Risky Play Policy

Policy

At Monkey Puzzle Colchester, we are committed to supporting children's development through a play-based approach that includes opportunities for **risky play**. We recognise that allowing children to explore risk within a safe, supervised environment is essential to developing their independence, resilience, judgment, confidence, and physical coordination.

Definition of Risky Play

Risky play refers to exciting and challenging forms of play that may involve a risk of physical injury but are **fundamental to children's learning and development**. It supports children in learning how to assess and manage risk in a controlled and safe environment.

Risk vs. Benefit in Early Years

We adopt a **risk-benefit approach** when planning and supervising play. This means carefully weighing the potential benefits of an activity against its risks, rather than eliminating risks entirely.

Benefits of Risky Play

- Develops **risk awareness and decision-making**
- Enhances **problem-solving and resilience**
- Supports **gross and fine motor skills**
- Fosters **self-confidence** and **emotional regulation**
- Encourages **creativity** and **exploration**

We aim to strike a healthy balance between keeping children safe and giving them freedom to explore, challenge themselves, and learn through experience.

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Types of Risky Play in the Early Years

Examples of risky play appropriate for early years may include but are not limited to:

Type of Risky Play	Example Activities
Height	Climbing trees or climbing frames, balancing, jumping
Speed	Running, cycling, rolling down hills, use of wheeled toys
Rough and Tumble	Superhero play, action play, destructive play such as breaking down boxes and dismantling items.
Exploration	Playing near water (puddles, shallow streams), dens or bushes, building and constructing with large materials, use of real materials
Use of Tools	Using child-safe scissors, hammers, digging tools

Staff Roles and Responsibilities

Staff have a critical role in supporting risky play by:

- **Conducting dynamic risk assessments** in real time, observing and intervening only when necessary.
- Ensuring **safe boundaries and supervision** without over-restricting children's autonomy.
- **Encouraging children** to consider the risks and benefits of their actions.
- Providing **age-appropriate tools, environments, and challenges**.
- Modelling safe behaviour and language around risk-taking.
- **Communicating with parents and carers** about the value and nature of risky play.

Reducing the Likelihood of Accidents

While we encourage risky play, we take proactive steps to minimise the likelihood of harm:

- Carry out **daily safety checks** of outdoor and indoor play areas.
- Ensure all equipment is **safe, age-appropriate, and regularly maintained**.
- Maintain appropriate **staff-to-child ratios** during risky play activities.
- Provide **clear safety rules and expectations** for children.
- Ensure **first aid trained staff** are always present.

- Maintain up-to-date **risk assessments** for all high-risk activities.
- Support children in understanding **what is safe and what is unsafe**, using language they can understand.

Communication with Parents and Carers

We ensure transparency by:

- Including information about risky play in our **parent handbook and induction** process.
- Inviting parents to **observe or participate** in activities involving managed risk.
- Offering **workshops or newsletters** explaining the developmental benefits of risky play.

Monitoring and Review

This policy is reviewed annually, or sooner if there are significant changes in guidance or incidents involving risky play. Observations and accident logs are monitored to improve practice and inform planning.

References and Guidance

- **Health and Safety Executive (HSE)** – Children's Play and Leisure: Promoting a Balanced Approach
- **Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)** Statutory Framework
- **Play Safety Forum** – Managing Risk in Play Provision: Implementation Guide
- **Forest School Association** – Principles and Good Practice