**Policy on play.**

“Play is the highest level of child development. It is the spontaneous expression of thought and feeling. Play is never trivial-it is sometimes serious and deeply significant”.

Froebel (The Education of Man). Children develop very quickly during the first five years of life and pre-school provision facilitates this development – physically, intellectually, emotionally and socially, through playful experiences.

**Characteristics of play:**

-Play is the child’s principle means of learning and is the starting point of cognitive development. Through play, a child begins to explore, question, investigate, form concepts, solve problems, practice skills and eventually come to terms with his/her environment.

-Play promotes the acquisition of language and helps the child to express his/her innermost thoughts and feelings.

-Play helps the child to develop emotionally by promoting self-esteem and self-awareness and helping the child to empathise and cope with situations.

-Play aids social development through co-operation with peers, sharing, taking turns, keeping rules, becoming aware of right and wrong and by enabling the child to respect other people.

-Play influences the physical development of the child, improving co-ordination skills and manipulative skills.

-Play stimulates the growth of imagination and creativity.

-Finally, play is of intrinsic worth; it is self-motivating and improves concentration. It is an enjoyable means of promoting the all-round development of the child.

It is always our policy:

-To provide a stimulating and enjoyable environment, both indoors and outdoors, where the child is given the opportunity to develop to his/her fullest potential across the 6 areas of the pre-school curriculum.

-To ensure progression in learning by building on previous experiences and, through regular observations of the children at play, matching materials / resources with children’s’ interests and developmental stages.

-To ensure a balance with child initiated and adult led experiences.

-To foster language acquisition and enrichment. To help the child come to terms with his/her environment by promoting self-control, positive self-esteem and self-worth and encouraging self-discipline.

-To increase social awareness by encouraging the child to empathise, share, co-operate, take turns and respect others.

-To improve physical development, muscular co-ordination and fine motor skills.

-To increase motivation and improve concentration.

-To encourage self-expression through creative and imaginative play.

-To promote play as an enjoyable activity.

Staff will participate in the children’s play, initiating ideas and helping to develop them, introducing skills, encouraging positive attitudes, helping children to establish relationships and fostering language.

Intervention will be necessary at times, to ensure safety, prevent disruptive behaviour and solve stalemates.

Pre-school staff will work together to draw up and implement long term and short-term plans of activity, evaluating progress and keeping adequate records.

Pre-school staff will observe play closely to ensure fruitful participation, planning and evaluation.