



Care, Learning and Play

Policy statement

The programme of activities and the atmosphere of our Club aims to encourage confidence, independence and enjoyment. Our work has, as its core, the aim of enabling children to develop their emotional, social, cognitive, interpersonal and physical skills, and their desire to explore, discover and be creative.

Procedures

The PlayDen will, with the help of the children, provide a well-planned and organised play environment that offers children rich and stimulating experiences, alongside opportunities to explore, experiment, plan and make decisions for themselves. The programme of activities will recognise and take into account the differing ages, interests, backgrounds and abilities of all children in the care of the setting.

Activities are carefully planned to allow children to build on their natural curiosity, advance their thinking, use their imagination and develop positive social relationships. At all times, The PlayDen will recognise a child's individuality, effort and achievement. Activities should be age related when planning. We include multi-cultural activities continuously in our planning, and have access to a multi-cultural development worker at the local authority.

Wherever appropriate, children will be involved in the process of planning activities so that the programme reflects their opinions, and so that children feel some ownership over their Club. Such processes will be governed by the procedures set out in the "Involving and Consulting Children" policy.

The staff team meet monthly to plan quality activities for After School Club, taking into account children's needs and interests.

The programme of activities will be displayed in a place that is accessible to all children and to their parents/carers. Free Play will be allowed at all times. Children will be offered access to outdoor play every day, subject to extreme weather conditions.

Individual Play Plans:

If a child is experiencing difficulties within the setting (i.e. accessing activities, have an SEN etc), an individual play plan will be put into practice.

An Individual Play Plan (IPP) should include the following:

- The nature of the child's difficulties in which areas of need.
- Usually no more than 3 short term targets set for the child to achieve in a stated length of time.
- The people who will be involved and the frequency of their support, including their parents.
- The teaching strategies that will be used.
- The provision that will be put in place.
- The outcome of the action taken.
- When the plan will be reviewed. This is usually every 6 to 8 weeks.



Early Years Foundation Stage

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) is a statutory framework that The PlayDen must adhere to.

The most recent (2024) EYFS statutory guidance states that:

3.51. Where the provision is solely before/after school care or holiday provision for children who normally attend Reception class (or older) during the school day, there must be sufficient staff as for a class of 30 children. It is for providers to determine how many staff are needed to ensure the safety and welfare of children, bearing in mind the type(s) of activity and the age and needs of the children. It is also for providers to determine what qualifications, if any, the manager and/or staff should have. See footnote 5 at paragraph 1.1 for the learning development requirements for providers offering care exclusively before/after school or during school holidays.

The PlayDen will keep to the ratio of 1:8 for all children and young people in their care when practicable. When there is a shortage of staff due to sickness and holidays, The PlayDen will use the new requirements for flexibility, still ensuring the safety and welfare of all children and young people in their care.

Staff of The PlayDen will continue to plan daily activities in the after-school club and holiday provision to enhance children's learning and development and support school staff in their long-term planning. The PlayDen will continue to share and discuss information to parents as appropriate about their child/children.

All other relevant legislation in the EYFS will be used in the setting to implement policies and procedures.

The PlayDen will comply with the learning and development requirements of the EYFS and will compile learning journals for the children in reception class and nursery. The parents and children will be notified of their family's key person and that person will be trained to understand the EYFS. Parents and carers will be asked whether they would like their child/children to be observed under the EYFS. Should they decline a note will be recorded in the child's file.

Outdoor Play

At the PlayDen the biggest part of the club's ethos is to promote outdoor play as much as possible to the children that attend. The club will always aim to provide a free flow access to the outdoor area, where this is not possible the club will aim to make an alternative arrangement.

Outdoor play promotes:

- Physical skills in gross motor movement.
- Opportunities for co-operation, language development and independence.
- Vital mathematical, scientific and creative exploration.



Children will be given the opportunity to play outside in all weathers. Parents are asked to provide suitable outdoor wear. When all the children are outside, staff will position themselves to ensure that all children are adequately supervised and supported.

Weapon and Superhero Play

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.

Historically, this type of play has often been banned from early year's settings, in the belief that it encourages aggression or violence. This ban, as well as being difficult to enforce, may well have a negative impact on young children's development, particularly boys.

Recent research and current writing suggests that children learn important lessons by exploring these themes in a safe arena of play, for example, concepts such as good and evil, life and death, strength and power, gender and identity.

We have developed this policy to support practitioners and parents to respond appropriately to superhero and weapon play. If there are concerns about aggressive or threatening behaviour, staff will follow the steps in the behaviour management policy, and subsequent dealing with negative behaviour policy.

- Although we are allowing superhero and weapon play we will discourage children bringing in toy weapons to the nursery, as this is a general rule about ANY toy, as they may get broken or lost.
- If children wish to make a weapon then this will be supported by a practitioner, as it may be an ideal learning opportunity to follow their interests. Children will also be allowed to be creative with the props that they use during this play, providing it will not break, hurt others and is observed by a practitioner.
- When superhero or weapon play is taking place, a practitioner will be nearby to observe and extend this play. The practitioner may introduce other storylines or characters to develop this in a creative or imaginative way.
- Superhero costumes are allowed from home into the OOSC, just as princess dresses or fairies are allowed. This will help practitioners to plan for individual children's interests.
- The children in the setting who show an interest in superhero or weapon play will be asked what rules they think need to be set for this play to be acceptable. A 'weapon license' will be made for each child involved in the play, with the rules on it, their picture and their signature (to show they agree to the rules.) If a practitioner sees any of the rules being broken by someone then they lose their license and they cannot continue in this play.
- When making the rules, the practitioner may need to suggest a few, such as, ensuring the children ask if others want to play with them, as certain children may feel uncomfortable with weapon or superhero play and this must not be thrust upon them.
- Conflicts and disagreements will happen, as it would in any play, and this will be dealt with a practitioner listening, discussing, compromising and resolving the problem. Please see our Behaviour Management Policy for more details.
- If parents are concerned by weapon or superhero play, then they are asked to speak to a member of staff and may then be referred onto the Manager or Deputy Manager. Their concerns will be taken seriously and the issue will be addressed.

If children within the setting do not show an interest in superhero and weapon play, then this will not be encouraged. We will only support this if their play resolves around these themes.



This policy was adopted at a meeting of	The PlayDen
Held in:	April 2026
To be reviewed in:	April 2027
Signed on behalf of the setting:	
Name of Signatory:	
Role of Signatory:	Manager Deputy Manager