



Play Policy

St Bernards is committed to supporting the importance of play, both indoors and outdoors and the value of risk taking. Practitioners support children's play throughout the sessions taking into account the age, interests and individual needs of the child. We provide provision in which children can play in a safe and secure environment and adjust schedule of play activities throughout the day to meet individual needs. Transition between daily activities, where possible should not interrupt the children's play experiences and routines remain flexible. Children are always encouraged to make choices and think critically throughout independent play in a one to one, small group or larger group capacity. All play experiences should reflect the acceptance and promote understanding of diversity. Practitioners are expected to encourage children to experience spontaneous activities e.g. snowfall, rainfall.

Play opportunities are provided for all children, indoors, outdoors or off the sight during planned outings. Free play provides children with chances to explore, investigate, create, discover, rehearse, repeat and cement knowledge previously gained to help develop and promote new skills, which can be an asset now and in the future. Milestones can be achieved as play aids social, emotional and cognitive developmental milestones.

Key Workers are key to identifying any resources needed by completing regular assessments and observations to aid child's interest or stimulate areas of development.

Management and staff take an active part via, staff meetings, training both in house and outside agency training, parents and children's voice to manage the resources or design the areas of play to ensure maximum education and learning.

Play in Practice

We provide a variety of play within our setting including sand play, water play, messy play, Malleable play, physical play, role play and heuristic play. The play opportunities can be structured, spontaneous, adult led or child initiated. All the children within the setting have accessibility to all the play activities including children with learning difficulties and disabilities.

Resources and Play Opportunities

An extensive variety of resources are available within the setting to promote positive play. The practitioners are encouraged to be creative and imaginative in the use of resources, using household materials and natural items to enhance learning and play experiences. These can include leaves, twigs, cornflour, shaving foam and baby lotion.

Practitioners

Practitioners are encouraged to promote child initiated play, but have the skills to provide support and interact with children to widen their experience and knowledge where appropriate. Staff are guided by a number of skills to support quality play these are as follows:

- Using books and visual aids
- Being vocal, singing or using clapping or instruments
- Imaginative play with the children
- Invaluable social interaction, and promoting this within the setting
- Using skills to know when to enhance play with extra resources
- Different concepts introduced to promote child's interest
- Open ended questions are asked
- Children are encouraged to experience a variety of learning opportunities

Environment

At St Bernards we provide adequate space and play zones for all children to explore and play in, we have many displays, which provide stimulating visual images and are linked with resources and changed on a regular basis.

We adapt the approach to the environment by ensuring:

- The suitability of space for different experiences – small areas, large areas, cosy quiet areas, role play and imaginative play.
- Zones for mark making, construction play, messy play
- Privacy areas for children
- Sand and water area
- Resources rotated to stimulate play
- Resources accessible to children

Outdoor Play

Outdoor play is an integral part of our curriculum. It provides chances for children to develop large motor skills and play in a different environment, whilst promoting health and wellbeing.

Practitioners are guided by the following in providing opportunities for play outdoors:

- Equipment is varied for physical development, e.g. bikes, ramps, climbing resources
- Design of the outdoors allows for free access to resources
- Clothing is suitable for the weather outdoors, leading to self independence in dressing themselves
- Play zones are reflective of indoor opportunities, but on a wider scale using varied resources to work alongside materials used indoors
- Resources provided to promote learning, knowledge and understanding of the world
- Opportunities to promote and develop skills on a wider scale, den making, forest schools ideas
- Sand and water provided with reference to additional resources to enhance learning.

Risk Taking

We endeavour to create an environment where children can learn to take risks in a controlled situation. The importance of taking risks can promote learning by negotiating skills, understanding, judging and making important personal judgments regarding their capabilities. Having these skills to make their own decisions, rather than relying on others can support personal development now and in the future.

Practitioner's role in promoting safety

- Support children to develop a sense of their own boundaries and to manage personal risks
- Important discussion on how to keep safe
- Establish and encourage expectations of behaviour
- Observe and identify children who may need additional support in areas or need challenging further
- Verbalise with children and support decisions
- Carry out all safety checks
- Distinguish between acceptable and unacceptable risks and remove any hazards
- Training may be requested or advised for practitioners to enhance risk play

Food Play

As we appreciate learning experiences are provided through the exploration of different textures, one of the many valuable resources we include in daily activities will be a number of varying food types. The experiences we offer can include food tasting, creative activities using a number of fruit and vegetables, activities incorporating children preparing and eating different food types and self independence when self serving their meals.

Practitioners have the ability to add certain foods to enhance play zones and other resources to provide a stimulating and educational activity. The alteration of some foods by adding colour or presenting them in different objects can enhance a child's learning experience. The most common of foods include jelly, pasta, dried pulses and rice and cooked spaghetti.

The inclusion of every day foods are evident in the role-play areas to enrich learning opportunities, they may include:

- Fruits
- Vegetables
- Dried pasta
- Bread
- Cereals

Practitioners must be vigilant in the supervision of areas where food products are used, and no foods are to be used where choking or allergies can cause harm to any child. Food products must be suitable for the age group who come into contact with the resources and all defective products removed and disposed off where necessary e.g. food put in mouths, dropped on floor, become unsuitable to use due to over use. Risk assessments are completed for the use of these resources.

