

# Play Therapy – Information for Parents and Carers

## 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 your 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 your child 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 your child may get a little messy when visiting to play. If this is likely to be a problem, please provide 'messy clothes' for your child to change into for the sessions. I do provide aprons, but because play therapy is non-directive, I can't insist your child puts one on.

Each session will last for 40 minutes, and I will collect and return your child from their class teacher. Sometimes Play Therapy is hard work, so



please be understanding if they are tired when they come home at the end of the day.

Sometimes big feelings come up in the playroom for a 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, but please don't quiz your 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 your child's sessions – usually around session 10, so that we can review the Play Therapy so far and plan together what is going to happen next. I also will have a similar meeting with school.

You can also help me by asking school to tell me if your child is away on a Play Therapy day or by letting me know directly. If I'm ill, the office and SENCO will have a script to help your 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.



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.

Creating  
CALM

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