**Canolfan Addysg Conwy - Play Policy**

**Rationale**

This policy has been developed to reflect the value that the Welsh Government places on play and the importance of children in our society. It reflects our commitment to ensure that a quality environment for play and informal recreation is available to all our children. The policy ensures that children and their needs are central to our commitment and that provision is made to meet those needs through exploration, manipulation and challenge in a safe setting, free from unacceptable levels of risk.

The policy statement is founded on the principle that the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, ratified by the UK Government in December 1991, recognises the importance of play for the child.

Play provision should be:

*Welcoming and accessible to every child, irrespective of gender, sexual orientation, economic or social circumstances, ethnic or cultural background or origin, or individual abilities.*

We recognise that the Welsh Government, in seeking to ensure the full implementation of Article 31 of the Convention, intends that this statement should contribute to creating an environment that fosters children’s play and underpins a national strategy for providing children’s play needs. Here at Canolfan Addysg Conwy we value the necessity to create an environment to recognise Article 31 and provide high quality play provision for children throughout the Service.

**Purpose**

As a school, we recognise the value of play and aim to develop a wide range of outside play environments to meet the needs of all our children. Play is defined as any freely chosen activity which a child finds satisfying and creative. Play may or may not involve equipment or have an end product. It may be serious or light hearted and may be done simply for its own sake. We aim to ensure children’s choice over their experience is promoted in Canolfan Addysg Conwy.

Play enables children to learn through experience that cannot be taught. Free play can also have a direct positive impact on a child’s ability to meet formal educational goals. Through exploring, manipulating and challenging themselves within play children learn to:

* Make new friends and communicate with people.
* Develop their physical, social, mental, emotional and creative skills.
* Learn through experiences that cannot be taught
* Play new games and learn new skills including physical ones like climbing.
* Get along with other people, learn how to share and work as part of a team.
* Take managed risks and challenge themselves, helping them make more informed and adapted decisions in play and later life.
* Take part in hands on activities where they gain experience from rolling around and getting dirty.

The role of an adult is governed by the Playwork Principles (Playwork Principles Scrutiny Group, 2005). These principles are based on the recognition that children and young people’s capacity for positive development will be enhanced if given access to the broadest range of environments and play opportunities.

The Playwork Principles are:

1. 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 wellbeing of individuals and communities.
2. 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 reasons.
3. The prime focus and essence of playwork is to support and facilitate the play process and this should inform the development of play policy, strategy, training and education.
4. For playworkers, the play process takes precedence and staff act as advocates for play when engaging with adult led agendas.
5. The role of staff is to support all children in the creation of a space in which they can play.
6. Staff’s response to children and young people playing is based on a sound up to date knowledge of the play process and reflective practice.
7. Staff recognise their own impact on play space and also the impact of children and young people on the staff.
8. Staff choose an intervention style that enables children and young people to extend their play. All staff intervention must balance risk with the developmental benefit and wellbeing of children.

Canolfan Addysg Conwy believes that adult’s attitude towards, and understanding of, children’s play behaviour will have a significant effect on the quality of the play opportunities offered within and outside the school. We recognise the need for training and development of staff to enable the Play Principles to be adhered to and create an appropriate play environment both indoors and outdoors for all children and young people to facilitate children’s freely chosen, self-directed play.

**Play and Risk**

The Framework for Children’s Learning (WG 2001):

*Children learn through first-hand experiential activities with the serious business of ‘play’ providing the vehicle. Through their play, children practise and consolidate their learning, play with ideas, experiment, take risks, solve problems, and make decisions individually, in small and in large groups.*

*First-hand experiences allow children to develop an understanding of themselves and the world in which they live. The development of children’s self-image and feelings of self-worth and self-esteem are at the core of this phase.*

An essential element of exploration within the medium of play is the opportunity for children to experience freely-chosen activities, where they can take acceptable risks and challenge themselves beyond their existing capabilities. Allowing children to take acceptable risks develops their ability to independently judge risks and learn new skills. Play means taking managed risks and being challenged as it will help children to make informed and adapted decisions in play and life.

Assemblies at the start of term will focus on pupil’s development of risk awareness/management. We are positive that taking measured risk has a long term benefit in educational terms. We believe that developing children’s understanding of risk from an early age will equip them with valuable ‘life skills’.

**Play and Values**

There will be 4 simple values that will enable all children to have a positive playtime experience. These are:

1. Play is critically important to all children in the development of their physical, social, mental, emotional and creative skills.
2. Play involves children rolling around, getting dirty and being hands on.
3. Play enables children to learn through experience which cannot be taught.
4. Play is taking managed risks and being challenged; as it will help children make more informed and adapted decisions in later life.

**Play environment**

The indoor and outdoor environments are created to given children opportunity and choice. A wide range of play opportunities are provided which allow children to develop their physical, social, mental, emotional and creative skills. These environments are supported by the use of yard, trim trail, forest school area, Loose Parts, various outdoor equipment such as bikes, scooters and climbing apparatus, equipment to experiment with such as water trays, various equipment’s which can be used to build and construct, balancing equipment, resources to play various games including balls, racquets, goal posts, tables and benches for children to sit and explore their creative side, play board games and develop their social skills.

**Play and Rules**

There will be four simple rules that will enable all children to have a positive playtime experience. These are:

* Have fun.
* We do not break.
* We do not hurt.
* We are all responsible for making sure equipment is packed away properly.