



ST. MARTIN'S CE PRIMARY & NURSERY SCHOOL

PLAY POLICY

“Play is freely chosen, personally directed, intrinsically motivated behaviour that actively engages the child”.¹

“Every Child has the right to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child”.

“All children and young people need to play. The impulse to play is innate. Play is a biological, psychological and social necessity, and is fundamental to the healthy development and well being of individuals and communities.”ⁱⁱ

Introduction

The above quotes begin to show just how important play is for children. As we've increasingly recognised this at St Martin's we've developed our break times and lunchtimes to reflect this need. Our most recent, and very exciting development, has been the installation of the PlayPod, which is packed full of exciting recycled materials that the children use to play with in very imaginative ways! This document aims to provide information regarding all aspects of play at St. Martin's.

Benefits of Play

- The development of a problem solving mind-set.
- Exercise
- Improving resilience through “developing communication skills, a positive attitude, a problem solving approach... the ability to plan, a belief in control, and a sense of humour”ⁱⁱⁱ
- Developing future adults who are creative and effective in the social and economic sphere^{iv}
- Helping children's learning as research has shown they are happier; more engaged and responsive; interact more with each other; and are more engaged with the world around them if they have regular positive play opportunities.^v
- Satisfying some of the children's need and want for risk taking.^{vi}

Hazards of not Playing

- "The tendency of many... to over-protect [children] has worrying implications. Once-normal activities such as roaming about with friends, or even simply walking unescorted to and from school, are

becoming increasingly rare... The activities of children are monitored and constrained to ensure that they come to no harm. They also take less exercise, potentially becoming overweight and/or unfit".^{vii}

- "If we do not provide controlled opportunities for children to encounter and manage risk [such as during play] then they may be denied the chance to learn these skills. They may also be more likely to choose to play in uncontrolled environments where the risks are greater"^{viii}

Principles of Play

At St. Martin's we follow the following 5 principles of play. They are:

1. Children need to play and we will promote this.
2. Play at St. Martin's should be primarily freely chosen and self-directed by the children
3. Children need to test and increasing understand boundaries and themselves in a challenging yet managed environment
4. We will strive to maximise the range of play opportunities available
5. We believe that play is for all children, and that all children have the right to choose and have a range of choice. We will strive to promote this.

Play Worker's Role

Play Workers at St Martin's will make the minimum interventions in children's play consistent with keeping them free from serious harm.

Play Workers will promote our principles of play in the following ways:

- a. Know and understand the 4 risk benefit assessments
- b. Know the reason for, and how to do, dynamic risk assessments
- c. Be hands off as much as possible promoting freely chosen and self-directed play
- d. Where intervention is needed use the 'language of choice', and help them understand risks through using questions such as "what am I worried about here?"
- e. Permit as much of the school site and equipment to be used as practical

Broader Support for Principles of Play

- The Bridge Team will ensure consistency through lunchtimes and direct the tidy up time. They will also:
 - Make decisions regarding whether to use the play pod, whether it is wet play, and whether to use the field
 - Make sure that the tidy up signs go out
 - Supervise the PlayPod Helpers as they tidy up the PlayPod
- 10 trained Playground Buddies who play games and help others who are feeling sad and lonely (year 4s)
- 8 PlayPod Helpers who help with tidy up time (year 6)
- There are the following sanctions available for children making wrong choices:
 - For first incident of unhelpful choice of behaviour use the 'language of choice' i.e. "if you chose (negative) then you will be choosing (negative consequence). If you choose (positive) then you will be choosing (positive outcome – describe this well)"
 - For minor wrong choices reception, yr 1 and yr 2 children should stand next to an adult for a period of time, older children stand by the wall for a short period of time(at Play Worker's discretion). The

adults should clearly explain to the children what it is about their behaviour that is unhelpful and children should be encouraged to explain to the adult how they will do things differently in future.

- For more moderate wrong choices children will not be allowed to play with the Play Pod resources for 1, 2 or 3 days at the Play Workers discretion (this should be CPOMSeD and Scott and Larisa copied into the report)
- If the wrong choice requires a more serious sanction children can be off the playground for various amounts of time. This should be decided in conjunction with Larisa and/or the class teacher or phase leader.
- For multiple offences sanctions can escalate to a complete playground ban at the discretion of Tania.

Risk Benefit Assessments

“Safety must be considered at all stages of play provision but... inevitably, there will be risk of injury when children play, as there is risk of injury in life generally. We must not lose sight of the important developmental role of play for children in the pursuit of the unachievable goal of absolute safety.” – The HSE

As experienced and trained play workers, St. Martin’s staff should be as free as possible in their practice (a description of this is in the Play Worker section above). Children’s play likewise should be as unencumbered as possible to allow the full benefits of play to be experienced. For this to happen it is important to understand that St Martin’s does not aim to the eliminate risk or potential danger entirely, as this would create a sterile play environment that would “ lack challenge and so prevent children from expanding their learning and stretching their abilities”^{ix}.

Rather, in line with the guidance from the UN, Play England and the HSE St. Martin’s aims to provide children “challenging, exciting, engaging play opportunities, while ensuring that they are not exposed to unacceptable risk of harm”^x. The primary methods for holding these two objectives in tension with one another are risk benefit assessments. These documents are simple to understand, and focus on reducing or eliminating the following:

1. Serious risks
2. Risks that by being eliminating do not reduce the benefits of play
3. Risks that are not foreseeable by the children

Following consultation with the PlayPod team and discussions in house, the following areas of highest risk have been identified as requiring risk benefit analysis:

1. Use of Tyres
2. Transportation
3. Structures and Ropes
4. Scrap on Scrap

We recognise that striking the correct balance between risks and benefits is not easy, nor is it a mechanical process. Further, as play is “freely chosen [and] personally directed”^{xi} by the children the risks will likely be fluid, changing and emerge over time. Play Workers will therefore perform dynamic risk assessments, considering the 3 types of risks outline above, to further reduce risks.

The following systems will be used to record risks as they emerge and to maintain the risk benefit assessments:

- When first aid incidents occur, if pertaining to play, the detail of where the incident happened and what equipment was being used will be recorded. If patterns emerge the relevant policies will be reviewed
- If Play Workers or other staff notice ‘near misses’ they will log them on CPOMS

- The risk benefit assessments will be reviewed twice in the autumn term, then once in the spring and summer term, and from then on once a year and any actions that are needed will be taken
- If a serious risk suddenly emerges, and a risk benefit analysis is either changed or introduced, all play workers will be informed by email

The following documents were consulted during the writing of this document and are held in the School Business Manager’s office. Copies can be provided by the Clerk to Governors.

- Best Play: What Play Provision Should Do for Children”, National Playing Fields Association
- UN Convention on the Rights of the Child”, IPA
- Managing Risk in Play Provision: A Position Statement”, Play Safety Forum
- Scrapstore PlayPod Training Handbook”, Children’s Scrapstore
- Children’s Play and Leisure: Propromoting a Balanced Approach’, HSE
- The Play Work Principles
- Managing Risk in Play Provision: Implementation Guide’, Play England

Policy Review

This policy was adopted by the Governing Board on 10th October 2016 and will be reviewed by the Lead Governor for Health & Safety and Premises (Resources Committee).

Review Term:	Three years
Next Review Due:	October 2019
Dates policy reviewed/amended:	

Endnotes

ⁱ “UN Convention on the Rights of the Child”, IPA. Available from: <http://ipaworld.org/childs-right-to-play/uncrc-article-31/un-convention-on-the-rights-of-the-child-1/>

ⁱⁱ “Managing Risk in Play Provision: A Position Statement”, Play Safety Forum, p.2. Available from: <http://www.playengland.org.uk/media/120462/managing-risk-play-safety-forum.pdf>

ⁱⁱⁱ Mental Health Foundation (1999) in “Best Play: What Play Provision Should Do for Children”, National Playing Fields Association, p.6. Available from: <http://www.freeplaynetwork.org.uk/pubs/bestplay.pdf>

^{iv} “Best Play: What Play Provision Should Do for Children”, National Playing Fields Association, p.6. Available from: <http://www.freeplaynetwork.org.uk/pubs/bestplay.pdf>

^v “Scrapstore Playpod Training Handbook”, Children’s Scrapstore, p.14

^{vi} “Play Work Principles”, available:

<http://www.playwales.org.uk/login/uploaded/documents/Playwork%20Principles/playwork%20principles.pdf>

^{vii} Bateson and Martin (1999) in “Best Play: What Play Provision Should Do for Children”, National Playing Fields Association, p.6. Available from: <http://www.freeplaynetwork.org.uk/pubs/bestplay.pdf>

^{viii} “Managing Risk in Play Provision: A Position Statement”, Play Safety Forum, p.2. Available from: <http://www.playengland.org.uk/media/120462/managing-risk-play-safety-forum.pdf>

An example of children showing risk seeking behaviour in our community was when they were found to be playing on the train tracks. Another, is a small fire being started in the small public play park in the centre of Cranbrook.

^{ix} For this quote and more information please read ‘Children’s Play and Leisure: Propromoting a Balanced Approach’, HSE. <http://www.hse.gov.uk/entertainment/childrens-play-july-2012.pdf>

^x “Managing Risk in Play Provision: Implementation Guide’, Play England. <http://www.playengland.org.uk/media/172644/managing-risk-in-play-provision.pdf>

^{xi} ‘Best Play: What Play Provision Should do for Children’, National Playing Fields Association. <http://www.freeplaynetwork.org.uk/pubs/bestplay.pdf>