



## **Position statement on play**

Children grow and develop naturally but it is through play that children have the richest opportunity and experiences for learning. Play is what children do and children learn by leading their own play. Through play children explore, make links and connections. They find out about the world, how it works and their place in it. Through play children develop interests and fascinations; they learn to engage in the social world both in terms of the opportunities it gives and the frustrations it can create when things don't go their way.

Play is fun and enjoyable and exciting but it is never pointless. It has value. Play is how children learn most effectively; through exploration, trial and error and by taking risks in a safe environment.

The current statutory framework for the early years (EYFS) places 'play' at the centre of the learning and development requirements. It states that although children develop and learn in different ways and at different rates it is through play that children can find their own way to learning.

### **Play at Adventure**

How children play at home can be very different to how they play in other spaces such as the park, friends' houses and here at pre-school. At Adventure play is different still.

At Adventure we aim to help children use their play to become effective learners and to maintain their internal motivation to explore, play and learn. We believe that the most effective way for most children to achieve this is to value the process of doing rather than just the outcome. By this we mean that how children engage in an experience is more important than if they can do it or are best at it.

For example, having a child enjoying and exploring texture and colour and shape and mark making is much more important to the child and their development than if their picture looks anything like you would expect it to. For us there is more value in creating multiple possibilities and encouraging divergent thinking than in focusing on children knowing the right answer.

Children are individuals and unique. It is important that we treat children as individuals, respect their ideas and suggestions and encourage them to become independent in their play and thinking. Children are capable – children come to us already full of the experiences they have had at home. It is our job to recognise those and build on them.

### **We support and encourage children's play by creating a 'learning inferno'**

When you build a fire, you need three things to light it and keep it going: some wood, a spark and oxygen. We like to think of play and learning as being similar to a fire.

We have fuel for the fire – the wood – which is our play environment; the spaces and places where the children play.



We have the breath for the fire – the oxygen – which are our adults; ready to keep the play going and to breathe new life into children’s experiences.

We have the spark for the fire – but we aren’t the only ones – children provide the brightest sparks with their ideas, interests and their play.

We don’t assume to guess what it is children will be fascinated by from day to day. This is why we don’t plan themes or topics. Our curriculum emerges from the children’s play, from interest and from the things we see and notice day to day. We make sure to challenge children through divergent thinking but we don’t direct their play or limit possibilities (other than where it would be impossible or the risk would outweigh the rewards).

### **Resources and what children play with**

We have made a deliberate choice to offer children something different to what they might have at home. We do not have toys. Toys tend to have a specific function or intended play in mind. Children can get obsessed with specific ones or very easily bored. To encourage children’s creativity and imagination we use more open-ended resources in our environment.

Our open-ended resources are predominantly natural materials which are offered as ‘loose parts’ to children’s play. We choose natural e.g. wood or metal because it gives a greater texture for children to explore than plastic, remains cleaner and offers greater aesthetics to children’s play.

### **What are loose parts?**

*“In early childhood education settings loose parts mean alluring, beautiful found objects and materials that children can move, manipulate, control and change while they play. Children can carry, combine, re-design, line up, take apart and put loose parts back together in almost endless ways. The materials come with no specific set of directions. Children can turn them into whatever they desire. A stone can become a character in a story, an acorn can become an ingredient in an imaginary soup. These objects invite conversations and interactions, encourage collaboration and co-operation. Put another way – loose parts encourage social competence because they support creativity and innovation. All of these are highly valued skills in adult life today.”* Lisa Daly and Miriam Beloglovsky (2015)

Loose parts: inspiring play in young children; Redleaf Press

We do have some more ‘traditional’ resources such as books, puzzles and puppets that children can play with then they need familiarity but plastic toys, tv or film characters and bikes are not for us.

There are also some ‘closed’ toys that are used for targeted interventions or specific inputs. These offer limited outcomes to play but can be useful for helping some children, especially those with additional needs, to develop and learn.