

Play Therapy – Information for Schools

What is Play Therapy and how does it work?

Play is essential for children to develop physically, emotionally and socially.

Play allows children to develop their imagination and creativity and it encourages confidence and concentration. Play helps children to make friends and to make sense of their ever changing and growing world. It also allows them to make mistakes safely.

Play is a symbolic communication – a child will often communicate through play what they cannot express with words. Play also acts as a bridge between the conscious awareness and emotional experiences.

Play Therapy is not a quick fix – each child has twelve or more weekly sessions and it helps most children. These sessions will be at the same time each week. If a child misses a session, it will not be made up.

77% to 82% of children referred show positive improvement.

Play helps children to:

- ✓ Understand relationships
- ✓ Experience and identify emotions
- ✓ Act out troublesome issues
- ✓ Practise roles
- ✓ Explore situations
- ✓ Learn, relax and have fun
- ✓ Develop physical skills
- ✓ Find out what is 'me' and what is 'not me'

Time visiting with a Play Therapist enables a child to consider and acknowledge their feelings. It helps them learn that is OK to feel and teaches them to cope with big feelings in a safe and constructive way. Play Therapy is integrative, it draws on many types of therapy and works



well alongside most other kinds of support that children may have in school.

Visiting with Elaine is:

- ✓ Non-judgemental
- ✓ Non-directive
- ✓ Non-interpretive

Play Therapy has very few rules, but as many as necessary:

- Everyone in the playroom is safe
- Everything in the playroom is safe

The equipment offered in each session includes:

- ✓ A sand tray with dry sand – and if there is space, another tray with wet sand
- ✓ A selection of symbols that will encourage the child to create any story in the tray, on the floor, or a table
- ✓ Clay – usually grey and red
- ✓ Art and drawing materials – paints, glue, glitter, collage etc.
- ✓ Small world play equipment including people, animals, vehicles and houses
- ✓ Music and movement equipment, including instruments
- ✓ Puppets
- ✓ Dolls, medical and caring equipment
- ✓ Dressing up equipment, such as masks, scarves, hats, glasses etc.

Please be aware that a child may get a little messy when visiting to play. I ask parents to provide 'messy clothes' for each child if they are worried about this, so please encourage the child to change into these before the session if they are provided, as this will really help!

Each session will last for 40 minutes, and I will collect and return the child to your classroom unless we make other arrangements. Sometimes Play



Therapy is hard work, so please be understanding if they are tired when they get back or need a little time to 'come back into the room' for you.

Sometimes big feelings come up in the playroom for the child and this can mean their behaviour can get worse before it gets better as they process those feelings. If you're worried, or there is anything you think I need to know, please let me know. Likewise, if there is anything important that I need to tell you, I will of course let you know too. I know it's tempting to ask what is happening in the play room, but please don't quiz the child. They are always told they can tell anyone anything they like about their time in the playroom, so please let them tell you, rather than you asking them.

I will make time to meet with you towards the end of each child's sessions – usually around session 10, and hopefully with the parents too, so that we can review the Play Therapy so far and plan together what is going to happen next.

You can also help me by letting me know if a child is going to have a planned absence e.g. school trips and I will do my best to help. If I'm ill, the office and SENCO will have a script to help the child deal with my absence in a therapeutic way.

Please catch me at school or get in contact via phone or email if there is anything you want to discuss. I'm always happy to chat.

About me

My name is Elaine Hutchinson and I have worked with children and their families for over 25 years. I am a qualified primary school teacher who specialises in special educational needs, behaviour, child development and social, emotional and mental health. I am a Play and Creative Arts Therapist, Emotional Logic Coach and Thrive Practitioner. I live in Somerset and I am mum to two teenagers.



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You can contact me using the email or phone numbers below.

About Orca



Orca is my therapy dog, there is lots of research supporting animal assisted therapy (AAT). Sometimes she is in my playroom, provided school, parents and child are happy for her to be there.

We will agree about whether she is in school and in the playroom with children before she just 'appears' in school.

She is half collie, half miniature poodle and she looks like a little black rug! She loves people and her favourite snack is cheese.

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