

# **PLAY**

## **Policy**

The Board of Management (BOM) supports every child's basic human right to play. It recognises that play fosters children's social, emotional and physical development and acknowledges that imaginative and active play has many benefits. Play can keep children healthy, aid learning, enhance social interaction and have a therapeutic effect. In order that pupils' play needs are met, the BOM will assure the provision of a quality, age-appropriate and safe play environment that is attractive, inclusive and accessible to all children in the school.

## **Procedures**

### **1 Responsibilities**

#### **1.1 BOM**

It is the responsibility of the BOM to ensure that the play policy is upheld and that the policy and procedures are kept up-to-date. It will allocate sufficient resources for these purposes.

#### **1.2 Principal**

The Principal is responsible for ensuring that the play procedures are implemented.

#### **1.3 Other employees**

Supervisory staff are responsible for the safety of play activities and for guarding against exclusion or bullying behaviour. In doing so, they must follow agreed health and safety and behaviour policies and procedures. They are responsible for supervising children's play and, where necessary, will pay special attention to children with special needs.

#### **1.4 Parents and guardians**

Parents and guardians must inform the school of any special needs and/or cultural issues that their children may have in relation to play.

## **1.5 Pupils**

Pupils have a right to enjoy the full range of available play facilities and settings. Where appropriate, they will be able to choose freely which activities to engage in. They are requested to respect their play environment and those they share it with. They will be advised of any relevant health and safety and behaviour policy and procedures and are required to comply with the staff in implementing these.

## **2 Play settings**

### **2.1 Structured play for infants**

Junior and senior infant classes will have a period of structured play each day, usually each morning on arrival.

### **2.2 Toy day**

In order to promote social and emotional development, each Friday is designated as 'toy day' throughout the school. Pupils may bring from home one toy with which they are allowed to play at a time designated by their teacher and at their second break. The focus is on toys that encourage sharing. Electronic toys and toys that promote aggressive and/or unsafe behaviour may not be brought in.

### **2.3 Indoor play at break times**

Break times are stipulated by the Department of Education and Skills. Children eat their lunch inside at the start or end of break times. Children only remain inside if the duty teacher decides that it would be unsafe to let them outside (for example, due to heavy rain, snow or frost). If this is the case, children are required to remain seated in their classrooms and engage in quiet activities, such as reading or drawing.

### **2.4 Outdoor play at break times**

The outdoor play environment has been designed to be as safe, green and appealing as possible and to require minimal maintenance. Junior and senior infants and first class pupils play in a separate yard to the older classes, although the yards are not fenced off. The junior yard contains a play house, play mounds, benches and painted yard games. The senior yard contains play mounds, benches, painted yard games and a basketball court. A 'buddy bench' is also provided for children who are looking for someone to play with them. Furthermore, there is a wildlife garden, for occasional play use by supervised groups of children only. Playground rules are in place to which all pupils must adhere.

All classes that use the senior yard have a box of play equipment (containing items such as skipping ropes, balls and giant versions of board games) which is brought out at the second break. Children play on their own and in groups; with or without the available play facilities and equipment. Chasing games and imaginative play are common. Play fighting, climbing and other unsafe games are not allowed. Basketball shooting is restricted to the basket nearest the staff room.

Children will be reminded at all times of the need to be respectful of:

- the environment (for example, no littering, no trampling on plants, etc)
- their peers (for example, including others into their games, discussing rules of the game, etc)
- the staff (for example, obeying rules for play time, walking quietly in line back to classrooms, etc).

## **2.5 Excursions**

There may be opportunities to include play during any school excursions that are held.

## **2.6 Play as a reward**

Where appropriate, teachers will offer pupils extra play as an individual or class reward (for example, through 'golden time' or additional yard time).

## **3 Review**

The whole play environment will be monitored and improved on an ongoing basis. In doing so, it is important that the views of staff, children and their parents/guardians are taken into consideration. If necessary, this policy and these procedures will be amended as a result of changed circumstances, and shall in any case undergo full review in 2015.

Approved by the BOM on 29 May 2012