



Play Policy
For
The Beckmead Trust

Name of Policy	Play Policy
Policy Level	Beckmead Trust
Date of Issue	January 2021
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Date of Next Review	January 2022
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Date of Signature	September 2021

THE BECKMEAD TRUST PLAY POLICY

Objective.

This policy is aimed at ensuring that all CYP attending Beckmead experience the correct quality and quantity of play opportunities and resources throughout their time at the trust.

Introduction.

Play is a child's natural form of expression and is fundamental to the work of the trust and how we plan for our children. Children use play to explore the world, make sense of life, show others how they feel, and connect to people. That's why play is so useful for helping children to resolve their troubles and worries and express thoughts or emotions. All behaviour is an attempt by a child to solve a problem. The difficulty is that the brain uses many ways that don't work, or can make a problem worse.

It is often hard to see what 'problem' the child is trying to solve but it usually relates to a very early developmental struggle, trauma, or missed experience. It can often leave colleagues, parents and carers feeling useless, deskilled and frustrated.

Beckmead provides opportunities for play to support children with their emotional or behavioural struggles because play helps children sort out many difficulties at a deep 'subconscious' level which means youngsters can avoid shame or anxiety and look for solutions. Through play, children can often see new ways to solve problems because they feel safe, relaxed, and curious with the environment, toys, games, spaces and kit and with the school staff. It takes time to build relationships with all these elements of play but we believe it is worth it.

Some children use play to act through, explore and think about their life experiences, difficulties, and worries. Some children explore the same issues but using the current moment play-based experiences that provide 'new' information to the brain about trust, relationships, self-worth, etc.

Play helps children explore and at Beckmead we provide many opportunities for this such as story-telling, sensory play, climbing and chasing, puppetry, sand play, creative mediums, outdoor space, playgrounds, sport and physical games, music, board games and drama to list just some of the ways we encourage our children to engage in play.

The relationships developed during play with adults and peers are enhanced by the child feeling accepted, safe, noticed, and understood. Play in the 'here and now' helps a developing brain resolve old struggles in new ways, with new insights, skills, and self-confidence.

Play provides taught and self-taught strategies for expression, self-awareness, and self-regulation. It also enables children to safely begin to notice how others experience them.

Play at Beckmead is enhanced by the belief that supporting parents and carers is usually the best way to help children make positive, sustainable changes. Support sessions, group work, child-development training, and parenting strategies can all be provided as part of the Beckmead offer that supports advances made during play.

Play can help children take positive control of situations and also to learn when to let grown-ups or others take control whilst still feeling safe, trusting, and valued. Play can be formally included on the timetable through classroom activities such as shop-keeping, yoga and sensory story-telling. All such activities help to promote self-awareness, emotional expression, relationships, and mindfulness.

Values and understanding.

CYP are entitled to respect for their own unique combination of qualities and capabilities. They should have their opinions and responses taken into account consistent with the needs and safety of others. They should be part of and contribute to the life of the school and the wider community.

Our CYP have a right to access play environments and resources that challenge, stimulate and offer an appropriate level of risk. They have the right to expect clarity and consistency from adults and feel part of a community of trust and cooperation.

Where play takes place.

Play occurs in:

1. Planned, structured curriculum led parts of the day.
 2. In non-curriculum parts of the school day such as break and lunchtimes.
 3. 3. Out of school hours.
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1. Play in this context should contain identified learning outcomes, be structured and assessed - even informally. Adults may intervene, guide and direct to develop knowledge and understanding. Activities should be fun and pleasurable, deeply involving and allow for spontaneity within a consciously adult-structured environment.

2. During break and lunch time play should be freely chosen by the child and be as far as possible within the child's control. Adult intervention and direction is at a minimum with no pre-determined outcomes.
3. Out of school hours includes before and after school, weekends and holidays. These may be controlled by the school – for instance extra-curricular activities and after school clubs. It should be explicit if sessions are outcome led or free choice.

Young children will experience the school day as 'seamless' but as they become older and the school day becomes more structured the categories of play are likely to become more distinct from the child's perspective.

All play at school has a fundamental role in enabling CYP to engage positively with the complexities of the world around them.

The role of the adult.

This is to support and enable children's play by having the freedom during the school day to use professional judgement to mediate the requirements of the curriculum through play. Adults will also intervene sensitively to maximise the learning potential of play.

In non-curriculum / out of school hours play opportunities, adults should have the freedom to adhere to, celebrate and promote the values and informal objectives of play.

The role of Beckmead.

1. To provide for children's free play needs with the correct allocation of break and lunchtime timings.
2. To provide rich, outdoor play-friendly environments.
3. To encourage and resource its schools to develop whole school approaches to and implement and celebrate play.
4. To ensure that the value and importance of play is recognised in curriculum and assessment systems.
5. To ensure that the supervision of CYP at play will:
 - a) *Extend the choice and control children have over their play and the freedom and satisfaction they gain from it.*
 - b) *Recognise that CYP need to test boundaries and respond positively to these scenarios.*
 - c) *Understand the balance between CYP needing and wanting to play whilst keeping them from being exposed to unacceptable risk.*

- d) *Maximise the range of indoor and outdoor play opportunities as well as the amount of time for individual and group play.*
- e) *Foster independence, confidence and self-esteem.*
- f) *Encourage respect for others and celebrate social interaction.*
- g) *Enhance well-being, health, growth and development, knowledge and understanding whilst fostering the creativity and capacity to learn.*

(From 'Best Play: what play provision should do for children'.
National Children's Bureau, 2019).

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January 2021.