

Baltasound Junior High School

Play Policy

"If we had nothing to play with school would be really boring. I would hate school. We wouldn't even be able to learn." (Anya Johnson, P3, BJHS)

"Children need the freedom and time to play. Play is not a luxury. Play is a necessity. (Kay Redfield Jamison)

"Play is a very misused adult word. To a child it is a way of life. To an adult it often means unimportant recreational things we do when we are not working" (Jean-Jaques Rousseau)



Introduction and Aims

At Baltasound Junior High School we are committed to putting play and play-based approaches at the heart of our learning and curriculum. Our school values are **Ready, Respectful** and **Safe**. These support us to be active members of our community and make us ready for life beyond BJHS. When we are ready, safe and respectful then we can be in the best position for learning, growth and meaningful play experiences which help our educations. We believe that a variety of play experiences throughout school, both indoors and outdoors, help foster curiosity, develop important life skills and build autonomy and resilience in our learners.

We aim to;

- make play a daily experience for all of our pupils in Early Years and our Primary Department while also integrating play into our Secondary Department where possible.
- ensure that our spaces for play, both indoors and outdoors, offer opportunities and possibilities for our learners to develop and explore.
- provide flexible, child focussed and engaging experiences and contexts to encourage learner led decision making and problem solving.

What is Play?

The Playwork Principles say play "is a process that is freely chosen, personally directed and intrinsically motivated. That is, children and young people determine and control the content and intent of their play, by following their own instincts, ideas and interests, in their own way for their own reasons."

Play is one of the most important aspects of childhood and is a fundamental right under Article 31 of the UNCRC. It allows children to make sense of the world around them, develop essential skills, and express themselves freely. Play can take place indoors or outdoors, be structured or unstructured, and encompass a wide range of experiences. It can be creative, messy, active, imaginative, and/or involve technology and is different for all learners and stages.

The Benefits of Play

"Play helps us learn, we are lucky to be able to play." (Nula Thomason, P4 BJHS)

"To a child, play is about having fun, but to society it is much more. Play is essential to healthy development from birth to adulthood, contributing to capacity for learning, resilience and the development of physical, cognitive, social and emotional skills." (Play Strategy for Scotland: Our Vision).

"Play creates a brain that has increased flexibility and improved potential for learning later in life." (Lester & Russell: Play for Change)

"Play can be fun or serious. Through play children explore social, material and imaginary worlds and their relationship with them, elaborating all the while a flexible range of responses to the challenges they encounter. By playing, children learn and develop as individuals, and as members of the community." (National Playing Fields Association: Best Play)

“Play is an essential part of a happy, healthy childhood and when children play their brains do two things: they grow and become organised and usable.” (Bob Hughes, Play work Theorist)

Play Opportunities in Baltasound JHS

At Baltasound JHS we recognise the value play has in developing young people who are ready, respectful and safe. We will ensure our pupils have a range of opportunities across the curriculum and school. Play is not just about having fun but is a powerful tool for learning. Through play, our pupils develop problem-solving skills, deepen their understanding of literacy and numeracy, and build confidence in exploring new ideas in a hands-on, meaningful way. These include adult led, adult initiated and child led learning opportunities depending on the age and stage of development of individual learners and classes. We believe time to play is vital, this includes short bursts of play, but also longer uninterrupted periods to allow them to fully immerse themselves in play for longer periods. The environment we create is the platform for play. We will create spaces across Early Years, Primary and Secondary that promote play and offer variety, allowing them to explore, discover and thrive.

Our Approaches to Risk and Challenges

“We are managing risk taking ourselves because when you are an adult there are lots of risks you can take or not take.” (Rosie Gazey, P5, BJHS)

Play naturally involves risk and we will allow our learners to engage in this type of play. We aim to strike a balance between keeping children safe while also allow them to be independent decision makers. Staff will manage these risky moments using on the spot risk benefit assessments and use these as opportunities to explain and educate learners about making safe choices, which is an essential part of lifelong learning. Exploring risks allows children to explore their limits and develop new skills, after all, children would never learn to climb, ride a bike, or navigate challenges without opportunities to take risks in a supportive environment. The sense of achievement that comes from overcoming a challenge can lead to proud learning moments that build resilience and self-belief.

The Role of the Adult

“When the adults play it makes play much more fun. It’s good that they can be silly.” (Eddie Moar, P5, BJHS)

At Baltasound Junior High School, we recognise that adults play a crucial role in supporting and enriching play experiences. However, this role varies depending on the needs of the learner and the situation. In our Secondary department, we hope adults foster a playful approach to learning by encouraging exploration, inquiry, and creativity across subjects. We encourage adults to take both a supportive and active role in play, this includes engaging with children, modelling, and extending learning through language and resources. When adults join in play with enthusiasm, they promote creativity, encourage problem-solving, and build trusting relationships with learners. At the same time, it is equally important for adults to recognize when to step back, ensuring that their involvement does not disrupt or interfere with the child’s natural play experience. In addition to active participation, we want our staff to develop confidence as observers, reflecting on the learning taking place and using this as a valuable assessment tool. This reflection can happen ‘in the moment’ or later, allowing adults to support children by scaffolding their thinking, expanding their knowledge, and making meaningful connections in their learning.

Baltasound Junior High Schools Play Promises

- We commit to maximising play opportunities across the whole school.
- We commit to valuing child-led play and giving learners time and space to follow their own ideas.
- We commit to providing a rich environment for play, both inside and outdoors.
- We commit to fostering a whole-school culture where adults engage playfully and observe meaningfully to enrich learning.

Date: April 2025

To Be Reviewed: August 2026