



Policy statement

All children and young people need to play; the impulse to play is innate. Play is a biological, psychological and social necessity, and is fundamental to the healthy development and well being of individuals and communities.

Aim

We feel play is a process that is freely chosen, personally directed and intrinsically motivated. That is, children and young people determine and control the content and intent of their play, by following their own instincts, ideas and interests, in their own way for their own reasons. The prime focus and essence of play is to support and facilitate play.

At Chavey Down Pre-School we believe that children should be allowed to freely explore and make sense of the world, experiment, and express themselves without fear of judgement.

Methods

The role of the key person is to support all children to experience play physically and emotionally.

Children may play alone or with others.

In their play children use the experiences they have and extend them to build up ideas, concepts and skills.

While playing children can express fears and re-live anxious experiences. They can try things out, solve problems and be creative and can take risks and use trial and error to find things out. (4.1 EYFS Play Principles)

The key persons response to children playing is based on a sound up to date knowledge of the play process, and reflective practice.

Key persons choose an intervention style that enables children to extend their play.

Key persons recognise that children need to put their own creative style and ideas into their creations such as cooking, arts, crafts and physically.

We recognise that children are the experts in their own play. Children will be involved in activities so that the curriculum reflects their opinions and interests, and to support us in providing a curriculum that reflects all children's type of play.

The environment we provide will have flexibility and adaptability and be controlled by the children. We will pay attention to and support the variety of feelings and moods that children bring with them to the setting or have during play.

Activities will be carefully planned to allow children to build on their natural curiosity, advance their thinking and use their imagination.

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Children will be able to access equipment independently, or where this is not possible, to make requests for equipment.

Children are not required to be occupied at all times.

Children will be given notice when their play must come to an end. If a play request is refused an explanation will be given.

Staff will observe and reflect on children's play and a record of activities and play opportunities will be kept and evaluated to ensure that the setting is meeting the play needs of all children.

Outdoor Play

Any outdoor play will take place in appropriately supervised spaces. Before any outdoor activities commence, safety checks are carried out.

Children will be offered access to outdoor play every day, so that they can have opportunities to experience the changing seasons, vegetation, terrains, and weather, and use this flexible environment in their play. The outside environment can provide access to natural materials, such as twigs, leaves, water etc. And so, provide a varied range of **“loose part”** resources, (Nicholson 1971), which support creativity, inventiveness and discovery.

(In severe weather conditions, the staff will risk access the outside environment, by comparing the benefits of playing outside in severe weather with the likelihood and severity of injury, e.g. playing in snow, and use this information when making decisions as to whether activity takes place).

“Enriched natural environments, strong social networks and enjoyment create the best opportunity for play and physical health” (Burdette and Whittaker 2005).

We believe that if children have a lack of contact with the natural outside environment, then there is a possibility that this will result in children having a lack of affiliation with nature.

Loose Parts

Within Chavey Down Pre-School setting we offer a loose part area inside the main hall where children can use rough, unusual objects, movable objects which allows sessions to become a new experience. With Loose Parts, children can create their own narratives and games; build something and tear it down; or simply play to enjoy shapes and textures. Chavey Down provide a setting which children can direct their own play. Staff allow play activity to evolve by maintaining a safe and secure environment, and by renewing and varying the supply of Loose Parts. Our job is to ensure a diverse, creative play space.

Equipment

The pre-school will provide a wide range of resources and equipment in order to provide a range of play opportunities and activities and enhance children's play experience.

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Resources will positively reflect the diverse communities that we live in, and where appropriate, will portray people from a variety of family groupings and cultural backgrounds in a range of non-stereotypical roles.

An inventory record will be kept and used to monitor gaps in equipment and resources.

Challenging/Risky Play

Children often crave risk when playing; they want challenge and excitement in their play, and they learn from it. They need to experience challenging play in order to develop important life skills and to better manage risk and challenge in their daily lives, building self-confidence, self esteem and resilience to health, both emotionally and physically, as “overcoming challenging situations is an essential part of living a meaningful and satisfying life”. (Gill, T. 2008 p16).

“Children should be protected from any activities that could harm their development”. (Unicef 1991). We believe that children need to feel safe, and we have a legal duty to ensure this. We believe it is better to teach children a form of risk assessment rather than risk avoidance. Nobody wants children to get hurt but bumps and scrapes are all part of growing up, the learning and experience that comes with them is very important.

We are aware that parents will have concerns about their child’s safety. We will consult with children and staff about the activities we offer, and the benefits of taking part in any activity will be measured against the severity and likelihood of risk and injury, and decisions about whether the activity should take place will be based on this. Risk benefit forms will be completed for activities to record this.

The Health and Safety Executive supports Play Safety Forum’s recent “Managing Risk in Play Provision” 2002 document, which makes clear that “safety must be considered.....but that, inevitably, there will be risk of injury in life generally”. “The important message is though that there must be freedom from unacceptable risk of life-threatening or permanently disabling injury in play”.

We will empower the children in assessing risk for themselves by:

- Introducing children to new equipment/activities. Discuss how they can be used safely, and what might happen if used inappropriately.
- Consult with children and set boundaries for behaviour and refer to these often. Discuss what the risks might be if there were no ground rules, e.g. no running with scissors – higher risk of tripping and becoming injured.
- Talk about how it feels to be bullied and who they can talk to about it.
- Before starting or introducing a new activity consult with the children on how this can be managed/how we should behave.
- Discuss what went well/what didn’t work with children after an activity.
- Discuss accidents/injuries that have happened and consult with the children on why they think this has happened, and how it can be minimised in the future.
- Consulting with them about the benefits of a particular activity, and the risks this might impose, (with regards to child’s level of understanding), and involving them in the decision-making process.

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- Observe and assess risks in children's play, to decide if whether there is a need to intervene and how to support the children's problem-solving processes.
- Discuss with children and support them in their ideas about the potential risks of visits and visitors.
- Share ideas with the children about how they can keep safe when playing away from adults, e.g. being with other children.

Staff at Chavey Down Pre-School are aware of the types of risk that children might experience during their play, they are: Physical, Emotional, Behavioural and Environmental.

We recognise that every child is unique, and that what one child might consider a challenge, another might consider too easy. Our staff appreciate that individual children need and want to access different levels of risk. We will not force children to do anything which they are not confident to do for themselves, or to go further than they feel safe. We will always be vigilant and will support children in their play.

Examples of some of the challenging play opportunities that we offer are:

- Tree Climbing
- Walking on Walls
- Role Play
- Rough and tumble
- Using woodwork tools
- Playing in dark areas (tents)

We believe that the likely outcomes of children not being able to risk assess for themselves will be that children will have more accidents, as they will not understand the dangers and their own limitations.

Messy Play

We do encourage children to get messy as we find they learn through using various senses to explore, were possible we encourage them to wear aprons, but we cannot force a child to do so. We offer a uniform which consists of a red t-shirt that can be purchased and prevents their best clothes getting too messy, and the children feel part of the pre-school.

This policy was adopted by: Kate Sillett

Date: 18th August 2025

Date to be reviewed: 18th August 2026

Signed on behalf of the Provider: 

Name of Signatory: Kate Sillett

Role of Signatory: Director

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