



PLAYTIME BEHAVIOUR POLICY

Article 31 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child states that “Children have the right to relax and play and to join in with a wide range of cultural, artistic and other recreational activities”.

AIMS

It is vital that as educators, we support and value the role of children’s play. Through their play we want our children to:

- Develop and build friendships and relationships
- Learn social skills (eg. take turns, co-operate, follow rules, cope when things go wrong)
- Develop confidence and self-esteem
- Develop emotional well-being
- Problem solve
- De-stress
- Let off steam
- Exercise and keep fit
- Have fun and be happy!

Children will experience different emotions in their play such as joy, fear, anger, sadness, shock and disgust. This will be within a safe context where there are rules to help keep things in check and adults to help give support. Sometimes things will go wrong in their play and we want our children to build resilience- the capacity to thrive despite adversity and stress by coping with difficult situations through developing creative approaches and problem solving. So added to the above list is:

- Develop resilience

For some children, playtimes can be challenging either because they are getting left out of games, have no-one to play with or are on the receiving end of name calling or rough play. For other children, playtimes can be difficult because of their own anti-social or aggressive or rough behaviour.

CHILDREN’S NEEDS

The school recognises the following needs of all children:

1. physiological needs- hunger, thirst, warmth
2. safety- secure, safe
3. belonging- love, affiliation with others, acceptance
4. esteem- to achieve, be competent, gain approval and recognition

(Maslow, 1973)

To ensure that these needs are met, all supervising staff are aware of these needs. They constantly monitor, assess and question the children to ensure that these needs are fulfilled. For example, they encourage a child to eat more lunch or to drink more fluid if he/she has not had much; they look after a child and make them feel safe if he/she has fallen over; they find a child someone to play with if he/she is lonely, they give praise to a child when he/she has done well. In short, staff apply a lot of common sense practice that a parent does with their own child.

CODE OF CONDUCT

Staff follow the Code of Conduct below to ensure that there is a positive relationship between adults and children. This ensures that all children are encouraged to behave well.

1. You are warm, friendly and kind, but firm.
2. You act and speak with confidence and sincerity, and express a sense of humour naturally.
3. You treat all pupils with equal respect by listening to their opinions and considering their feelings. You are as impartial as possible.
4. By distinguishing between the deed and the doer, you never damage your relationship with the children. You may object to what the child is doing, but not to the child him/herself.
5. You set boundaries for expected behaviour and maintain these boundaries through praise and encouragement.

STRATEGIES FOR PROMOTING CO-OPERATIVE PLAY AT PLAYTIMES

We recognise that having fun with their friends at playtimes is a very important part of a child's day and that for many it is the most important part of their day!

Some children do not know how to play and just have a lack of idea about what games they can play. As a school, we need to provide for these children and to make sure we are providing for their needs. This is done by providing games for the children to play. This will ensure that the children are happier and more confident in themselves, have fewer grievances when they get back to class, are more playful and co-operative and that playtimes are a more harmonious time of the day for all. Therefore, children are taught how to play games, including the old, traditional games that many children (for different reasons) no longer know.

At playtimes, there is a balance of free play and of games-based activities that children can choose to get involved in. Games are introduced and encouraged through the following means:

1. Games are taught by Playground Activity Leaders (PALS) during lunchtimes
2. School assemblies introduce a "game of the week"
3. A Football Club runs across lunchtime twice a week
4. Teachers show classes how to use the playground markings and regularly practise playground games as part of their PE or PSED (Personal, Social & Emotional Development) lessons
5. Adults should involve themselves in the games too as role models
6. As children get to know the games well, they can become PALS themselves and teach other or younger children their games. This includes children from Mount Pleasant Junior School.

PLAYTIME RULES

Children are taught “The 3 Bs” as a general set of rules to keep to in their play:

- BE KIND
- BE FAIR
- BE SAFE

This is reinforced by staff at playtimes and through school assemblies.

Children are taught to say “*Please stop it, I don’t like it*” if someone says or does something to them that they don’t like. This should be spoken firmly, but calmly, with a raised hand signal. If this doesn’t work, they are taught to go and tell an adult. Sometimes an anxious parent tells their child to hit back, but this should not be encouraged on any account as it inevitably ends with children indiscriminately hitting each other and is very difficult to sort out. If a parent feels that they have no option but to say this to their child, they should come into school to talk to the class teacher or the head teacher so that alternative strategies can be sought.

At the end of playtimes, children must put away all equipment when the “swistle” goes and stand still when the bell rings. The bell should only be rung when the teachers or teaching assistants have come to collect their class. They walk to their lines when a member of playground staff holds up their class number. Lines should be quiet and orderly. This ensures that children are safe and calm, ready to re-enter the school building. All staff should help to promote this.

When all children have had a fantastic playtime, the whole school celebrates at the end of the playtime with a big “drum roll” (slapping of knees) and everyone shouts “HOORAY!” The staff member holding up the class number cards should instigate this.

WET PLAYTIMES

Indoor playtimes due to bad weather can have a negative effect on behaviour as children are often “cooped up” all day without the chance to run off their excess energy. This can lead to inattentive and fidgety learners. Therefore, it is important that supervising staff have a number of strategies to call on to create a happy, calm, fun, stimulating and socially enjoyable wet playtime. Wet Play Activity Boxes are available which contain a variety of activities to occupy children- such as colouring sheets, quiz and puzzle activities. One classroom within a year group can be used to show a DVD or host a “talent show” and staff also have access to a range of active games which they can lead. During a morning wet playtime, the hall (if free) can be used for an active games session. Children who may have difficulties managing to play well are encouraged to play games with the Playground Activity Leader. As children get to know the games well, they can become PALS themselves and teach other or younger children their games. The same rules and rewards as above apply across wet playtimes. The Playground Activity Leader is responsible for ensuring that the wet playtime boxes are properly resourced and regularly replenished.

CONSEQUENCES

The consequence of breaking rules is that the child has a verbal warning. They also need to apologise to those harmed for their behaviour. If they break the rule again, they have “time out” for 10 minutes. Children can join in playtime once again as long as they can explain the rule they need to be keeping.

Playground incidents are written on the “playground board” so that problems can be followed up and monitored by the class teacher and head teacher. As a result of unsatisfactory behaviour a teacher or the head teacher may do any of the following:

- Discuss the incident with the dinner supervisor and child(ren) involved.
- Give the child(ren) involved a “glum face” (the happy face/glum face system that operates in the classroom).
- Asks the child(ren) to apologise to the child(ren) or adult harmed.
- Inform the children’s parents if appropriate.
- For persistent poor behaviour, a child is placed on a “yellow card” which means that their play is closely watched by a member of playground staff to check that they are following “The 3B’s” above. Following a more serious or persistent misdemeanour, a child is placed on “a red card” which means that they have to walk around next to a member of playground staff, missing their playtime(s). They can be allowed a short 5 minute play if they have managed this well. The yellow and red card system enables the different staff on playtime duty to know which children to monitor.

SOLVING DIFFICULTIES

Playground supervisors receive appropriate training that enables them to sort out playtime disputes between children using “restorative practice” techniques. Children are asked about the incident using a sequence of questions that enables them to explain what has happened:

Responding to Challenging Behaviour

What happened?

What were you thinking about at the time?

Who have you upset?

How do you think (name of child) is feeling?

Why are they feeling (name emotion)?

What do you think needs to happen next?

Responding to those Harmed

What happened?

How are you feeling?

What do you need to happen next?

Staff will always listen to both sides of the story and endeavour to come to a fair and appropriate response. This will vary depending on the incident. For example, this may involve “time out” for 10 minutes, saying “sorry” to those harmed, or agreeing to play a different game or play away from each other.

For children who continue to find co-operative play at playtimes a real challenge or if a child’s parent reports that their child is unhappy, is being bullied or is having any difficulty with another child at

playtime, an investigation will take place to look at the underlying causes of the problem. This will be undertaken by the class teacher and/or the head teacher and will involve any or all of the following:

1. Observation of the child(ren) at play to work out what is going on and to try to establish why
2. Discussions with the child about his/her feelings and motives
3. Discussions with the other children involved in the difficulties
4. Discussions with the child's parent(s) or other children's parent(s) to help with understanding and addressing the problem
5. Undertaking a class sociogram which is a way of analysing the relationship that different class members have with one another. This can often reveal the underlying cause of a problem.
6. The child may be encouraged to play games with a Playground Activity Leader as this will give them a focus for their play.
7. Making a personalised "social story" for the child. This specialist technique uses simple language to convey to the child how they should and should not behave at playtime. This story is then read regularly to the child by staff at school and can also be taken home for the parent to reinforce.

It is vital that problems are sorted out because if a child is unhappy, it can affect their self-esteem and their ability to learn. The child will continue to be monitored for an agreed amount of time and discussions between the parent and the school will be maintained during this period.

If a parent or a member of staff has a concern about a child, it is important that this is reported to the class teacher or head teacher so that it can be addressed promptly. Regular meetings between lunchtime staff and the head teacher are held so that any difficulties can be aired and resolved.