

# Gun and Superhero Play Policy

At The Orchard Day Nursery Kingston, we recognise that children often explore themes of superheroes, rescue services, heroes, conflict, power, protection and imaginary weapons through their play. These interests form part of many children's developing understanding of the world and provide valuable opportunities for learning when supported appropriately by skilled practitioners.

In line with the **Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)**, we value child-led play and understand that practitioners play an important role in extending children's thinking, language, imagination, emotional development and understanding of relationships whilst ensuring that all children remain safe and feel secure.

This policy should be read alongside our Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, Promoting Positive Behaviour Policy, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy, SEND Policy and Curriculum Statement.

## Why Children May Engage in Superhero or Weapon-Themed Play

Children's interests may develop through a range of experiences including:

- Favourite books, films or television programmes
- Imaginative stories
- Superhero characters
- Emergency services and community helpers
- Historical events
- Family experiences or occupations, including the armed forces or emergency services
- Online media viewed at home
- Discussions with peers or siblings
- Personal experiences or significant life events.

Practitioners understand that children's play does not necessarily reflect aggressive behaviour or attitudes. Instead, it often represents curiosity, imagination, problem-solving or an attempt to understand experiences.

## Our Approach

We provide an environment where children are supported to express themselves safely and appropriately.

Practitioners will:

- Follow children's interests whilst maintaining appropriate boundaries
- Use children's play to extend communication and language
- Encourage imaginative storytelling and problem-solving
- Support children to identify and express emotions
- Promote empathy, kindness and respect
- Encourage cooperation, negotiation and turn-taking
- Help children understand the difference between fantasy and real life
- Model peaceful conflict resolution
- Reinforce that people should not deliberately hurt others.

Rather than focusing on weapons, practitioners will extend children's ideas by exploring characters, adventures, teamwork, rescue missions, helping others and solving problems together.

### **Safe Play Expectations**

Where superhero or weapon-themed play emerges naturally, practitioners will ensure:

- All children feel safe and included
- Participation is always voluntary
- Children who do not wish to join the play can access uninterrupted alternative experiences
- Clear, age-appropriate boundaries are agreed with children
- Play does not involve physical aggression, intimidation, bullying or exclusion
- Children do not point imaginary or constructed weapons directly at another person's face
- No child is made to feel frightened or distressed
- Play is stopped immediately if it becomes unsafe or causes upset.

Staff will support children to develop self-regulation and consider how their actions affect others.

### **Promoting Positive Learning**

Practitioners will extend learning through opportunities to:

- Tell and create stories
- Solve problems together
- Develop imaginative play
- Explore courage, kindness and helping others
- Learn about real-life heroes such as firefighters, nurses, doctors, paramedics, teachers, lifeboat crews, community volunteers and other people who help us
- Discuss fairness, friendship and cooperation
- Explore emotions including excitement, fear, sadness and happiness
- Build communication and vocabulary
- Develop gross motor skills through active play.

Open-ended resources such as fabric, loose parts, construction materials and role-play equipment will be used to encourage creativity rather than reliance on commercial character toys.

### **Inclusion and Equality**

We recognise that children access superhero and role-play experiences differently.

Practitioners will:

- Avoid reinforcing gender stereotypes
- Ensure all children can participate regardless of gender, culture, disability or background
- Value children's individual interests
- Adapt experiences to meet individual developmental needs
- Support children with SEND through appropriate scaffolding and adult guidance.

### **Trauma-Informed Practice**

We understand that some children and families may have experienced trauma, violence, bereavement or conflict.

Practitioners will:

- Remain sensitive to children's individual experiences
- Observe children's play carefully for signs of distress
- Avoid making assumptions about the meaning of children's play
- Provide additional emotional support where needed
- Work in partnership with parents and external professionals where appropriate
- Follow safeguarding procedures if children's play raises concerns about their welfare.

### **Partnership with Parents**

We recognise that families may hold different views regarding superhero or weapon-themed play.

We will:

- Explain our approach to supporting children's interests safely
- Listen respectfully to parental concerns
- Work together where individual adaptations are appropriate
- Ensure parents understand how practitioners promote positive behaviour, empathy and emotional development through play.

### **Staff Responsibilities**

All practitioners are expected to:

- Model respectful behaviour at all times
- Intervene appropriately where play becomes unsafe
- Use positive language to extend children's learning
- Support children to resolve disagreements peacefully
- Maintain high expectations for behaviour
- Provide consistent responses in line with the nursery's Behaviour Policy
- Record and report any safeguarding concerns in accordance with nursery procedures.

The Nursery Manager (Learning & Development) will monitor practice to ensure this policy is implemented consistently and remains in line with current EYFS requirements, safeguarding guidance and best practice.

This policy will be reviewed annually or sooner if guidance changes.

| <b>This policy was adopted on</b> | <b>Signed on behalf of the nursery</b> | <b>Date for review</b> |
|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------------|------------------------|
| <i>05/08/2026</i>                 | F.Joyce                                | <i>December 2026</i>   |