real harm and suffering (HSE web site 2007)

- Adopt the South Gloucestershire Visual Risk assessment tool which has been developed to eliminate the risks in children’s play while allowing for
 - a proportionate balance between the benefits of play and the need to protect them
 - an acknowledgement that different children will respond differently to the same situation

4. To provide support, advice and guidance to pupils and parents we will

- As a whole staff act as positive role models for play
- Highlight play issues, particularly managing risk, in:
 - Assemblies
 - Newsletters
- Invite parents to join with us observing children at play
- Seek to understand individual responses to the risk taking element of play when communicating with parents

Policy Adopted: March 2009

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