



## **PLAY POLICY**

### **Statement of Intent**

Every child has the right to play. This is contained in Article 31 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child 1991. We want Ashton Gate Out of School (AGOSC) to be somewhere where every child can feel free and confident to explore their ideas and interests. We aim to provide a welcoming, safe and inspiring environment led by the needs and ideas of the children. AGOSC advocates playing as integral to children's enjoyment of their lives, their health and their development.

### **What is Play?**

The word play is usually used to describe the activities of children from babyhood until the early teenage years. There is no neat definition that will cover all the meanings given to parents, early years and playwork practitioners and other adult commentators – let alone how children talk about play when their opinions are invited. There are some common themes and these are as follows:

- Play includes a range of self-chosen activities, undertaken for their own interest, enjoyment and the satisfaction that results for children.
- Play supports children's emotional well being as well as a wide range of learning within their whole development.
- Children can play alone but often play with other children and with familiar adults. This then supports their social development.
- Playful activities offer freedom of choice and the opportunity to invite others to join in.
- Children's play can involve disagreements but this is an important exercise in conflict resolution.
- Children and young people of every ability, age, culture or ethnicity, social or economic background, need and want to play in whatever way they can.
- Through playing, children are creating their own culture, developing their abilities, exploring their creativity and learning about themselves, other people and the world around them.

### **Benefits of Play**

- *Extending the child's world:*

Play provides children with awareness of different cultures and of the wider world. Through play they enhance their knowledge by discovery, meeting others and visiting new places. By offering a wide range of play choices and play experiences

children interact and engage with different communities and cultures, enabling them to learn from each other and accept the people around them.

- *Enhance knowledge and skills:*

As playworkers we will act as advocates for play and offer the opportunity for children and young people to explore the wider world through trips and outings. Not only is it vital to provide children with new play experiences to build upon their knowledge and skills but also to provide the resources that build upon their interests so the play process is child centred and directed.

- *Build positive relationships:*

Play allows children to test their boundaries and learn from their actions. At AGOSC we feel that it is important that children have the opportunity to enjoy risky play in a safe and supporting environment. Through play children can build positive relationships with their peers and have the freedom to promote their own learning and resolve their own conflicts. At AGOSC we believe play to be a fundamental part of a child's development as given the correct flexible play environment and resources, children can progress but most importantly have fun.

### **The Playworkers Role**

The prime focus and essence of playwork is to support and facilitate the play process and this forms the development of AGOSC's policies, procedures, recruitment, training and strategy.

- *Play environment:*

The role of the playworker is to provide a welcoming, varied and inspiring play space that is accessible to all. The space should allow children to engage in positive play experiences.

At AGOSC the play environment will stimulate and provide opportunities for risk, challenges and the growth of confidence and self-esteem. The play environment will be a safe and healthy place where a wide range of activities will take place that will meet the developmental needs of children through play. AGOSC aims to create a varied and interesting environment that stimulates social, physical, creative and intellectual play.

The setting includes the provision of open space, music, lighting, and a range of objects and materials (loose parts) that children can select to develop their own play.

- *Training:*

AGOSC supports staff to undertake Playwork training to keep up to date with developments in playwork. Our response to children and young people playing is based on sound and current knowledge of the play process and our own reflective practice.

- *Empowerment:*

AGOSC is child centred play setting where the playworkers respect children and meet their individual needs. We will empower children by consulting with them and facilitating child-led play. Playworkers will be aware of knowing when to stand back and let the children make their own choices and discoveries thereby fostering a sense of responsibility and ownership of their surroundings and play experiences. It is important that playworkers encourage children to be sensitive to the needs of others; this ensures an atmosphere of respect and co-operation.

○ *Liaising with Families:*

All staff at AGOSC will advocate the importance of play in the local community, school and with parents/carers. Staff will also develop positive relationships through communication and consultation to meet the individual needs of the child. It is vitally important to consider family networks and developing relationships with the child's family which build trust and respect.

The setting will consult with children and parents/carers in a variety of ways on a regular basis. Consultation methods include discussions, suggestion box and child observations.

○ *Resources:*

Play resources need to vary to allow children flexibility when it comes to play. We will provide resources that make many types of play possible including:

- Construction equipment
- Dressing up
- Everyday life props
- Art and craft materials
- Gardening tools
- Cookery equipment

AGOSC will plan activities and provide resources that are based on children's interests and support individual children's needs to ensure all children enjoy themselves.

Staff in the setting recognise the importance of free play with minimal intervention whilst keeping children safe from harm.

○ *Play Companions:*

Children can benefit from a choice of play companions. Through our 'buddy' system, circle time and planned activities we encourage children of different ages, genders, abilities, religions, race and culture to play together. Children can encounter difficulties during play, at AGOSC playworkers will help to provide children with the skills to resolve conflict for themselves. We enjoy playing with the children when they invite us as we can use our knowledge of the play opportunities available to help extend their play.

*For more information on play and playwork please read the following documents:*

*7 Best Play Objectives*

*Playwork Values and Assumptions*

*Playwork Principles*

*Bristol City Council play policy 'Making Play Matter'*

*UN Convention on the Rights of the Child 1991*

*Charter for Children's Play*

*Taxonomy of Play Types (Bob Hughes)*