



Weapon and Superhero Play Policy

At St Marks Pre-school we feel it is important to create a whole setting approach of which practitioners, children and parents have a clear understanding. This policy is a formal statement of our approach to children's weapon and superhero imaginative play.

Children learn actively through play, first-hand experiences, creativity and critical thinking. As children learn and develop, they "*actively build their own meanings by applying, revising and reapplying what they know.*" (EYFS card 4.2 *Active Learning in depth*).

Boys often appear to be more active learners than girls, but whether or not there is a gender divide in this respect, active learners need opportunities to make their own decisions and have control over their learning to keep their interest and to develop their creativity.

Principles that underpin the policy

The principles that underpin our Superhero and Weapon play policy are that:

- Approaches to teaching and learning in role play should reflect the interests of the children and not exclusively those of the adults. Effective and engaging play is about our setting fitting the interests of the child, not the child fitting the setting.
- Planning for role play in the environment should be based upon assessment information from the observed play of the current cohort.
- Styles of teaching and learning should meet the needs of children and not pre-conceived notions of what is or is not appropriate role play.
- All children's emotional welfare, wellbeing and involvement should be assessed in relation to this style of play.
- Children should enjoy the play opportunity. The weapon/superhero play should motivate and challenge children.
- The creation of an effective culture of weapon/superhero play in any setting takes time and is a process rather than an event.
- Parents and carers need to feel well informed about and comfortable with the setting's approach to weapon/superhero play and the principles that underpin it.

St Marks Pre-school will acknowledge the positive aspects of the character of the superhero and highlight the negative aspects of weapon use and physical violence at a level that is appropriate to the age and needs of the children. This will be mainly done through story, drama and appropriate discussion.

Procedure

- In planning for an individual child's interests and acknowledging play that revolves around this, the practitioner team will support superhero and weapon play but will not actively encourage/promote this play.

- The pre-school discourages any children from bringing toys in from home as these may get broken or lost. This rule applies to toy weapons. If a child brings a Superhero outfit in to pre-school, there is an expectation that other children will be able to take turns wearing it too.
- If children wish to make a weapon then this will be supported by a practitioner, as it may be an ideal opportunity to incorporate learning into a child's interest. Children will also be allowed to be creative with the props that they use during this play, providing it will not break or 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 play in a creative or imaginative way.
- Practitioners will encourage children to engage in superhero or weapon play outside as this allows children to distance themselves if they do not want to join in.
- Conflicts and disagreements will happen, as they would in any play, and this will be dealt with by a practitioner listening, discussing, compromising and resolving the problem.
- Alongside weapon and superhero play there will always be other areas in the pre-school for the children to access that support other models of role play, e.g. home corner, vets, doctors, etc.
- The children who show interest in superhero or weapon play at pre-school will be asked to adhere to the following rules:
 - ✓ No one must be hurt for real as a result of this play and any such outcome will result in the termination of the game. What is important to focus on is that it is the harm that is discouraged rather than the form of play.
 - ✓ Children should check that other children want to join in before involving them or aiming the game their way.
 - ✓ Vocabulary or a tone of voice that reflects the character the child is pretending to be is OK if the language used is still appropriate for pre-school.
 - ✓ Children should look where they are going. They should take care not to crash into other children or the resources they are using or interfere with other children's use of space.
 - ✓ If a child breaks the rules, then this child cannot continue in this play. They will be asked to take off any outfit that is part of this play and relinquish any props.
 - ✓ Practitioners may also encourage/support children to think of additional rules themselves to ensure that it is acceptable to others.

RULE OF THUMB for practitioners:

- If the play witnessed seems to lack sufficient mutuality or feel imposed on any children, remind the children of the ground rules.
- If the play feels like it has crossed the line into something featuring genuine aggression, then the play should be stopped or those children exhibiting this behaviour removed from the game. These children will be asked to take off any outfit that is part of this play and relinquish any props.
- Communicating clear and consistent expectations will mean that children soon learn the acceptable boundaries.

Initial preparations

The types of play that all children engage in is enhanced or diminished by the quality of the learning environment inside and out. The EYFS card, *Supporting Every Child*, flags up that: "Children need

sensitive, knowledgeable adults who know when and how to engage their interests and how to offer support at different times.” (card 3.2)

Practitioners must take responsibility for ensuring the learning environment is planned to inspire, challenge and intrigue every child.

All practitioners will:

- observe children’s individual and group imaginative play within the setting identifying themes that result in high level engagement.
- be aware that the success of some themes and enhancements will differ between cohorts/ groups of children, therefore plan to the needs of the current cohort.
- build on what children know and understand.

Creating an appropriate environment

Practitioners will:

- be aware of the thinking that underpins this policy.
- involve themselves with every child’s choice of role play and learning experiences regardless of any perceived gender choices.
- think creatively about how the environment can support weapon/superhero play.
- provide resources and enhancements (including appropriate construction materials) are in place to specifically support this style of play. Some resources may replicate actual objects alongside others that will be open ended and ambiguous to allow for individual interpretation and foster an approach of imagination and creativity.

If parents are concerned by weapon or superhero play, the Pre-school Manager will take these concerns seriously and seek to discuss and resolve these.

This policy will be reviewed regularly, and we will assess how we can best support, assist and facilitate weapon and superhero play.

This policy was adopted at a meeting of the pre-school held on (date)

Signed on behalf of the pre-school

Also see: Parental Involvement
Safeguarding

Positive Behaviour Management Policy
Valuing Diversity and Promoting Inclusion and Equality