



Issued 2010
Revised 2013
Review 2016

SACRED HEART PRIMARY SCHOOL

WHOLE SCHOOL PLAY POLICY

Rationale

The staff at Sacred Heart Primary School value play as an important tool in the teaching and learning process. Through play, there are clear positive outcomes in the following areas:

- Physical and mental health indicators reflect a direct correlation between rigorous, physically active play and reduced levels of obesity, heart related problems, and chronic stress.
- Cognitive development is optimised through active, exploratory play, as evidenced through research which documents that active, stimulating play on a regular basis promotes optimal brain development in young children.
- Social competence is best nurtured through socio-dramatic and pretend play with peers, social interactions in small group settings, and assimilation of routines and reciprocal engagement with peers and caring adults.

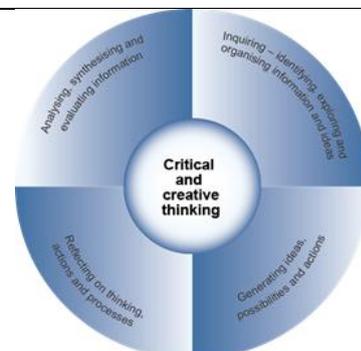
Definitions

“Play provides opportunities for children to learn, as they discover, create, improvise and imagine. Play is a valued process for childrens learning, thinking, imagination story making and communication. Play provides children with the opportunity to develop a sense of agency and demonstrates their competence to be leaders in their own learning. Play can provide children with a sense of belong and being and supports the development of children’s individual and social identity. *“Early Years Learning Framework p30.*”

Although opportunities to play may be evidenced throughout the curriculum, play most directly links to the following General Capabilities of the Australian Curriculum.

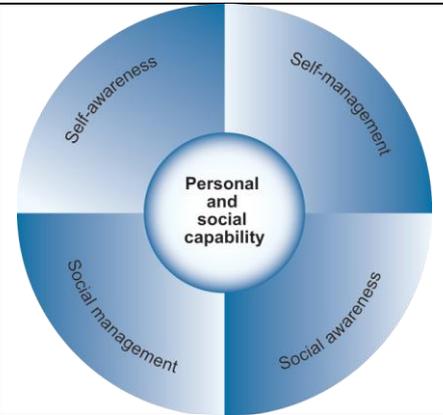
Critical and Creative Thinking

In the Australian Curriculum, students develop capability in critical and creative thinking as they learn to generate and evaluate knowledge, clarify concepts and ideas, seek possibilities, consider alternatives and solve problems. Critical and creative thinking are integral to activities that require students to think broadly and deeply using skills, behaviours and dispositions such as reason, logic, resourcefulness, imagination and innovation in all learning areas at school and in their lives beyond school.



Personal and Social Capacity

In the Australian Curriculum, students develop personal and social capability as they learn to understand themselves and others, and manage their relationships, lives, work and learning more effectively. The capability involves students in a range of practices including recognising and regulating emotions, developing empathy for others and understanding relationships, establishing and building positive relationships, making responsible decisions, working effectively in teams, handling challenging situations constructively and developing leadership skills.



Principles

The essential features of play

- Play requires specific conditions of safety and psychological security that are essential for the child to engage in relaxed, open-ended and exploratory behaviours
- Play includes exploratory behaviours that involve manipulation of objects, toys and other materials and this exploratory nature of play often precedes actual focused play behaviour
- Play is an important evolutionary behaviour that is essential for healthy development across all areas: social, cognitive, language, physical and creative
- Play is behaviour that sustains the healthy development of the individual and the larger sociocultural fabric of society and reflects the contexts in which the child lives (home, community and the larger society)

Developmental stages of play

Children move through the following developmental stages of play.

- **Solitary Play** - play where children play alone immersed in their own investigations and are not aware of others.
- **Parallel Play** - play where children play alongside each other observing but playing individually. Interactions may be minimal.
- **Associative Play** – play in which several children may loosely play together. At this stage children may work together on similar projects.
- **Cooperative Play** – play in which participants assist to achieve the group’s goal. The participants take on roles, tasks and one or two children usually lead the group.
- **Competitive Play** – play can be based on games with rules and performance is rated (such as chess). This type of play needs to be used with caution as it requires a certain level of development and players should be relatively evenly matched.

Types of play

Dramatic - Children take on roles within pretend games about familiar experiences.

Fantasy – Children create props and use these as they engage in fantasy adventures.

Exploratory – Children explore the properties or functions of materials equipment and objects

Manipulative – Children manipulate and explore objects, parts and materials e.g. construction sets.

Physical – Children explore movements and ways to combine movements.

Games with rules - Children follow or create rules to reach a shared objective in games.

Procedures

Phases of Play at Sacred Heart Primary School

Early Childhood Phase Pre K – 2

In the early years, daily routines include active indoor and rough-and-tumble outdoor play, kinaesthetic movement as part of concept learning, integration of music, movement, and creative expression and adult-child interactions that model moderate to high levels of physical activity. The play is mostly child chosen and teacher facilitated. It focuses on relationship building and development of concepts.

Playing is integral to children’s enjoyment, health and development. Children, whatever their age, culture, ethnicity, social or economic background, need and want to play, both indoors and outdoors. Through playing, children are creating their own culture, developing their abilities, exploring their creativity and learning about themselves, other people and the world around them.

Children need and want to stretch and challenge themselves when they play. Play provision and play space that is stimulating and exciting allows children to encounter and learn about risk. This helps them to build confidence, learn skills and develop resilience at their own pace.

Children benefit the most from play

- When adults are watchful but not intrusive
- When their games are free from adult agendas
- When there are places and spaces they can make their own
- When they are free to gather, make and create in their own time and in their own ways
- When they can play with others and form relationships
- When they can be alone and private or when they can be free to gather in groups

Play is the fundamental way that children enjoy their childhood. It is essential to their quality of life:

- Playing is fun: it is how children enjoy themselves. It keeps children healthy and active
- Play promotes children’s development, learning, imagination, creativity and independence Play allows children to find out about themselves, their abilities, their interests and the contribution they can make
- Play allows children to experience and encounter boundaries, learning to assess and manage risk in their lives; both physical and social

- Play helps children to understand people and places, learn about their environment and develop their sense of community. Play can be therapeutic. It helps children to deal with difficult or painful circumstances such as emotional stress or medical treatment

Play for Older Students Year 3-6

By examining the characteristics and needs of older students in primary school, it is possible to design programs that spark their interests and keep them enthusiastically engaged. When program experiences and activities are directly linked to the developmental needs, children are much more likely to show and sustain interest in participating.

1. *The Need for Physical Activity*

Students need opportunities to:

- exercise their growing bodies and explore their emerging large and small muscle capacities.
- learn new physical skills and learn how to keep their bodies safe and healthy as they grow.
- challenge their growing physical capacities and test their limits with support and help from caring adults in a safe, secure environment.
- pace themselves by balancing periods of physical activity with needed rest and relaxation.

2. *The Need for Competence and Achievement*

Students need opportunities to;

- learn and develop new skills and understandings related to all areas of life.
- be acknowledged for their accomplishments which encourages them to build on these accomplishments.
- learn to set realistic goals.

3. *The Need for Self Definition*

They need to participate in experiences that help them discover their interests, talents, and abilities and shape their attitudes, beliefs, values, and character. They need opportunities to make choices and decisions about what is most important to them and how they want to spend their time and energy. They need to participate in experiences and activities that allow them to create personal goals.

4. *The Need for Creative Expression.*

Students need to participate in verbal and nonverbal experiences that allow them to explore, shape, and express emerging thoughts, feelings, interests, talents, abilities, values, attitudes, and beliefs about themselves and the world around them.

5. *The Need for Positive Social Interaction.*

Students need increasing opportunities to experience positive social relationships that allow them to explore emerging ideas, views, values and feelings. This can be achieved through opportunities to just ‘hang out.’

6. *The Need for Meaningful Participation*

Students need opportunities to identify, develop and use individual talents, skills, and interests in the context of the real world. Christian service learning opportunities may fulfil this.

Learning Experiences for older students

- Children learn best by doing. Try to demonstrate instructions for activities or projects.
- Complete projects, games, crafts, or activities in which children use large and small muscles together.
- Encourage cooperative as well as competitive games.
- Encourage children to collect things like shells, stamps, or flowers and to engage in messy play.
- Encourage pretend play because it is still an important learning experience.
- Make time for gross motor play running, hopping, skipping, digging, jumping, weight bearing, kicking, catching, throwing and climbing.
- Encourage children to dance sing or perform to music.
- Encourage children to talk about their feelings while working or playing together
- Provide opportunities for technology and games to consolidate and apply cognitive concepts taught.

The Importance of Outdoor Play

- Children are more active when they are outdoors. This physical activity leads to better physical and mental health as well as improved cognitive function and concentration. As much of their life at home is taken with ‘screen time’, it is important for the school to provide some quality outdoor time.
- The opportunity for children to play in an unstructured way in an outdoor environment, not only encourages creativity. It also improves social and emotional development as children develop self-regulation and executive function. The opportunity to make decisions and take measured risks in an outdoor play environment develops resilience, confidence and competence.

Role of Adults in Play

Depending on the desired learning objective, adults can take a range of roles. Set up and facilitate play, observe, monitor and support children’s participation. Adults can direct the play or be a co-player. They may be stage manager, mediator, player, scribe, assessor, communicator or planner.

Assessing Play

Play is rich in meaning but these may remain undiscovered unless as educators we devote more time to observe, document and interpret the meaning inherent in childrens play.

Considerations may include:

- Which children play alone,

- Which children play together,
- What are children's interests, dispositions, and attitudes and how do these influence their play?
- How does children's play progress over time?
- What engages children at a deep level?
- In what ways can we strengthen children's involvement in deep and meaningful play?

Future Planning

At Sacred heart School we plan to continue developing our outdoor play areas to include areas for:

Constructive play

- Facilitated by using sand and water play and providing a place for blocks and wheeled toys

Social play

- Providing opportunities for children to practise their basic social skills. Using equipment encouraging the engagement of more than one child eg having a picnic, using a props box to perform a play or gardening are all examples which encourage social play

Dramatic play

- Including structures in the environment that children can change, adapt, add their own meaning to and use to expand their imagination

Nature Play

- Providing opportunities for students to engage with the natural environment.