



Play Policy

What Is Play?

Play is an intrinsic part of human nature and development and should take place indoors and outdoors. Play is a process that is freely chosen, personally directed and intrinsically motivated. Children determine and control the content of their play by following their own instincts, ideas and interests in their own way and for their own reason. General Comment No.17 of the UNCRC states that: *“Play is any behaviour, activity or process initiated, controlled and structured by children themselves. Play happens whenever and wherever there is an opportunity to play. The key characteristics of play are fun, uncertainty, challenge, flexibility and non-productivity.”*

The Value of Play

- Play promotes children's development, learning, imagination, creativity and independence
- Play contributes to keeping children healthy and active
- Play allows children to experience boundaries and learn to assess and manage risk
- Play allows children to develop a sense of community and learn about different people, places and environments
- Play helps children learn about themselves; their abilities, interests and preferences
- Play is therapeutic and can help children deal with stress, difficulties and emotional concerns
- Play is an important way of initiating, building and maintaining important relationships

Our Aims

At Trelawnyd Little Learners we strive to provide both indoor and outdoor learning and play opportunities to achieve the following aims:

- To empower children to take ownership of their learning
- To encourage children to develop problem solving skills, resilience and a growth mindset
- To develop skills of communication, cooperation and collaborative learning
- To provide a challenging, safe and secure environment within which children can take and manage their own risks
- To encourage children to care for and respect their environment
- To encourage close links with parents / guardians and the school in celebrating our outdoor space and the rich learning that can take place within it
- To encourage children to develop a love for the outdoors
- To allow children to develop their 5 areas of development in line with Early Years Wales guidance

Implementation

Staff will commit to providing high quality play experiences throughout the setting and will ensure that children are provided with a variety of opportunities for both free flow and structured play, within a wide range of settings (including indoor and outdoor). Staff will review experiences provided for children within the classroom and use this information to set up equipment in response to the children's interests and ideas. Children should be provided with the opportunity to use a wide range of resources. The classroom will include the following possible areas:

- Home corner / role play area
- Creative area / mark making area
- Loose parts area
- Construction area
- Sand and water area
- Sensory area
- Malleable area

Parents / guardians will be kept up to date with the activities done each day both via SeeSaw and the setting's Facebook page.

(<https://www.facebook.com/TrelawnydLittleLearners/>)

Play and planning will consider the individual observations taken of a child to ensure they have access within their play to develop the skills they need to focus on. Play and planning will always be done in a child centred manner, and include the children's ideas and interests which could mean changing adult led ideas or topics entirely to meet the needs and ideas of the children.

Risk and Challenge

All children will be supported in taking risks within a safe and secure environment. Children will be taught how to manage risks. It is important to ensure that both the indoor and outdoor environment offers these challenges. Staff will regularly look out for risk and assess their risk-benefit ratio and ensure that robust risk assessments are completed, which are seen and signed by all relevant staff and are regularly reviewed and updated. All children are regularly reminded about the importance of staying safe, for example:

- Only visit the outdoor spaces when a member of staff is present
- Keep yourself and others safe by listening carefully to instructions and following adult signals, such as whistles or bells
- Respect boundaries, staying within the boundaries marked out by an adult
- Ensuring that you can always be seen / are within hearing distance
- If harmful items are found do not touch them and make sure to alert an adult straight away
- When carrying large loose play items, ensure that you walk safely and check that there is no one else around you

Inclusion

Every child has a right to play, therefore by creating an environment where diversity is respected and valued, we ensure that the principles of inclusion apply to children of all abilities, ethnic backgrounds and ages as they should do.

“Provision of high-quality play opportunities to children regardless of their needs and abilities. While children won’t always be able to participate in all available activities, all projects should offer all children a real choice of play activities” - Ludvigsen, Creegan and Mills 2005

We ensure that play is inclusive by:

- Ensuring the physical environment is accessible (flat even floors, wide entrances)
- Ensuring access to resources. All resources and equipment are to be places within reach of children to ensure all can access them
- Making reasonable adjustments to allow disabled children to enjoy similar opportunities to that of children without disabilities
- Consider barriers that impede disabled children accessing the play facilities, and take action to reduce or remove those barriers, prior to a disabled child using the facility

Role of the Adult

It is up to the adults within the settings to ensure play is carried out safely, inclusively, and age appropriately. When planning for structured play, staff should be mindful of limitations and targets for each child; they can refer to the children's individual observation sheets which include information on targets and next steps. Play should be stimulating, and staff should not intervene with play unless it enhances the development or if play needs redirecting if it is becoming inappropriate (e.g. children fighting, play pretend guns etc).

Staff should ensure that intervention to play is stimulating. Stimulating interventions are open impulses that stimulate a range of actions in the children and make the difference between low and high involvement. This includes:

- Engaging children's curiosity and questions
- Helping children reflect and extend their thinking
- Supporting children to solve their own problems
- Suggesting activities to children that are not engaged
- Offering materials that fit in an on-going activity
- Inviting children to communicate
- Asking children what it is that they would be interested in doing within the session