

St. Patrick's Primary School



Outdoor Play Policy

APPROVED BY BOG NOV 21st 2019
REVIEW DATE- NOVEMBER 2021

We at St. Patrick's Primary School, aim to enhance the quality of outdoor free play opportunities at school through:

- ✚ Supporting outdoor play;
- ✚ Establishing and maintaining a high profile for free play;
- ✚ Relating play issues directly to the schools values and ethos;
- ✚ Ensuring that decision making at all levels within the school; includes consideration of those decisions that impact on children's opportunities to play;
- ✚ Applying this Playground/outdoor play policy consistently.

Furthermore, to ensure that play is a priority for all those associated with the school including pupils, parents, teachers and governors we will:

- ✚ Appoint a member of staff to oversee the development of outdoor play opportunities, lead improvement work and monitor progress – currently this is Mrs.Grugan;
- ✚ Involve children, staff (including teaching and supervisory staff) and parents in play development work;
- ✚ Use the school prospectus to promote our play policy;
- ✚ Keep the whole school community informed of play issues;
- ✚ Undertake relevant play training where possible.

Our Understanding of Play

Outdoor play is essential for all aspects of a child's development. It can provide children with experiences which enable them to develop intellectually, emotionally, socially and physically. It also provides a rich context for the development of children's language, imagination, creative thinking and can encourage positive attitudes towards a healthy lifestyle.

Play should be seen as an integral part of children's education – it is a natural and enjoyable way for children to learn. At St. Patrick's Primary School the aim of both indoor and outdoor play is to provide a stimulating environment for children's learning in all areas of the curriculum and for all key stages.

We believe that the provision and planning for outdoor play must reflect the diversity and richness of the experience and developing interests of the children.

“Some opportunities for learning can only happen outside. The experience of a change in the weather, finding a colony of ants under a big stone, making a large-scale construction with huge cardboard cartons or painting on great big strips of wallpaper – all these motivate children in mental and physical engagement”.

Majorie Ouvry, the National Early Years Network 2000.

At St. Patrick's Primary School we believe that the school playground and outdoor space should be viewed as an essential medium for learning that can extend the learning that takes place indoors.

“Outdoors should provide opportunities for children to engage in planned and freely chosen play experiences and should offer risk, challenge, variety and fun”.

Learning through Landscapes.

At our school we have taken into account the change in children's play culture outside of school hours. In particular, the significant decline in outdoor play, which has led to concerns about children's health and well being. With this in mind it is our intention to enhance all our pupils' development by providing outdoor play experiences in varied and challenging ways.

Managing Risk and Play

Children need and want to take challenges and risks when they play. Our school's 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, we aim

to manage the level of risk, so that children are not exposed to unacceptable risks of death or serious injury.

“Through play children are able to learn about risks and use their own initiative. Skills learnt through play and other activities can act as a powerful form of prevention in other situations where children and young people are at risk.”

Robin Sutcliffe (SutcliffePlay)

Since the reason for providing play opportunities is their benefit to children, the starting point – and most important consideration – for risk assessment and decision making should be an understanding of the benefits that the provision offers.

We at St. Patrick's Primary School believe that we should not prevent children from doing things that they enjoy because of risks. We strive to strike a balance between risk and fun, and therefore offer challenging play opportunities in a safe environment. We believe that if we restricted 'challenging' play opportunities children's enjoyment outdoors would be limited.

Risk – Benefit Assessment

It is our intention at St. Patrick's Primary School to adapt the 'risk – benefit assessment' tool recommended by Managing Risk in Play Provision – Implementation Guide (Play England).

“The descriptive approach taken in this guide, called ‘risk-benefit assessment’, recognises that providers can make sound judgements about many of the risks and benefits relating to play provision but that they need to record their considerations and evidence base systematically. It is in legal terms a ‘suitable and sufficient’ risk assessment in the context of children’s play, since it is a reasonable approach to the task of balancing risks against benefits.”

Managing Risk in Play Provision – Implementation Guide (Play England)

St. Patrick's Primary School values outdoor play and its outdoor play space. Therefore we are committed to providing an attractive play space with adequate resources to allow for quality free play opportunities (such as loose parts, seating areas, quiet areas, activities and games etc). All playground equipment and resources will be safely stored and accessible for staff and children.

In valuing outdoor play we aim to ensure that all children have adequate time for free play opportunities throughout the school day (break and lunch time).

The Role of the Adult

To ensure balance and breadth of provision, adults need to have a clear understanding of their role in relation to the children's playtimes.

St. Patrick's Primary School aims to create an outdoor environment where adults will be actively involved with children in their games and activities (where appropriate) and should not be solely in a supervisory/'policing' role.

We believe that adults should be:

- ✚ Talking and interacting with children in a positive way;
- ✚ Joining in games and activities when invited by children;
- ✚ Initiating games and activities;..SEE PLAYGROUND GAMES folder- RM staff
- ✚ Extending children's play by making extra resources available;
- ✚ Enabling children to use resources in different ways;
- ✚ Observing at all times;
- ✚ Be aware of safety issues;
- ✚ Allow flexibility in planned activities;
- ✚ Assess resources throughout playtimes and remove where necessary;
- ✚ Remind children of rules and restrictions in a positive manner.

In order to facilitate the above, we believe that all playground staff need to be provided with suitable and sufficient training. St. Patrick's Primary School is committed to ensuring that playground staff are offered appropriate training opportunities relevant to their needs.

By adhering to the guidelines above and participating in relevant training, adults can make positive contributions to children's play; working in conjunction with the school's quality play ethos.

Who is Responsible?

Mrs. Grugan is the designated staff member for the playground, whose main role is to co-ordinate the management of playtimes. However this does not mean in isolation, the management of the playground is a collective responsibility. The designated staff member is responsible for putting systems in place to support and guide playground staff in ensuring that quality play opportunities are provided.

Dedicated time is set aside for planning for the playground to ensure the outdoor area is well laid out and provides for:

- ✚ Challenging and exciting play;
- ✚ Quiet and reflective play;
- ✚ Fast physical play;
- ✚ Opportunities for large scale experiences (den building/construction);
- ✚ Natural play (exploration, digging etc);
- ✚ Imaginary play (resources to be available);
- ✚ Co-operative play.

The above list is not exhaustive and may be extended as play development evolves.

It is the responsibility of the designated co-ordinator to communicate all aspects of the running of playtimes with clear guidelines to all relevant staff and pupils. This will include

depicting rotas, hosting meetings, conducting informal staff discussions and liaising with children through class discussions, questionnaires, evaluations and/or school assemblies.

As with all good practice the health and safety of children involved in outdoor play is paramount. The designated co-ordinator will ensure the appropriate risk – benefit assessments are in place for all outdoor play activities.

Additionally monitoring and evaluating through observation and feedback from playground staff will be a continuum.

Health and Safety in the Playground




Staff on duty outdoors must always be aware of the safety of the children in their care, be vigilant and never leave the play area for any reason unless another member of staff has taken over.

If an accident or incident should occur the staff supervisor must fill in the accident and incident book and where necessary inform the Principal.

Behaviour Management

During play children will behave in different ways; sometimes their play will be boisterous, sometimes they will play in groups; sometimes play will be solitary. Adults intervening in play should be sensitive and non-intrusive.

At St. Patrick's Primary School staff will extend the schools 'Promoting Positive Behaviour Policy' outdoors. The ethos of the schools behavioural policy is to promote positive behaviour so that successful personal, social and emotional development is encouraged. Staff may need to intervene in children's play when:

-  Children's play has become disruptive and is interfering with the activities of other children;
-  Children have a problem they cannot solve;
-  Children are at risk because equipment or materials are being abused.

At St Patrick's Primary School we believe that it is good practice to have children feed into and agree a set of rules for playtimes which are depicted clearly in the playground to remind them of their boundaries and expected behaviour.

When intervening or reinforcing rules in the playground, staff will do so in a positive manner giving children simple explanations of why their behaviour is not acceptable. (See Appendix 1)

All staff working in the playground (including teaching staff and playground supervisors) will be made aware of behaviour management systems in place during induction and through staff training opportunities.

Identified Resources/Equipment

St. Patrick's Primary School believe that the playground play environment, like other areas of the school, should be adequately resourced to encourage the development of opportunities for play. This requires financial investment into purchasing playground equipment by the school.

Outdoor storage with appropriate trolleys should be provided to ensure easy access for pupils and staff to manage. It is the responsibility of all staff to ensure that any broken or damaged equipment is removed and recorded and passed onto the designated co-ordinator.

Other equipment obtained FREE by means of parents, staff and Play Resource Outlets will be monitored and replaced accordingly.

Equal Opportunities

At St. Patrick's Primary School it is our aim that all children at the school will have access to the outdoor environment regardless of their gender, special educational needs, religion, race, home or cultural background.

Quality outdoor play opportunities will be available to children Foundation Stage, Key stage 1 and 2 and in all accessible playground areas. (See Appendix 2 for playground zoning)

Children's Involvement

At St. Patrick's Primary School we value and encourage children's participation and input about things that affect their school life. We therefore encourage children's involvement in any playground development.

We are committed to hearing the views and opinions of the children in school and will use methods such as consultations, informal discussions, and surveys within classes to enable children's views and opinions on outdoor play to be sought. We also believe that although it is crucial that playtimes are organised and managed by adults it is equally important that the children have a full understanding of any processes involved and that their opinions are taken seriously.

In order to help with the management of outdoor play St. Patrick's aims to set a system in place where Student Council will voluntarily take on the responsibility of putting out and away equipment, playing games with groups of children and feedback to the playground co-ordinator about any playtime issues. Play Equipment will be changed once a term

Pupils in Year 6/7 are encouraged to apply to become Playground Buddies. Playground Buddies receive training on how to interact with younger pupils positively to enhance play-time.

To encourage a variety of outdoor Play, a YARD SWAP will take place each Wednesday and there will also be a timetable for football-Mon/thurs -p4/5 ...tues/fri-p6/7

Monitoring and Review of Policy

The Board of Governors reviews this policy annually.
This policy was adopted by the B.O.G. on 21st November 2019.

Signed:

(Chairperson)

Date:

Signed:

(Principal)

Date: