



ST JOSEPH'S RC PRIMARY SCHOOL, RAMSBOTTOM

Play Policy

"All your children shall be taught by the Lord, and great shall be the peace of your children."
Isaiah 54:13

Mission Statement

Our school is proud to be part of the Roman Catholic Church in the parish of St Joseph's. Our mission is to serve God, uphold the worth and dignity of every person and enable them to develop their talents. Everything we do is rooted in the values of the Gospel, as we seek to deepen faith, strengthen hope and grow in love in a respectful, safe and happy environment.

Our Play Vision (Intent)

At St Joseph's we aim to create a welcoming, caring environment where relationships are based on the gospel values of Love, Faith and Hope to develop positive self-esteem in each child. The opportunity to build good relationships through play at break times and lunchtimes is fundamental to each child's happiness, well-being and successful learning. All staff are committed to maintaining high expectations of play as an essential contribution to the educational experience at St Joseph's.

We recognise that play is an essential part of a happy and healthy childhood. As a school, we endeavour to 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 St. Joseph's we are committed to using our school vision and this play policy to guide our planning and actions in providing play opportunities for children.

1. Commitment

Our school undertakes to refer to this play policy in all decisions which affect children's play. Our school is committed to providing the strategic and operational leadership needed to provide and maintain quality play provision for all of our children.

2. Rationale

Our school believes that all children need opportunities to play which allow them to explore, manipulate, experience and affect their environment. The school acknowledges the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and supports the child's right to play. We believe play provision should be welcoming and accessible to every child, irrespective of gender, sexual orientation, economic or social circumstances, ethnic or cultural background or origin, or individual need.

3. Definition and Value of Play

Play is defined as any freely chosen activity which a child finds satisfying and creative. It may or may not involve equipment or other people. We believe play has many benefits, including:

- Being critical to children's health and wellbeing, and essential for their physical, emotional, social, spiritual and intellectual development.
- Helping children to explore the physical and social environment, different concepts and different ideas.
- Play enhances children's self-esteem and their understanding of others through freely chosen social interactions, within peer groups, with individuals, and within groups of different ages, abilities, interests, genders, ethnicities and cultures.
- Play requires ongoing communication and negotiation skills, enabling children to develop a balance between their right to act freely and their responsibilities to others.
- Play enables children to experience a wide range of emotions and develop their ability to cope with these, including sadness and happiness, rejection and acceptance, frustration and achievement, boredom and fascination, fear and confidence.
- Play encourages self-confidence and the ability to make choices, problem solve and to be creative.
- Play maintains children's openness to learning, develops their capabilities and allows them to push the boundaries of what they can achieve.

4. Aims

In relation to play our school aims to:

- ensure play settings provide a varied, challenging and stimulating environment.
- allow children to take risks and use a common-sense approach to the management of these risks and their benefits.
- provide opportunities for children to develop their relationships with each other.
- enable children to develop respect for their surroundings and each other.
- aid children's physical, emotional, social, spiritual and intellectual development.
- provide a range of environments which will encourage children to explore and play imaginatively.
- provide a range of environments which will support children's learning across the curriculum and learning about the world around them.
- promote independence and teamwork within children.
- build emotional and physical resilience.

5. Rights

Our school recognises the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child which includes the right to play, recreation and leisure (Article 31) and the right of children to be listened to on matters important to them (Article 12). We acknowledge that we have a duty to take these rights seriously and listen to children's views on their play. Our Play Leaders and The School Council act as an additional voice for all children to share their views on play.

6. Staff Role in Play

As staff, our core function is to create an environment which will stimulate children's play and maximise their opportunities for a wide range of play experiences. Staff will work together to enrich play experiences both in terms of the design and resources of the physical environment and in terms of the attitudes and culture fostered within the play setting. The staff are also available to participate in the play if invited.

7. Environment

We believe that a rich play setting should ensure that all children have access to stimulating environments that are free from unacceptable/unnecessary risks and thereby offer children the opportunity to explore for themselves through their freely chosen play. With the introduction of our Play Zones, and additional areas of play, children can choose their own play environments.

Our Play Practice (Implementation)

Our Pupil Play Leaders worked together to create our Play Charter, which we will use alongside this Play Policy.

At St Joseph's, everybody has the right to have a fun playtime and everybody has a responsibility to make sure that others have a fun playtime too.

We can do this by:

- Choosing which zone we would like to play in
- Looking after the play equipment by using it sensibly and keeping equipment in the correct zone.
- Respecting and listening to each other, play leaders and staff.
- Treating others how we would like to be treated
- Helping and supporting other children
- Tidying up resources and looking after our school environment

We all want to have lots of fun and create lots of happy memories.

This Play Charter will be reviewed regularly and updated.

Our Play Outcomes (Impact)

We believe play has a vital role in children's health, happiness and wellbeing. At St Joseph's we will provide opportunities for our children to become independent, confident, imaginative, adaptable, social and able to assess risks whilst creating childhood memories through play.

REVIEW

This policy will be reviewed in accordance with the School Development Plan.

July 2026