

MARKETHILL PRIMARY SCHOOL



Tomorrow's Success Begins Today... 

BREAK AND LUNCHTIME OUTDOOR PLAY POLICY



Break and Lunchtime Outdoor Play Policy

At Markethill Primary School, we aim to enhance the quality of outdoor free play opportunities at school through:

- Supporting outdoor play
- Establishing and maintaining a high profile for free play
- Relating play issues directly to the school's values and ethos
- Ensuring that decision making at all levels within the school includes consideration of those decisions that impact on children's opportunities to play
- Applying this Break and Lunchtime Outdoor Play Policy consistently

Furthermore, to ensure that play is a priority for all those associated with the school including pupils, parents, teachers and governors we will:

- Appoint a member of staff to oversee the development of outdoor play opportunities, lead improvement work and monitor progress, currently this is Mrs G Allen.
- Involve children, staff (including teaching, classroom assistants and supervisory staff) and parents in play development work
- Use the school prospectus to promote our play policy
- Keep the whole school community informed of play issues
- Undertake relevant play and risk management training where possible

Our Play Values

- We recognise the child's right to play.
- We value the opportunity for Play and recognise the many benefits it offers children.
- We value the play environments available within our school and will strive to ensure that they are maintained and accessible to all our pupils.
- We accept and value the concept of providing risk and challenge in play provision as set forth in the 'Managing Risk in Play Provision Implementation Guide'. This includes the need to incorporate 'risk benefit' assessments into our play provision.
- We value the role of our staff in providing the best play opportunities we can for our pupils. (This incorporates our recognition of the need for the adults to implement behaviour management guidelines when required).

Our Understanding of Play.

Outdoor play is essential for all aspects of a child's development. It can provide children with experiences which enable them to develop intellectually, emotionally, socially and physically. It also provides a rich context for the development of children's language, imagination; creative thinking and can encourage positive attitudes towards a healthy lifestyle.

Play should be seen as an integral part of children's education – it is a natural and enjoyable way for children to learn. In Markethill Primary School, the aim of both indoor and outdoor play is to provide a stimulating environment for children's learning in all areas of the curriculum and for all key stages.

We believe that the provision and planning for outdoor play must reflect the diversity and richness of the experience and developing interests of the children.

“Some opportunities for learning can only happen outside. The experience of a change in the weather, finding a colony of ants under a big stone, making a large-scale construction with huge cardboard cartons or painting on great big strips of wallpaper – all of these motivate children in mental and physical engagement “.

Marjorie Ouvry, the National Early Years Network 2000

At Markethill Primary School we believe that the school playgrounds and outdoor space should be viewed as an essential medium for learning that can extend the learning that takes place indoors.

“Outdoors should provide opportunities for children to engage in planned and freely chosen play experiences and should offer risk, challenge, variety and fun”.

Learning through Landscapes.

At our school we have taken into account the change in children’s play culture out side of school hours. In particular, the significant decline in outdoor play, which has led to concerns about children’s health and well being. With this in mind it is our intention to enhance all our pupils’ development by providing outdoor play experiences in varied and challenging ways.

Managing Risk and Play

Legal requirements

When it comes to play projects the agreed European standards may not be relevant. However, given that the Play Safety Forum, the Health and Safety Executive UK and the Health and Safety Executive N.I. and many other governing bodies endorse the risk-benefit approach as a suitable model for managing risk it should be considered by practitioners as the way forward in safeguarding themselves and children.

Children need and want to take challenges and risks when they play. Our play provision aims to respond to these needs and wishes by offering children stimulating, challenging environments for exploring and developing their abilities. In doing this, we aim to manage the level of risk, so that children are not exposed to unacceptable risks of death or serious injury.

“Through play children are able to learn about risks and use their own initiative. Skills learnt through play and other activities can act as a powerful form of prevention in other situations where children and young people are at risk.”

Robin Sutcliffe (Play Safety Forum) 2009

Risk Management in play provision involves balancing risks and benefits in a strategic way. Since the reason for providing play opportunities is their benefit to children, the starting point – and most important consideration- for risk assessment and decision making should be an understanding of the benefits that the provision offers.

Some of the benefits of risky play:

- Places to play
- Space to meet and hang out
- Space to have fun
- A chance to encounter nature

- A place to make friends
- Encourage physical activity
- Learn how to manage risks
- Develop a sense of one's abilities
- Cater for the adventurous

We at Markethill Primary School believe that we should not prevent children from doing things that they enjoy because of risks. We strive to strike a balance between risk and fun, and therefore offer challenging play opportunities in a safe environment. We believe that if we restricted 'challenging' play opportunities children's enjoyment outdoors would be limited.

Risk – Benefit Assessment

It is our intention to adapt the 'risk - benefit assessment' tool recommended by Managing Risk in Play Provision – Implementation Guide (Play England).

“The descriptive approach taken in this guide, called ‘risk-benefit assessment’, recognises that providers can make sound judgements about many of the risks and benefits relating to play provision but that they need to record their considerations and evidence base systematically. It is in legal terms a ‘suitable and sufficient’ risk assessment in the context of children’s play, since it is a reasonable approach to the task of balancing risks against benefits.”

Managing Risk in Play Provision – Implementation Guide (National Children's Bureau) for Play England 2013

Valued Space/ Environment

In recognition of the benefits of outdoor play, Markethill Primary School is committed to the continuous development of children's playtimes. This will be achieved by ensuring that the outdoor space is utilised to its full potential by reviewing restrictions and pupil's accessibility to all appropriate areas.

Markethill Primary School values outdoor play and its outdoor play space. Therefore, we are committed to providing an attractive play space with adequate resources to allow for quality free play opportunities (such as loose parts, seating areas, quiet areas, activities and games etc). All playground equipment and resources will be safely stored and accessible for staff and children.

In valuing outdoor play we aim to ensure that all children have adequate time for free play opportunities throughout the school day (break and lunch time).

The Role of the Adult

To ensure balance and breadth of provision, adults need to have a clear understanding of their role in relation to the children's playtimes.

Markethill Primary School aims to create an outdoor environment where adults will be actively involved with children in their games and activities (where appropriate) and should not be solely in a supervisory / 'policing' role.

We believe that adults should be:

- Talking and interacting with children in a positive way
- Joining in games and activities when invited by children

- Initiating games and activities
- Extending children's play by making extra resources available
- Enabling children to use resources in different ways
- Observing at all times
- Be aware of safety issues
- Allow flexibility in planned activities
- Assess resources throughout playtimes and remove where necessary
- Remind children of rules and restrictions in a positive manner

In order to facilitate the above, we believe that all playground staff need to be provided with suitable and sufficient training. Markethill Primary School is committed to ensuring that playground staff are offered appropriate training opportunities relevant to their needs. All staff availed of training from Playboard NI on 28 February 2022.

By adhering to the guidelines above and participating in relevant training, adults can make positive contributions to children's play; working in conjunction with the school's quality play ethos.

Who is Responsible?

Mrs Allen is the designated staff member for the positive playground initiative, whose main role is to co-ordinate the management of playtimes. However, this **does not** mean in isolation, the management of the playground is a collective responsibility with all teaching staff, classroom assistants and supervisory staff involved. The designated staff member is responsible for putting systems in place, with assistance, to support and guide playground staff in ensuring that quality play opportunities are provided.

Dedicated time is set aside for planning for the playground to ensure the outdoor area is well laid out and provides for:

- Challenging and exciting play
- Quiet and reflective play
- Fast physical play
- Opportunities for large scale experiences (den building/construction)
- Natural area (exploration, digging etc)
- Imaginary play (resources to be available)
- Co-operative play

The above list is not exhaustive and may be extended as play development evolves.

It is the responsibility of the designated co-ordinator to communicate all aspects of the running of playtimes with clear guidelines to all relevant staff and pupils. This will include depicting rotas, hosting meetings, conducting informal staff discussions and liaising with children through class discussions and/or the school council and/or school assemblies. Time will be allocated to facilitate the co-ordinator to complete the above.

As with all good practice the health and safety of children involved in outdoor play is paramount. The designated co-ordinator will ensure the appropriate risk – benefit assessments are in place for all outdoor play activities.

Additionally, monitoring and evaluating through observation and feedback from playground staff will be a continuum.

Health & Safety in the Playground

Staff on duty outdoors must always be aware of the safety of the children in their care, be vigilant and never leave the play area for any reason unless another member of staff has taken over.

If an accident or incident should occur the staff supervisor must fill in the accident and incident book and where necessary, inform the designated coordinator.

Behaviour Management

During play, children will behave in different ways; sometimes their play will be boisterous, sometimes they will play in groups, sometimes play will be solitary. Adults intervening in play should be sensitive and non- intrusive.

At Markethill Primary School, staff will extend the schools 'Positive Behaviour Policy' outdoors. The ethos of the school's behavioural policy is to promote positive behaviour so that successful personal, social and emotional development is encouraged.

Staff may need to intervene in children's play when:

- Children's play has become disruptive and is interfering with the activities of other children
- Children have a problem they cannot solve
- Children are at risk because equipment or materials are being abused

At Markethill Primary School, we believe that it is good practice to have children feed into and agree a set of rules for playtimes which are depicted clearly in the playground to remind them of their boundaries and expected behaviour.

When intervening or reinforcing rules in the playground, staff will do so in a positive manner giving children simple explanations of why their behaviour is not acceptable.

Should a child fail to comply with adult intervention in relation to a behavioural issue the adult should if necessary refer the matter to the playground coordinator / or principal.

All staff working in the playground (including teaching staff and playground supervisors) will be made aware of behaviour management systems in place during induction and through staff training opportunities.

Identified Resources / Equipment

Markethill Primary School believes that the playground play environment, like other areas in the school, should be adequately resourced to encourage the development of opportunities for play. This requires financial investment into purchasing playground equipment by the school.

Outdoor storage with appropriate trolleys should be provided to ensure easy access for pupils and staff to manage. It is the responsibility of **all** staff to ensure that any broken or damaged equipment is removed and recorded and passed onto the designated coordinator.

Other equipment obtained FREE by means of parents, staff and Play Resource Outlets will be monitored and replaced accordingly.

Equal Opportunities

At Markethill Primary School it is our aim that **all** children at the school will have access to the outdoor environment regardless of their gender, special educational needs, religion, race, home or cultural background. Quality outdoor play opportunities will be available to children in the Foundation and Key Stages 1 and 2, and in all accessible playground areas.

Children’s Involvement

At Markethill Primary School, we value and encourage children’s participation and input about things that affect their school life. We therefore encourage children’s involvement in any playground development.

We are committed to hearing the views and opinions of the children in school and will use methods such as consultations, informal discussions, and surveys within classes to enable children’s views and opinions on outdoor play to be sought. We also believe that although it is critical that playtimes are organised and managed by adults it is equally important that the children have a full understanding of the any processes involved and that their opinions are taken seriously.

In order to help with the management of outdoor play, Markethill Primary School aims to set a system in place where senior pupils will voluntarily take on the responsibility of putting out and away equipment, playing games with groups of children and feedback to the playground coordinator about any playtime issues.

Markethill Primary School strives to ensure that the outdoor play environment is a positive, fun happy place to be for children and adults alike.

Monitoring and Review of Policy

This Break and Lunchtime Outdoor Play Policy will be reviewed on an annual basis, in consultation with pupils and their parents/carers.

This policy was adopted at a meeting of the Board of Governors held on 13 June 2022.

Chair of the Board of Governors:	
Principal:	
Review Date:	June 2023