

Newbold Church School And Nursery

WEAPON AND SUPERHERO PLAY POLICY.



Review: K Marsh April 2025

Approved: GB

Signed: Chair of Governors via School Bus

Signed: Headteacher Via School Bus

Next Review: April 2027

By nurturing academic achievement and social development in a supportive Christian environment, we will cherish individual talents and abilities, enabling everyone at our school to successfully fulfil their potential."

Nurture

Encourage one another and build up each other, as indeed you are doing

1 Thessalonians 5:11

Cherish

Jesus said "Love one another. Just as I have loved you, you should also love one another."

John 13:34

Succeed

Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up

Galatians 6:9



At Newbold Church School and Nursery, we recognise that each child is unique and will support them to be resilient, capable, confident and self assured. Children learn to be strong and independent from a base of secure and loving relationships, as well as having the opportunity to learn in a positive and stimulating environment.

Most children enjoy engaging in imaginative play that relates to, and makes sense of, the world that they live in. For lots of children this imaginative play contains a strong element of weapon and Super Hero re-enactment. Re-enacting weapon use is a universal language of play for children and usually results in high levels of engagement for the children actively involved in it.

Images and ideas gleaned from the media are common starting points in boys' play and may involve characters with special powers or weapons. Adults can find this type of play particularly challenging and have a natural instinct to stop it. This is not necessary as long as practitioners help the children to understand and respect the rights of other children and to take responsibility for the resources and environment.

As previous EYFS states:

"Value play which is based on characters, such as superheroes who may mean a lot to children, even if you do not appreciate them yourself!" (EYFS card 4.3 Learning and Development)

Creating situations so that boys' interests in these forms of play can be fostered through health and safe risk-taking will enhance every aspect of their learning and development (DSCF 2007)

The 2024 EYFS statutory framework states in Paragraph 1.16,

"Play is essential for children's development, building their confidence as they learn to explore, relate to others, set their own goals and solve problems. Children learn by leading their own play, and by taking part in play which is guided by adults."

Then, in paragraph 1.18 it says,

"In planning and guiding what children learn, practitioners must reflect on the different rates at which children are developing and adjust their practice appropriately.' In other words, effective learning for young children starts from their interests.

Rationale

At Newbold Church School and Nursery, we feel it is important to create a whole school approach of which staff, children, parents, governors and other agencies have a clear understanding. This policy is a formal statement of our approach to children's weapon and Superhero imaginative play across the EYFS.

Aims

For staff to understand why superhero and weapon play is so important to certain children.

For adults to engage with and develop the play

To channel the play positively and use it as a tool to extend thinking, learning skills and imaginative development

To plan for superhero and weapon play which has arisen from children's interests and observations of their play

For children to express their feelings in a safe environment

For staff to monitor that the environment is kept safe and ensure children's expression of feelings during superhero play does not intimidate nearby children who are not part of the game

To develop children's negotiation and rights respecting skills and help them make the connections to transfer these skills into everyday situations

To monitor gender issues - both girls and boys enjoy superhero and fantasy play and so there should be female as well as male hero figures represented in the equipment and displays

Equal Opportunities and Inclusion

The children and parents are actively involved in the education process at Newbold Church School and Nursery and their perceptions about Weapon and Super Hero Play are explored and valued.

The staff will regularly evaluate the impact that actively fostering this element of role play has on the environment, the cohort as a whole and identified groups of children and individuals.

If required a range of support strategies will be put in place to ensure that this style of play does not have any negative impact.

Principles that underpin the policy

- Approaches to teaching and learning in role play should reflect the interests of the children and not exclusively those of the adults
- Planning for role play in the environment should be based upon assessment information from the observed play of the current cohort.
- Our setting will acknowledge the positive aspects of the character of the Superhero and highlight the negative aspects of weapon use and physical violence at a level that is appropriate to the age and needs of the children. This will be mainly done through story, drama and appropriate discussion.
- Styles of teaching and learning should meet the needs of children and not pre-conceived notions of what is or is not appropriate role play.
- All children's emotional welfare, wellbeing and involvement should be assessed in relation to this style of play.
- Children should enjoy the play opportunity.
- The Weapon/Superhero play should motivate and challenge children.
- The creation of an effective culture of Weapon/Superhero play in any setting takes time, and is a process rather than an event.

- Parents and carers need to feel well informed about and comfortable with the settings approach to Weapon/Superhero play and the principals that underpin it.
- Children, parents/carers and staff need to be involved on an equal basis in the formulation and regular review of this policy.
- Effective and engaging play is about our setting fitting the interests of the child, not the child fitting the setting.
- On-going opportunities for quality imaginative play are not overlooked or left to chance, but thought about and planned in advance.

Creating an appropriate environment

The types of play that boys and girls engage in is enhanced or diminished by the quality of the learning environment inside and out. Practitioners must take responsibility for ensuring the learning environment is planned to inspire, challenge and intrigue every child. However, sometimes practitioners find the chosen play of boys more difficult to understand and value than that of girls. They may choose activities in which adults involve themselves least, or play that involves more action and a greater use of the available space, especially outdoors.

"Some boys who are at risk of becoming disaffected at a very young age have shown significant improvements if their learning takes place outside. Opportunities which reflect all six areas of learning outdoors must be available."
(Bilton et al 2005.)

Practitioners need to be aware of the impact of both the emotional and physical environment on the well-being and self-esteem of all children:

Practitioners will:

Use a range of strategies to extend the play and drive the children's ideas forward so that it is not repetitive

Develop children's turn taking, sharing and cooperative skills - they cannot have a capture and rescue game on their own rescue games lead to problem solving scenarios

Look at the wider 'lives' of the superheroes e.g. what do they eat, where do they live - and use this information to extend learning across the nursery areas

Use a range of materials to make dens and develop role play indoors and outdoors

Encourage use of different types of text e.g. write superhero stories, shopping lists, notices, tickets etc

As an adult we can help by:

Supporting and not discouraging or banning this kind of play. Children who feel they don't have to hide their weapon and superhero play will approach adults for ideas to develop within their play.

Getting involved as appropriate.

Suggesting ideas, information, and materials and props to extend the richness of the play.

Facilitating children's understanding of violence and aggression and why violence is never acceptable.

supporting children to understand that violence towards animals or anyone is not acceptable. Keep the focus of superhero and weapon play on imagination.

Building on what children know and understand

Newbold Church School will ensure that, through training and development, all staff are aware of the impact of both the emotional and physical environment on the well-being and self-esteem of all children:

ensure that there are regular opportunities for 'unplanned' role play to allow for children's self-expression and staff observation.

monitor and record and evaluate the positive aspects of the play that they see, incorporating preferences and themes into future planning

ensure that the physical environment both indoor and outdoor contains resources that will support and promote children's play.

provide a variety of resources, some that replicate actual objects alongside others that will be open ended and ambiguous to allow for individual interpretation and foster an approach of imagination and creativity.

be aware that the success of some themes and enhancements will differ between cohorts/groups of children, therefore plan to the needs of the current cohort and not necessarily deliver previous plans without evaluation and amendment.

Weapon/gun play guidelines

1. Play needs to be consensual. Children can hand signal or say they do not want to be involved at any time (e.g. it may be discussed that if they put their hand up and say 'Stop I'm not playing' - then they are no longer in the game).
2. Keep weapons away from faces and not pointed in the direction of anyone's face.
3. Avoid disrupting the play of others who do not wish to join in.
4. Do not cause damage and do not actually hurt or harm any person, animal or living thing.
5. If children cannot follow the rules then we will remove the weapon and use our usual conflict resolution and behaviour strategies as detailed in our behaviour policy
6. We will have discussions about alternatives to hurting others / using weapons
7. We will have discussions, based on reality or imagination, about how to help those who are hurt e.g. medical people who help us, magic potions to make them better

Partnership with parents

At Newbold Church School and Nursery, we encourage parents and carers to be involved by:

Making available on our website information about the general benefit of Weapon/Superhero play and how it is positively impacting on their child.

Encouraging parents and carers to come in and help in the setting.

*Staff are sensitive to the cultural / family background of the child, including whether the child's family has experienced violence, moved to Britain to escape war etc. The key person should be proactive in gently explaining the play to families who may be sensitive to it and discuss any issues that may arise from it, while recognising that children who have been in aggressive situations may welcome the play as an outlet for pent up feelings. If staff are unsure they should refer to the safeguarding policy and / or speak to a senior member of staff.

Further Reference

<https://empoweringchildhood.wordpress.com/2013/05/28/children-need-gun-play/>

<https://www.amazon.co.uk/DonT-Play-Guns-Here-Superhero/dp/0335210899>

'Confident, capable and creative: supporting boys' achievements: Guidance for practitioners in the Early Years Foundation Stage' is at www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk.

<http://www.richlearningopportunities.co.uk/pdf/bang%20bang%20gun%20play%20and%20why%20children%20need%20it.pdf>

Grimmer, T. 2020. *Calling all Superheroes: Supporting and Developing Superhero Play in the Early Years*. Oxon: Routledge

We don't play with guns here: War, Weapon and Superhero Play in the Early Years (Debating Play) by Penny Holland