



## Play Policy

Little Star has an ethos of learning and development through play and also instil an “everyone can play” ethos.

*Play is vital for children. Quite literally. It's through play that babies and young children learn, grow and have fun. It helps them understand the world and to develop socially and emotionally. Singing songs, reading together, playing games with letters and numbers, and having fun with friends gives them a head start. And that means not just a happy childhood. It also helps their confidence, so they can handle what life brings them.*

(DFES: EFYS *It's Child's play*)

## Principles

Children should do what they do best naturally and that is play. We recognise that the most effective learning comes when the child is engrossed in a topic or activity that is largely self chosen and so we create an environment that supports their preferred type of play. Thus by working closely with the individual child and the family we try to build upon and develop interests and passions, providing suitable and stimulating resources and play opportunities.

The revised EYFS 2013 recognised the ‘**characteristics of effective learning**’ which we use to identify productive play and development in your children. These are linked in your children’s learning stories (see ‘**learning journals**’ )

## Focus on children

We at Little Star listen to the children and value their decisions thus providing a programme of play that responds to their desires and needs. Their feedback gives us the springboard to plan activities and resources, guided by the EYFS child development framework. In return children can feel valued in their opinions and choices and thus give them the confidence in their own abilities so vital to lead them successfully through life.

## **A basis for quality**

Little Star Nursery values play as a learning tool in itself and not merely a means to apply a particular “lesson”. The quality of play is enhanced by practitioners who are involved, interested and knowledgeable in order to extend the thinking that is taking place.

## **Safety**

We recognize that an element of risk is necessary in child’s play to gain a sense of their own abilities. Thus through careful and rigorous ‘risk benefit’ assessments (see ‘[Risk assessments](#)’ ) children are still allowed to stretch themselves and exercise their natural curiosities through activities such as tree climbing or woodwork. The children are encouraged to think of their own safety, and look at risks to themselves and others around them. This is all done through sensitive support of staff members.

## **Resources**

Resources are chosen with the children’s needs and interests in mind but also giving value to those with an open ended use as possible to promote heuristic play. Everyone knows the imaginative potential an empty cardboard box or a stick offers a young child. A variety of resources are used and thoughtfully added to continuous provision to promote learning across all 7 areas of learning and development. For example a set of scales may be added to the play doh to promote learning of weights and measures; a pen and clipboard to the home corner to make shopping lists or menus to encourage mark making. We will listen to the children’s needs for further resources and consult all members of staff.

Children are free to interpret and use resources as they choose, within the limits of safety to themselves and others around them. If play becomes threatening or unpleasant to other children or adults in the setting the children will be asked to reconsider their choice of play or relocate their play (this is often seen to work through extending the play outside). Practitioners will guide them on the safe and correct use of materials and also on how to care for our equipment to prevent damages or breakages.

Consideration to health and safety is always taken when planning resources. Particular care during sessions where babies under 24 months should be playing in the main areas of the nursery (for example not using small items that could cause choking where the babies could freely access them).

**Role of the practitioner**

Practitioners strive to become quality “play partners” for the children. Playing alongside them to model good examples of play and validate the self chosen play activities of the children. In this way we hope to instil an ethos of respect and listening, valuing each other’s opinion, voice and choices. By deep involvement in play we can scaffold and develop thinking, working through problems together building trusting, collaborative playful relationships. We strive for a balanced mix of adult and child led activities in order to give the best possible opportunities for all children and their varied needs.

**Inclusion**

We strongly guide the children to develop an inclusive attitude to play. Instances of exclusion are closely examined and discouraged. Children are asked to consider others in their play and to see the benefits of a mutually inclusive atmosphere. Such concepts are reinforced through both daily play and in more directed circle time themes.

For more information, please refer to our [Equal Opportunities policy](#).

*Policy reviewed August 2015*