



## **Statham Play Policy** **Every Individual Child Achieves**

### **1. Commitment**

**Article 31 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child states that ‘A child has the right to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts.’**

Statham Primary School recognises that play is an essential part of a happy and healthy childhood. As a school, we provide consistently high quality, sustainable play opportunities for all children. These inclusive opportunities in play are achieved by offering carefully considered outdoor spaces, equipment and toys that offer a rich choice of accessible play experiences for every child. At Statham we are committed to using our school vision and this play policy to guide our planning and actions in providing play opportunities for children. We believe play has a vital role in children’s health, happiness and wellbeing. It creates children who are independent, confident, imaginative, adaptable, social and able to assess risks.

### **2. Rationale**

Children spend up to 20% or 1.4 years of their time in school at play. Therefore, this time needs to be coherent and planned for. Changes in society such as heavier traffic, busier lifestyles, fewer areas for play and awareness of risk have led to ‘play deprivation’ for many of today’s children. This makes their play opportunities at school even more vital.

Better quality play leads to happier children and happier staff. With better quality play opportunities there are fewer behaviour problems, a more positive attitude to school and improved skills development and learning. As the children improve their quality of play and have more enriching play times, there are fewer accidents and classroom learning is enhanced as the children come in from play happy and ready to learn.

Play is recognised for the important contribution it makes to education and lifelong learning; a finding confirmed by many studies of early childhood. Research shows that play can enhance problem solving; it is also widely regarded as providing opportunities for social interaction and language development which is vital for all our children and in particular for EAL learners and those children with deprived speech and language. The contribution of play to educational development is suggested through the inherent value of different play types e.g. through risk taking and exploratory play in formal and informal settings, allowing children to experiment, try new things and push their boundaries in a safe environment.

### **3. Definition of Play**

The Government's Play Strategy defines play as:

*'encompassing children's behaviour which is freely chosen, personally directed and intrinsically motivated. It is performed for no external goal or reward and is a fundamental and integral part of healthy development – not only for individual children but also for the society in which they live'.*

This activity meets the four components of a child's development:

- Physical (direct impact on physical development, co-ordination and fitness);
- Intellectual (cognitive development, imagination);
- Educational (the knowledge and understanding of academic outcomes); and
- Social (the development of values, beliefs and self-perception and the parallel communication skills, leadership and teamwork this enhances).

#### **At Statham the children and staff think that:**

- play allows children to be creative and co-operative
- adults' roles in great play is to be responsive to children's invitations and requests, and to carry out dynamic risk assessments to weigh up the risk and benefits of play activities and develop the children's risk awareness.
- play may be solitary or social
- play invites investigation and exploration which may test boundaries
- play makes children happy and happy children are healthier children who in turn can learn better
- children have a right to play with anything they choose from the playground resources and as long as it is safe regardless of age, gender, social or cultural background
- play is something you choose to do and that it is fun!
- enables children to process their experiences of the world

- Play is enjoyable

At Statham we expect to see children climbing trees, digging in sand and mud, taking part in rough and tumble play.

#### **4. Risk and Benefit**

Many research studies have found that the social, physical and mental benefits to children of managed risks are vast. Children become more resilient, adaptable and are keen to try new experiences. Children should be provided with opportunities to challenge themselves and also to experience successes and failures. Risk and challenge is not limited to physical risk – it includes the uncertainties involved in making new friends, playing with children from different backgrounds and building emotional resilience through trying out new experiences with the possibility of failure.

*'Without opportunities to take acceptable levels of risk, children's development is inhibited, undermining their capability to deal with the wider unsupervised world'.  
(DCFS)*

At Statham we are committed to providing these experiences for our children in a managed way. The Health and Safety Executive offer guidance on the provision of play in educational settings and state that:

**'HSE fully supports the provision of play for all children in a variety of environments. HSE understands and accepts that this means children will often be exposed to play environments which, whilst well managed, carry a degree of risk and sometimes potential dangers'. (HSE, 2013)**

Statham Primary School will use the Health and Safety Executive's guidance on Managing Risk in Play and Leisure ([www.hse.gov.uk](http://www.hse.gov.uk)) as its principle guiding documents in making decisions relating to risk and play.

Our role as play providers is to facilitate the maximum amount of enriching opportunities for children to encounter. They need to learn to manage risk for themselves in an environment that is as safe as it needs to be, rather than completely devoid of risk. The benefit to children of challenging play opportunities should be balanced with any potential risk when carrying out risk assessments. We will adopt a risk-benefit approach and use dynamic risk assessments to manage our duty of care to protect and provide for children's needs.

## **5. Adults' Role in Play**

**We, as an entire staff, are fully committed to working with children to provide the play experiences that they want and need in their school. We will have a continuing dialogue with children about the play provision in the playground which will include regular play assemblies, School Council involvement, surveys and other pupil voice outlets.**

Adult's role will also be to facilitate play and encourage children to assess the risks and benefits of activities within the play setting. The school are working with OPAL ([www.outdoorplayandlearning.org.uk](http://www.outdoorplayandlearning.org.uk)) to help guide a strategic approach to developing play. In addition to this the Statham Play Team will work in collaboration with parents, teachers, teaching assistants and all other staff as well as the children to implement the changes highlighted in this policy. Teaching assistants will take on the role of Play Makers. They will ensure that the broadest possible range of play opportunities are available to children: to observe, reflect and analyse the play that is happening and select a mode of intervention or make a change to the play space if needed. Play Makers ensure that the play space is inclusive – supporting all children to make the most of the opportunities available in their own way.

Our OPAL working group meets termly to discuss ongoing improvement and evaluation of practices and practicalities of playtimes. Additionally our Play Team (Teaching Assistants) meet termly to discuss practice and resourcing to continually develop play.

## **6. Children's Role in Play**

The children will all have access to their own version of the play policy. In it will also include the rights and responsibilities of the children to

- Have ownership of their play and outdoor learning experiences
- Respect and look after each other their environment, equipment and toys.
- To be aware of sanctions surrounding purposely dangerous or unsafe behaviour
- Ensure that playtimes are fun for everybody

This children's policy will be shared and explained to all children regularly as part of ongoing assemblies, discussions and dialogue in class and with School Council

### **Taking Turns**

The task of waiting for "a turn" or for an adult's attention is geared to each child's maturity. A very young or immature child may need one-to-one adult company while waiting for a turn, e.g., to speak to an adult or waiting for their turn on a bike. Board games with just 2 players, then 4, then 6, help children to gradually be able to

wait longer for a turn or passing the items around a very small, then a bigger group. Sand-timers make the passage of time visible and make waiting easier for young children to understand.

### **Sharing**

Children who are used to owning all their toys at home can find it hard to understand that resources at school are to be shared. Equipment and games which are more fun with two or more children, e.g., see-saw, picture lotto, domestic play, help children to appreciate the advantages as well as disadvantages of sharing.

### **Politeness**

Some children already use words, such as “please”, “thank-you” and “excuse me”, before they arrive at school but others need guidance and the example of adults to learn to use these phrases routinely and regularly. Children may need to learn to share and not to take more than their share but this may need an adult to help develop such social skills.

### **Handling conflict**

Children can learn techniques for handling conflicts. They need help to recognise the source of the conflict initially. It is important for adults not to make value judgements about the situation but to help both sides to see the situation from someone else’s viewpoint. They may need help to recognise that there is nothing wrong with what either of them wants to do but they have different ideas.

Once they have been helped to see the nature of the problem, children will often be willing to become involved in looking for a solution. If they cannot suggest a way out themselves, the adult may suggest alternatives and help them to make a decision and then gradually withdraw.

It is also important for children to realise the effect their behaviour can have on others. The adult can support this by helping the child to name their feelings and helping the child to express them, making a connection verbally between the event and the feeling,

A solution to a problem which children can reach together will be much easier for them to accept than one imposed from outside by an adult. It also provides a useful message that conflicts can be resolved without quarrels and fights if they are tackled together.

### **Rough and tumble play and fantasy play**

Young children often engage in play that has aggressive themes – such as superhero and weapon play. Some children appear pre-occupied with these themes but their behaviour is not necessarily a precursor to hurtful play or bullying, although it may be inconsiderate at times and may need addressing.

The role of staff in supporting such play is:

To develop strategies to contain play that are agreed with the children and

understood by them, with acceptable boundaries to ensure children are not hurt

To recognise that fantasy play also contains many violent dramatic strategies (blowing up, shooting, etc.) and that themes often refer to 'goodies' and 'baddies'; as such, these offer opportunities for us to explore concepts of right and wrong

To be able to tune in to the content of the play, perhaps to suggest alternative strategies for heroes and heroines, making the most of 'teachable moments' to encourage empathy and lateral thinking to explore alternative scenarios and strategies for conflict resolution

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## **7. Environment**

At Statham we will:

- use the outdoor space as a natural resource for learning and playing, encouraging the children to value natural or found objects for play
- include the children when planning for playing and learning outdoors
- ensure that the outdoor area offers all children the opportunity to investigate, take risks and explore and use their imagination and creativity
- expect the children to respect the outdoor environment and care for living things
- give children the opportunity to manage the space and freedom afforded by the outdoors
- enrich the quality of the environment to maximise variety of play types and increase play value
- ensure that the playground be an integrated area where all children from Reception to Year 6 can play safely.
- Teach the children their responsibilities with regard to maintaining the quality of their outdoor space, and the equipment available and ensure they take an active part in doing this.
- Promote children's pride for the outdoor space that belongs to them.