**Smart Play Network Play Policy Template for Schools**

**School Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Date Policy Written: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Due for review** (ideally annually): **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

***How to use this play policy template***

*Use the headings below to build your policy. A good policy will have been discussed and contributed to by the people implementing it as well as those who will benefit from it. Text in red is there to pose the questions and give some context to your discussions and can be removed before finalising.*

*If you would like any support with developing your Play Policy further or putting it into practice, please contact Smart Play Network (*[*admin@smartplaynetwork.org*](mailto:admin@smartplaynetwork.org)*) and we would be happy to support you.*

**Our Process.** Describe your process in developing this policy, who you consulted, what prompted you to do it and how it will be used. You could elaborate with where it will be kept, when it will be reviewed and how the process went in general.

**What do we mean be play?** Play means different things to different people. Below are a couple of helpful definitions. You can add a statement about what play means to your school and/or use the suggested statement(s) below.

* *Article 31 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) states: “States Parties recognise the right of the child to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the children and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts.”*
* *General Comment No.17 of the UNCRC states that: “Play is any behaviour, activity or process initiated, controlled, and structured by children themselves. Play happens whenever and wherever there is an opportunity to play. The key characteristics of play are fun, uncertainty, challenge, flexibility, and non-productivity. These factors contribute to the enjoyment of playing and the incentive to continue playing.”*

**Why is play important?** There are so many benefits for children when they play. Below are some quotes which summarise some of the key benefits. Consider these, decide if you want to keep any of them and add your own thoughts and beliefs.

* *Play Strategy for Scotland: Our Vision: “To a child, play is about having fun, but to society it is much more. Play is essential to healthy development from birth to adulthood, contributing to capacity for learning, resilience, and the development of physical, cognitive, social, and emotional skills.”*
* *Playwork theorist Bob Hughes said that: “Play is an essential part of a happy, healthy childhood and when children play their brains do two things: they grow and become organised and usable.”*
* *The National Playing Fields Association’s document Best Play: What play provision should do for children states that: “Play can be fun or serious. Through play children explore social, material, and imaginary worlds and their relationship with them, elaborating all the while a flexible range of responses to the challenges they encounter. By playing, children learn and develop as individuals, and as members of the community.”*

**What play opportunities does our school provide?** To help with developing this section, you can use the following headings and considerations, adding in the needs for your school. As a preamble, you could outline some of the key changes this policy will deliver, for example: Some schools feel that football in the playground restricts play for those who don’t take part and have therefore restricted times for this.

* **Time**: Time to play is key, consider the times a child can play within the school day. This does not just have to be at breaktimes! How much time will you give to free play outdoors and more structured play indoors?
* **Environment**: Think about the space you have at your school and what type of play opportunities you will support to take place. What natural spaces are available and are there interesting features or spaces in your playground to encourage a range of different play types to take place?
* **Resources**: Explain what resources for play you will provide to support children to extend their play resources, such as loose parts, and natural materials, and how you source these.
* **Permission:**Consider how adults supervising play will respond to a child playing and learning, when will they get involved or step back, what will adults permit to take place/where do they draw a line.

**How does play link in with our learning outcomes?** Explain how what you will offer supports the learning outcomes of the Curriculum for Excellence (and outdoor learning). Consider any other outcomes, physically, emotionally, or socially your play will support (making new friends, building confidence and self-esteem etc).

<https://education.gov.scot/documents/All-experiencesoutcomes18.pdf>

**Your school will have its own ethos and several statements to support this, consider how play fits in with what you have already developed.** This could be around topics that you might not consider fit in with play such as saving the planet through reduce, re use and recycling (Scrap resources and loose parts).

**How we involve our children’s?** Consultation with the children is a key part of the process when producing a Play Policy. As part of the Child’s Right and Wellbeing Impact Assessment Tool that the Scottish Government encourage organisations, to consider the impact of the change on the children. When consulting with the children you could use fun methods to gather their thoughts like drawing their ideal playground or talking to them about their views. Add in here a summary of the children’s voices/thoughts.

**What is our approach to play (risk and challenges)?** Below is a statement from the Care Inspectorate about risky play to help you consider the approach to take within your school. Add in the approach your school will take to challenge and risky play. Dynamic risk assessments are helpful for staff to consider what they are observing and whether they need to intervene or allow the child/ren to follow through on their play. Training for PSA and teachers on risky play and the benefits, could help provide the confidence of when to step back and when to be involved. The Play Cycle helps to explain this further: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BtGrwAxgLrQ>

*“The Care Inspectorate supports care service providers taking a positive approach to risk in order to achieve the best outcomes for children. This means moving away from a traditional deficit model that takes a risk averse approach, which can unnecessarily restrict children’s experiences attending registered services, to a more holistic risk benefit model. For example, we encourage services to use risk assessment to support children to enjoy potentially hazardous activities such as woodwork using real tools, exploring nature, and playing in the mud and rain. We do not expect written risk assessments to be carried out for daily play activities.” (Care Inspectorate Position Statement 2016).*

**Our pledges to play and how we will implement these.** We have put some suggestions below to start to get you thinking, use these as a starting point to create your own pledges. For example;

*We pledge that...*

* *All p1 & p2 will have at least x hours of unstructured play each day.*
* *Loose parts resources will be available during breaktime and lunchtime.*
* *We will work with other agencies to support play within the school setting, this could include regular training and advice.*
* *Be a free member of Smart Play Network to have access to wider information on play within the sector.*
* *Inform and engage the parents/carers and families on the plans for play at school.*
* *We will listen to our children’s voices and involve them in developments to do with their play.*
* *We will identify Adult and Children ‘Play Champions’ to be ambassadors for play.*
* *….*