

Islington Play Association's Adventure Playgrounds

Adventure Playgrounds are spaces where children are free to come and go as they like, free to play how they want and playgrounds are free at the point of access. In this way children's opinions are utmost, they decide how and when they play, with who and where, and let us know whether the playground is a good place to play or not. They can choose to leave if it is not good enough for their needs.

IPA's childcare services, including those at Martin Luther King, follow this play focussed ethos and all children that attend IPA services are supported by trained playworkers to develop emotionally, socially and physically. The only difference is that childcare children are not allowed to choose to leave.

Trained playworkers observe children at play and **only intervene** if needed ie someone is at risk of serious emotional or physical harm. If a child can resolve problems for themselves, they become more confident and empowered and get to know themselves and others. Unless children have the opportunity to do this how will they find out if they can?

It is vital that parents understand the **ethos of adventure play** and support this alternative approach to the structured and controlled environments that children spend most of their time in.

It is easy to see the benefits of climbing on structures and physically active games for children, however social and emotional development happens in ways which can **sometimes be difficult** for parents to handle. Whilst it is clear children are generally happy whilst playing with other children (one of the wonderful benefits of play on children's wellbeing) there are lots of other challenging situations both socially and emotionally which children have to navigate when at play.

At our playgrounds children may:

Get muddy or messy (children should come in suitable clothes)

Get wet

Play sword fighting with sticks

Play with children whom their parents might not know

Enjoy challenging Play ie jumping off high platforms or other rough and tumble play

Negotiate arguments with other children

Graze their knees, get splinters or even take a knock or two

Use equipment, objects or furniture in an unusual way, children have great imaginations!

Test boundaries, with our trained adults, behaviour, language etc learn through experience and following their own curiosity.

All these things are play!

Play is the way children explore themselves, the world and others.