

Inclusive Play Policy

At Heath Barn Preschool, we fully support the importance of play for all children and this is an integral part of our ethos. The need to play is recognised as a right of all children and as such Article 31 of the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child that sets out that right to play. Article 31 looks to improve opportunities for children, campaign for action on play, challenge discrimination and inequality, promote children's participation and raise awareness on children's rights.

A Definition of Play

The Children's Play Council defines play in the following way:

- Play is an essential part of every child's life and is vital for their development. It is the way children explore the world around them and develop and practise skills. It is essential for physical, emotional and spiritual growth, for intellectual and educational development and for acquiring social and behavioural skills.
- Play is a generic term applied to a wide range of activities and behaviours that are satisfying to the child, creative for the child and freely chosen by the child. Children's play may or may not involve equipment or have an end product. Children play on their own and with others. Their play may be boisterous and energetic or quiet and contemplative, light-hearted or very serious.

The Benefits of Play

- Through play and interaction with others children can develop a framework for their own attitudes and behaviour.
- Through play children can explore their world, learn about it and discover their own place in it.
- Play provides children with the opportunity to develop confidence, a positive sense of self and that they are valued for who they are now.
- Play provides children with the opportunity to explore, to express themselves and learn through the investigation of their environment.

All children need a place to play – they need space, informality, freedom to move around, to make a noise, to experiment and investigate, to be themselves.

Inclusion

Inclusion works on the belief that all children have a right to be part of their local community and to be welcomed and included on equal terms.

Children with additional needs also benefit from freedom to move around in surroundings that stimulate their imagination and challenge them. They require positive play opportunities that lead to an increase in self-confidence, autonomy and independence. Practitioners must work towards meeting these needs for all the children in their settings. For some children, practitioners may have to adjust the provision to ensure the needs are met, but the needs of children themselves remain the same.

Bedfordshire's Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership has a strategy for the development of provision for children with additional needs. The Partnership is committed to

promoting inclusive play wherever possible and recognises the importance of Government Social Inclusion initiatives which aim to increase access and attendance for all children.

To ensure inclusive play is successful, children, parents and carers, and practitioners must come together to meet individual children's needs. A setting aiming for an inclusive approach will be drawing on all available resources to create an environment within which each child can progress to their full potential. An inclusive approach to play is not just a matter of making adjustments. If it is to be genuine it will impact on all aspects.

Practitioners must ensure that all children will experience an environment in which they have equality of opportunity for play. Children need to be presented with positive images that they all have a valuable contribution to make. When children attend an inclusive setting they are provided with the opportunity to share skills and learn from each other, thus promoting tolerance and understanding.