



ISL Surrey Risky Play Policy 2017

**Date reviewed
October 2017**

**To be reviewed
August 2018**

Mission statement

The International School of London Group is a culturally diverse community which fosters a passion and enthusiasm for learning, through outstanding educational practices. Students' cultural and linguistic identities are valued and nurtured through our international curriculum and Mother Tongue programme. Our school develops the attitudes, skills and understanding needed for active and responsible contributions to both local and global communities.

At the ISL Surrey, we believe in:

- Empowering students to maximize their learning opportunities and to fulfil their potential.
- Actively integrating cultural diversity in the curriculum.
- Creating inclusive, vibrant and innovative learning communities.
- Offering a diverse and extensive international programme that supports personal, social and professional growth.

Principles and aims

At ISL Surrey Primary School we believe that play is key to children's well-being and development and that children need challenging environments to play in that satisfy their need for risk taking. Furthermore we believe children should learn to deal with and manage environmental hazards. Our play provision offers all children the chance to learn about risk in an environment designed for that purpose, and helps prepare them to deal with similar hazards in the wider world. Learning to risk assess is an important skill and we believe in providing, through play and outdoor learning, many opportunities to develop children's risk awareness and prepare them for their future lives. Additionally, exposure to some degree of risk may be of benefit because it satisfies a basic human need and gives children the chance to learn about risk and consequences in a controlled environment

At ISL Surrey:

- We promote risk awareness rather than risk avoidance.
- We manage risk by striking a careful balance between risks and benefits.
- We believe in creating a safe learning environment, giving pupils an appreciation of risk and how to deal with it.
- We will undertake reasonable actions to reduce significant risks by putting in place control measures to manage real risks. It is not about the elimination of all risk.
- We maintain a positive attitude towards accidents by talking about what happened and discussing alternatives (rather than banning the equipment or activity that resulted in an accident)
- Our health and safety arrangements are proportionate and appropriate to the risks involved.

This Policy should be read in conjunction with our Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

What do we mean by 'risky play'?

Play Wales (2008) states that play means '*...providing opportunities for all children to encounter or create uncertainty, unpredictability, and potential hazards as part of their play. We do not mean putting children in danger of serious harm.*'

Risky play can be defined as a thrilling and exciting activity that involves a risk of physical injury, and play that provides opportunities for challenge, testing limits, exploring boundaries and learning about injury risk (Sandseter 2007; Little & Wyver, 2008). Activities such as climbing, sliding, balancing, jumping from heights and hanging upside down can be considered as risky (Tovey, 2010, pg. 79).

'Good risks and hazards in play provision are those that engage and challenge children, and support their growth, learning and development. These might include... loose materials that give children the chance to create and destroy constructions using their skill, creativity and imagination. Bad risks and hazards are those that are difficult or impossible for children to assess for themselves, and that have no obvious benefits. These might include sharp edges or points on equipment, weak structures that may collapse, and items that include traps for heads or fingers.' (Play England, 2007)

What are the benefits of 'risky play'?

'Children and young people themselves recognise that 'you can't make everything safe' and that a balance is needed between risks and fun. Children recognise that knowing about risks and how to manage them is an essential part of growing up... Through play, children are able to learn about risks and use their own initiative. If children and young people are not allowed to explore and learn through playing and taking part in positive activities, they will not learn how to judge risks and manage them for themselves. These skills learnt through play and other activities can act as a powerful form of prevention in other situations where children and young people are at risk.' (Play England, 2007)

Gives children the opportunity to access risks and manage situations.

- Children learn vital life skills needed for adulthood, and gain the experience needed to face the unpredictable nature of the world
- Risky play often leads to new learning experiences.
- Risky play is necessary for the development of children.
- Risky play allows children to extend their limits and learn life skills
- Risky play develops resilience.
- Risky play is essential for motor skills, balance, coordination and body awareness.
- Risky play encourages social skills, health and well-being.
- Risky play teaches children about their own limits and how to deal with risks in the future.
- Risky play encourages children to learn from their actions, and how to keep themselves safe.
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Furthermore; Risk taking is considered to have further benefits, which contribute to the development of desirable personality traits, including creativity (Susa and Benedict in Ball, 2002)

Managing risk and challenge

- In our planning to provide play opportunities, our goal is not to eliminate risk, but to weigh up the risks and benefits and put procedures in place to minimise the danger of harm.
- We reflect on whether the risks outweigh the benefits or vice versa to come to a conclusion that will be in the best interests of the children (Risk-Benefit Assessments).
- We recognise that a risky play situation for one child might be different to that of another and use our knowledge or support individuals to take appropriate risks in their play.
- We observe the children and identifying those who need greater challenge or specific support.
- We distinguish between acceptable and unacceptable risks including:
 - The likelihood of coming to harm;
 - The severity of that harm; and
 - The benefits, rewards or outcomes of the activity.
- We establish and display expectations for behaviour.
- We actively encourage children to assess risks and possible consequences.
- We have in place a systematic maintenance program.
- We acknowledge that risk does not always have a negative outcome. Many positives can come from taking risks. At ISL Surrey Primary School we think of risk as being divided into two components and distinguish between acceptable and unacceptable risk
 - A CHALLENGE: something obvious to the child where he/she can determine their ability and decide whether to take that risk
 - A HAZARD: something unseen or not obvious to the child that often results in injury!

Hazards

Some hazards can be turned into valuable opportunities for learning and not all potential hazards have the same degree of seriousness. When carrying out our risk-benefit assessment we look at:

- Which hazards need to be modified or removed?
- Which hazards might be acceptable or desirable because they create opportunities for children to gain access to potential benefits?
- What hazards need to be created to enhance children's opportunities to gain potential benefits?
- What is to be done about identified hazards, if anything?
- Can this hazard actually be reframed and managed as a challenge?

“An essential part of the process of a child becoming an adult is the need, and desire, to explore limits and to try new experiences. Minor injuries are part of every child's learning process and are a far more normal part of their lives than is the case for adults.” (CEN 2006)

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Appendix:

- ✓ Risk-Benefit Assessment Template