

| PLAY POLICY | |
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PLAY POLICY

For all staff working in the Children and Family Services it is our intention to provide an environment where children can learn and succeed, where they feel valued and respected, safe, and secure and where they can grow. We believe play is essential to children’s well-being and it is through play that children learn and develop.

United Nations Convention on the Right of the Child Article 31

‘All children have a right to relax and play, and to join in a wide range of activities.’

The Government’s review of children's play Getting Serious About Play defines play as *“what children and young people do when they follow their own ideas, in their own way and for their own reasons.”*

‘Whether it is fun or serious, polite, or mischievous, children and young people love to play. It’s how they connect with the world around them and how they learn to value themselves and others. Play is most often activity for its own sake, but it is also a vital preparation for the future.’

Making Play Matter (Bristol City Council)

At Windmill Hill City Farm Children and Family Services we implement the Early Years Foundation Stage (2021) standards for Learning, Development and Care for children from birth-five.

The Early Years Foundation Stage is made up of four key principles:

- **A Unique Child**
- **Positive Relationships**
- **Enabling Environments**
- **Learning and Development**

It is through the following four key principles and in line with the Early Years Foundation Stage guidance that we aim to support each child in reaching their full potential and provide them with the skills and attitudes to become competent and capable learner’s right through to adulthood.

All staff recognise that an important element of providing a high-quality learning environment is to have ongoing reviews and reflect on what is being offered. Therefore, we are committed to improving and developing our practice, through professional development with both regular in-house and out of house training and through participation of the Bristol Standard Quality Improvement Framework for Birth-Five and Lead Teacher visits where support and guidance is offered. We are Ofsted registered.

- **A Unique Child**

Every child is a competent learner from birth who can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured.

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Our Commitment:

- We recognise every child is individual and aim to celebrate each child's individuality in all aspects of our practice.
- We understand children are learning and developing from birth and in different ways and at different rates. We will respect and plan for children's choices and preferences and learning styles.
- All adults will communicate appropriately to all children in a way that the child understands e.g., verbal at child's level or non-verbal through gestures, visual aids, facial expressions, sounds etc.
- We will always start from what children can do as opposed to what they cannot do.
- We recognise inclusivity is a right, not a privilege and essential to children's development and emotional wellbeing. We will be pro-active in promoting an inclusive environment and will challenge negative behaviour or actions which are not deemed inclusive be it from staff, parents and carers, children, or visitors.
- We will ensure all children are provided with opportunities to be listened to, valued and be equal in all aspects of our practice regardless of class, culture, gender, needs or abilities.
- We recognise babies and young children are vulnerable and will work in line with policy and guidance in ensuring babies and young children are kept safe and well. We will, through discussion, activities and props support children's growing awareness of who they can trust and how to keep safe.
- We will work in line with our Personal, Social, Emotional and Behaviour Policy to support children in understanding rules and boundaries and why they exist and distinguishing from right and wrong.
- We will ensure babies and children are supported and given opportunities to make choices and will respect their choices and preferences regarding their learning style and learning environment.
- We recognise that through making choices, children feel valued and respected and feel a sense of control and independence.
- We recognise physical and emotional wellbeing is essential to learning and development and aim to provide an environment where children feel safe and secure. We want to ensure that needs are met, and

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feelings are accepted including opportunities to be active, have space to rest and sleep and nutritious meals and snacks.

- We will work in partnership with parents and carers in ensuring every child is cared for in the best possible way including sharing knowledge and experiences on providing a safe and stimulating environment, appropriate health care and healthy and caring relationships with their peers and the adults in their lives.

➤ **Positive Relationships**

Children learn to be strong and independent from a base of loving and secure relationships with parents and/or key person.

Our Commitment:

- We understand warm, respectful, and caring relationships are essential in providing children with a safe platform in which they can learn and develop from.
- We understand friendships are an important part of development and that through friendships children can have enjoyment and fun but also can give and receive practical help and support. However, we recognise that for some children it is not so easy to make friends and therefore we will actively support these children in overcoming barriers in a sensitive and inclusive manner.
- We recognise parents and carers as the most important people in a child's life and understand through partnership working, we can learn from each other and are best equipped to support the child.
- We will work in partnership with parents/carers and share information about activities and experiences to ensure they are accessible to all, such as providing appropriate outdoor clothing, sun cream etc.
- We will create a warm and welcoming atmosphere where all individuals feel valued and respected and where there is a two-way flow of information.
- We understand babies and young children will feel a wide range of feelings and that at times these feelings can be confusing and overwhelming. We will, with care and understanding support babies and children in understanding and managing these feelings.
- We understand through interaction, engagement and listening to children we can tune in and encourage and extend their thoughts, ideas, and learning. We understand babies and children will communicate in a variety of ways such as verbally, non-verbally, in English or in their home language or through signing.

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- We will ensure every child has a named key person who will work closely with the child and their family from the outset. The key person will be the person who will work to develop a bond with each child for whom they are responsible and will be responsive and work in partnership with the parents and carers.
- We will, as a staff team, set a positive example by showing each other the same value, respect and understanding we show the children and families in our care.
- We will promote and support outdoor learning by being positive role models ourselves. We will join in with the children and their interests and play, and through this further extend their learning.

➤ **Enabling Environments**

The environment plays a key role in supporting and extending children’s development and learning.

Our Commitment:

- We recognise that our environment encompasses the indoor and outdoor areas and includes the wider community and the people within it and that the environment plays a key role in supporting every child’s learning and that it must be accessible and available to all at every opportunity.
- We understand learning is a personal and continuous journey through which babies and children will build on what they already know and have experienced and from this create new understanding and knowledge.
- We recognise the importance of having an ongoing cycle of observation, planning and assessment. As a team this allows us to provide high quality care and learning and ensure each child’s needs are met and that the child and their parents and carers remain a central part of this process.
- We will use our observations of the babies and children to find out about their needs, what they are interested in and what they can do. We will observe children in different areas of play and at different times and will involve parents in the observation process.
- We will use the information gained from observations to inform our planning; from this we will base activities and experiences and adapt and develop the indoor and outdoor environments around children’s needs, interests and what they can do.
- We will keep ongoing assessments of every child in line with the Early Years Foundation Stage guidance and will use this information as a means of identifying areas of achievement, areas needing further support, as a form of reflection and evaluation of practice.

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- We aim to provide a rich and varied environment which encompasses all areas of learning, provides challenges and opportunities for taking risks.
- We will ensure all indoor and outdoor play areas are safe and secure through doing daily risk assessments of the areas and the equipment within it to ensure there are enough challenges and opportunities for children to take risks.
- We understand being outdoors has a positive impact on children’s sense of well-being and the outdoors provides experiences and opportunities unavailable indoors, such as experiencing weather changes, ‘slugs and bugs’, outdoor sounds e.g., transport and animal noises.
- We will ensure every child has access to free flow play at regular and extended intervals throughout the day and will ensure babies and children are appropriately dressed and protected for all weather conditions. We understand this enables children to choose freely to use the indoor and outdoor space, by making this a voluntary choice this can encourage children to use these areas, explore their interests and increase their independence and confidence.
- We understand the settings environment can be like a second home and will ensure it has areas for a variety of activities and areas for rest. We aim for our environment to reflect the child’s home and aim to bring in home experiences into the setting.
- We will adapt and develop our environment in response to children’s interests, needs, and will involve children in the planning and development of their environment.
- We will aim to utilise the opportunities and resources available within our local community as much as possible, including the Farm, the people within our community, local high street and shops and local parks.

➤ **Learning and Development**

Children develop and learn in different ways and at different rates and all areas of Learning and Development are equally important and inter-connected.

Our Commitment:

- We understand children need to feel at ease, safe, secure, and confident to be both mentally and physically engaged in learning.
- We understand babies and children may play alone or with others and it is through play babies and children can try things out, experiment, solve problems, be creative, take risks and build on existing skills as well as develop new ones.

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- We understand all areas of learning are connected and are equally as important.
- Through trying things out repeatedly and revisiting activities and experiences we understand babies and children can consolidate and confirm their knowledge, set their own challenges, and further extend their ideas.
- We will extend children's play and communication through sensitive and appropriate intervention, such as questioning, commenting, and reflecting back what the child is doing and sustained shared thinking e.g., getting involved in the learning and with them and at their level.
- We understand that communication can take place in many forms including verbal, non-verbal, facial gestures, body language, visual aids, sounds and noises etc. and will use these forms of communication to support each child's learning and development.
- We understand to learn babies and children need to have some independence and control over their learning, this will help support their creativity and imagination and promotes a sense of satisfaction, confidence and develops independence skills.

The Early Years Foundation Stage is made up of seven areas of Learning and each area of development is divided into individual aspects. We will work in line with every aspect.

Prime Areas:

- Personal, Social and Emotional Development
- Communication and Language
- Physical Development

Specific Areas:

- Literacy
- Mathematics
- Understanding the World
- Expressive Arts and Design

There are three areas of Characteristics of Effective Learning which demonstrate the different dispositions, styles and attitudes children may demonstrate in their learning. We will work in line with every aspect.

Bristol Characteristics of Effective Learning

- Engagement: Playing and Exploring
- Motivation: Active Learning

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- Thinking: Creativity & Critical Thinking
- Emotional Well-Being

We will plan to provide play and learning opportunities which encompasses all seven areas of learning and the characteristics of effective learning, and which offers the babies and children a rich variety of activities, resources and materials and experiences both indoors and outdoors and within our local community.

Our named Curriculum Lead is Sophie Freyer.

Whilst all our staff ensure children's well-being is paramount, our named children's well-being leads are Abbie Jones and Sophie Freyer.

This policy works in line with all other Farm and Children and Family Services policies with reference to the Equal Opportunities Policy, Health and Safety Policy, Special Educational Needs Policy, Personal, Social, Emotional and Behaviour Policy and Partnership with Parents Policy.