



Glascote Academy

Part of Fierté Multi Academy Trust

Policy on Risk Assessment: Foundation Stage 2018-2019

At the heart of our Trust are both the UNICEF Rights Respecting values and articles and Building Learning Power. Through these, we aim to put children's rights at the heart of our schools. We work together to embed children's rights in our ethos and culture; to improve well-being and develop every child's talents and abilities to their full potential. We aspire to give children a sense of pride and achievement in all that they undertake.

Every child has the right to:

- An education (UNICEF article 18)
- Develop their personalities, talents and abilities (UNICEF article 29)
- A range of activities (UNICEF article 31)
- Be safe (UNICEF article 19)

All through life children will meet dangerous tools, glass, china, and other hazards. Our philosophy for Reception children at Glascote Academy is that the sooner the children learn to deal with these the safer they will be. Providing real cups and knives and proper tools in other areas makes experiences real for the children and helps them to develop a sense of responsibility and self-discipline. None of these tasks are dangerous in themselves, provided that they are well supervised and safety rules are followed. In all of the areas of experience described above, the adult is a sensitive observer and enabler who can discuss and plan with the child, drawing their attention to any potential dangers and helping them to find solutions for dealing with them.

Rich, empowering, interesting experiences involve risks as well as challenges. The adult's role is to ensure that any risks are minimised so that the children can engage in the experience safely and gain from it. The Reception staff must take a risk themselves and decide on whether the educational benefits of any experience outweigh the risk. Bruce (2004) tells us that: '...safety awareness should open up and not close down learning opportunities.'

Involving children in assessing risk is part of their learning. For example:

- 'What do you think could happen if you go down the mound in a cart and X is at the bottom?' 'What do we need to do/say?' 'Look', 'wait,' 'tell him/her', could all be solutions to this problem.
- 'Do you think that it is safe to build here?'
- 'How can we make it safe/safer?'

Sometimes we may need to be prescriptive and explain our reasons. For example, when using knives or scissors:

- 'This is how you hold the knife.'
- 'Always look carefully at what you cut.'
- 'Hold it like this.'
- 'Carry the scissors like this.'

Learning basic strategies for dealing with their environment in order to manage it more safely not only empowers children but enables them to progress to more complex learning situations.

When managing risk and challenge it is the adult who must always decide on the importance of the experience, the educational benefits to the children and the ways in which they use risk for the benefit of everyone. All children are natural risk takers and challenge seekers. The question we need to address is: *'Are we going to empower them by helping them to manage risk and meet challenges positively, or are we going to introduce them to a society that is cautious, sanitised and discouraging of risk taking?'*

Development Future Matters

Development Matters makes a strong case for the need to consider sustainable development as a fundamental requirement underpinning children's wellbeing.

'Children's environmental wellbeing – their daily experience of living and learning in the environment around them, and their options and opportunities for experiencing a healthy environment in the future – is a critical factor in their overall wellbeing.'

This is a statement which many early years professionals will relate to from their own experience of what constitutes high-quality learning experiences for the children they are responsible for. Reception children are given opportunities to play outdoors every day in the secure outdoor area which enables them to engage with the environment in all weather conditions and to build an understanding and appreciation of the natural world which are experiences that all young children are entitled to as part of the EYFS. Outdoor activities are supervised by a member of staff.

Education for life

Early Years education is 'education for life' and life itself is a series of risks and challenges! Therefore, it is very important to prepare children for these as part of their Foundation Stage experience. Allowing children to take risks within a safe and secure environment is vital.

Challenge is an integral part of life and development, and often the way in which children move on to the next stage of learning. Risk is anything that an individual child does not normally choose to do. As with adults, risks and challenges will vary for each individual. What is a risk or challenge for one may be a very ordinary experience for another. Risks can vary from making a simple guess to using sharp knives or cooking over a flame. The adult's role is to recognise when a child is taking what is a risk for them, and to support and encourage them in their self-chosen tasks.

Limiting children may discourage their creative ideas and even put them off participating in an experience. It can also have a detrimental effect on their growing independence. For example: staff saying "do not build above your shoulder" immediately limits what children are capable of doing with a set of blocks. Life skills are built through experiential learning.

Monitoring and review

This procedure is monitored by the governing body, and will be reviewed in two years, earlier if necessary.

Signed:

Date: