Roseacre Play and Learning Policy 2024

Rationale

Children spend up to 20% of their time at primary school at play, this equates to 1.4 years of their entire time at school. As this is a significant amount of time, this needs careful consideration and planning as this period has the potential to provide enormous benefits and learning opportunities for the children. Roseacre believes that better play means: happier children, more focused learning, more developed social skills, a development of imagination, creativity and problem solving, improved behaviour and enjoyment for all. We want our provision to enable children to have endless and flexible opportunities for children to explore play.

Our Aims

Through play, we aim to:

- Give all children the opportunity to explore the world around them through the freedom of play
- Develop children's self-regulation skills and emotional resilience
- Allow children to take risks and develop their ability to manage these risks in order to gain the benefits
- Provide opportunities for all children to play together and develop their relationships with each other
- Encourage opportunities to develop creativity and imagination
- Encourage children to make independent choices and be responsible for their outcomes
- Develop independence and take responsibility for themselves, each other and their environments
- Provide a range of environments which encourage children to play and enhance their learning about the world

What is Play?

The most commonly used words when asked to define play are 'fun' and 'imagination' closely followed by 'friendship' and 'activity.'

Play is different from work, it does not follow set rules like sport and we can't be forced to play so whatever our age we might say:

'Play is what I do when everyone else has stopped telling me what to do' (Bath and North East Somerset Council Play Policy, 2000)

The playwork sector in the UK is guided by three simple principles, that play should be:

• Self-directed – children must make the choice about what and where they want to play and what their end goal will be

• Intrinsically motivated – children are intrinsically motivated to gather experiences, some of these will be enjoyable, others will not. All experience is relevant.

• Freely chosen – children will have freedom to choose where they play, what with, who with and how long for

To achieve this, Roseacre recognises that children need to: get dirty, make noise, make a mess, explore their surroundings, express themselves and, at times, be out of the direct gaze of adults.

Children's Rights to Play

As a school, we recognise the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child which includes 'the right of child to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities' (Article 31). At Roseacre, we whole-heartedly promote these rights and use this as a basis for our approach to play. Schools have a legal and moral obligation to ensure that all children in our care have access to engaging high quality play opportunities. The duty of schools is set out in the United Nations published General comment 17 (2013). Schools should play a major role in fulfilling the obligations under Article 31, including:

• *The physical environment of settings* – should aim to ensure the provision of: adequate indoor and outdoor space, promotion of equal opportunities for all to play, adequate sanitation facilities, play landscapes which are safe and regularly inspected, playgrounds with appropriate boundaries, equipment and spaces accessible to all, areas which afford opportunities for all forms of play, design of play areas with adequate protection.

• *The structure of the day* – statutory provision should guarantee appropriate time throughout the day, to ensure that children have sufficient opportunity for both rest and play.

Risks and Benefit

'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 up in cotton wool' (Managing Risk in Play Provision: An Implementation Guide - 2012)

At Roseacre, we believe that risk-taking is an essential part of child development and enables children to learn. When children understand how to manage risk they become more resilient, adaptable and seek out new experiences. Play should provide children with the opportunity to challenge themselves, develop their ability to judge risk and understand their limits. It is essential that we provide children with the appropriate environment and ethos for children to learn how to take and manage risk.

To manage risk we will:

• Provide staff with training to supervise and enhance play

• Ensure that risks are as apparent as possible to staff and children

• Ensure that staff use professional judgement to balance between safety and taking risk

• Complete comprehensive risk assessments which are updated at least annually, or when there is any significant change

'*Risk benefit assessment means that the provider considers two goals alongside each other: the goal of protecting children from avoidable serious harm, and the goal of providing them with stimulating, adventurous play opportunities'* (Managing Risk in Play Provision: An Implementation Guide - 2012)

At Roseacre, we will adopt a risk benefit approach. This means that we believe that the benefits of managed risks are huge. More often than not, the benefits which children will gain from risky play will outweigh the possible risk. If children were never able to experience risk, they would never learn to walk, climb or ride a bike.

Supervision and the role of the adults

Legally, children must have supervision at primary school playtime; however, there are no stated ratios for Y1-Y6. As a school, we do not believe that direct supervision of playtime is possible or beneficial. We will ensure that the number of adults supervising playtime is appropriate for the number of children at play and the amount of zones/areas available to the children. Supervision will take place in two ways:

• Remote – where adults are visible and reachable by all children. Risks will be controlled by managing the environment.

• Ranging– where adults patrol an area to gain an idea of the play which is taking place and any risks which may emerge.

At playtime, the adults supervising will take on the role of playworkers, their main aim will be to maximize the benefits which children can gain from play and provide opportunities for a wide range of activities. Staff will make interventions to play when appropriate and support children; their ultimate goal will be to facilitate an environment which supports their own play. They will also be available to join play if they are invited, though can never be completely engrossed in the play, they must always reserve part of their attention to the awareness of the site they are supervising. All playworker's interventions must balance risk with the developmental benefit and wellbeing of children.

Clothing

As a school, we strongly advise that all children are prepared for all weather play. During the colder months, wellies and waterproof coats should be worn when accessing areas away from the playground. Children will be responsible for managing their outdoor clothing before they go out to play. The nature of outdoor play means that children will get muddy at times; however, the provision of outdoor clothing will reduce this. In warmer months, children will be expected to have sun cream and hats.

Environment

At Roseacre, we believe that children should have access to free range play which uses our environment to the best of its possibility. We will endeavour to ensure that the environment is free from unacceptable risk. To manage risk, we will:

• Our site team will perform regular checks of play areas and equipment

• Supervision staff will check for risks/hazards when working with children

• Children will be made aware of possible risks and understand who to alert

Inclusion and Equality

By providing children with rich play opportunities we will be ensuring that our play provision is able to meet the needs of all children regardless of age, gender, race, disability or individual ability. It is our responsibility to make sure that provision is available for all.