

## Thanet Early Years Project

### Weapon and Superhero Play Policy Statement

At Thanet Early Years Project (TEYP) we recognise that each child is unique, and we will support them to be resilient, capable, confident and self assured. Children learn to be strong and independent from a base of secure and loving relationships, as well as having the opportunity to learn in a positive and stimulating environment.

At Thanet Early Years Project, we aim to provide support for all areas of learning and understand that from time to time, children may show an interest in superhero and weapon play.

#### **Rationale**

Historically, this type of play has often been banned from early years settings, in the belief that it encourages aggression or violence. This ban, as well as being difficult to enforce, may well have a negative impact on young children's development, particularly boys.

Recent research and current writing suggest that children learn important lessons by exploring these themes in a safe arena of play. For example, concepts such as good and evil, life and death, strength and power, gender and identity.

We have developed this policy to support practitioners and parents to respond appropriately to superhero and weapon play. If there are concerns about aggressive or threatening behaviour, staff and managers will refer to the **Behaviour Management Policy and Procedure**.

#### **Aims and Objectives**

Although we allow superhero and weapon play, we discourage children from bringing in toy weapons to the nursery, *and this is a general rule about ANY toy*, as they may get broken or lost.

If children wish to make a weapon then this will be supported by a practitioner. This will be viewed as an ideal learning opportunity for children to follow their interests. Children will also be allowed to be creative with the props that they use during this play, providing it will not break, 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 in a creative or imaginative way.

Superhero costumes are provided in the nursery alongside princess dresses and fairies etc. This will help practitioners to plan for individual children's interests.

The children in the setting who show an interest in superhero or weapon play will be asked what rules they think need to be set for this play to be acceptable, for example, children must not hit others, point guns into children's faces or damage property. If a practitioner sees any of the rules being broken then the children will be reminded of the rules. However, if superhero or weapon play is deemed to lack purpose or be dangerous, practitioners will gently intervene with a view to supporting children to enjoy their play whilst adhering to the rules or if necessary, children will be asked to surrender their weapons/costumes in order to stop any dangerous or hazardous play.

When making the rules the practitioner may need to suggest a few guidelines, such as, ensuring the children ask if others want to play with them, as certain children may feel uncomfortable with weapon or superhero play and this must not be thrust upon them and/or the importance of being kind to others.

Superhero or weapon play will mostly take place outside as the setting allows children to free flow for large parts of the day. However, during inclement weather, it may be necessary to allow superhero and weapon play in certain areas of the nursery. This should be away from the quieter activities and allow other children to distance themselves if they do not want to join in.

Conflicts and disagreements will happen, as it would in any play, and this will be dealt with by a practitioner listening, discussing, compromising and resolving the problem. Please see our **Behaviour Management Policy and Procedure** for more details.

If parents are concerned by weapon or superhero play, then they are asked to speak to a member of staff. Their concerns may then be referred on to the Nursery Manager or Project Manager. Their concerns will be taken seriously, and any issues will be addressed.

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

If children within the setting, do not show an interest in superhero and weapon play then this will not be encouraged. We will only support this if their play revolves around these themes.