



Play Policy

Statement of Intent

Our school undertakes to refer to this play policy in all decisions that affect children's play. Bankfields Primary is committed to providing the strategic and operational leadership needed to provide and maintain quality play provision for all of our children. Our school believes that all children need opportunities to play that allow them to explore, manipulate, experience and affect their environment. We believe play provision should be welcoming and accessible to every child, irrespective of gender, economic or social circumstances, ethnic or cultural background or origin, or individual abilities.

The OPAL Primary Programme rationale is that *"... better, more active and creative playtimes can mean happier and healthier children, and having happier, healthier, more active children usually results in a more positive attitude to learning in school, with more effective classroom lessons, less staff time spent resolving unnecessary behavioural problems, fewer playtime accidents, happier staff and a healthier attitude to life."*

Definition and Value of Play

Play is defined as a process that is intrinsically motivated, directed by the child and freely chosen by the child. Play has its own value and provides its own purpose. It may or may not involve equipment or other people. We believe play has many benefits, including:

- Play is critical to children's health and wellbeing, and essential for their physical, emotional, social, spiritual and intellectual development.
- Play enables children to explore the physical and social environment, as well as different concepts and ideas.
- Play enhances children's self-esteem and their understanding of others through freely chosen social interactions, within peer groups, with individuals, and within groups of different ages, abilities, interests, genders, ethnicities and cultures.
- Play requires ongoing communication and negotiation skills, enabling children to develop a balance between their right to act freely and their responsibilities to others.
- Play enables children to experience a wide range of emotions and develop their ability to cope with these, including sadness and happiness, rejection and acceptance, frustration and achievement, boredom and fascination, fear and confidence.
- Play encourages self-confidence and the ability to make choices, problem solve and to be creative.
- Play maintains children's openness to learning, develops their capabilities and allows them to push the boundaries of what they can achieve.

Aims and Objectives

In relation to play our school aims to:

- Ensure play settings provide a varied, challenging and stimulating environment.
- Allow children to take risks and use a common-sense approach to the management of these risks and their benefits.
- Provide opportunities for children to develop their relationships with each other.
- Enable children to develop respect for their surroundings and each other.
- Aid children's physical, emotional, social, spiritual and intellectual development.
- Provide a range of environments that will encourage children to explore and play imaginatively.
- Provide a range of environments that will support children's learning across the curriculum and learning about the world around them.
- Promote independence and teamwork within children.
- Build emotional and physical resilience.

Types of Play

While links are made to children's development and to the curriculum, it is not suggested that we should prioritise one set of play types to the exclusion of others – they are all equally beneficially important and, for maximum enjoyment, children will be able to make their own play choices. The children will have opportunities to experience a range of different types of play, including:

- Creative play- Making, painting, manipulating materials. Using imagination and inventiveness with materials and ideas. Use of any medium for its own sake often in new combinations. Original expression of emotions, feelings and ideas. Playing with 'loose parts'.
- Exploratory play- Physically exploring an environment – going higher, further, jumping over, jumping on, feeling, tasting, swinging from. Testing 'what happens if...?' Manipulating objects or environment and assessing their properties Exploring fire, puddles, earth, etc.
- Mastery play- Digging holes. Building moats in sand in the path of the tide. Changing course of streams (building dams) Growing things Blocking drains to create puddles Demolition and construction.
- Object play- The object itself is the focus of the play and may be used in unexpected or unconventional ways. Testing, discovering the possibilities of an object Can involve any object e.g. - sticks and stones - household items
- Communication play- Imitation for comic effect Singing, rhyming. Non-verbal communication: gesture, hands and body language. The 'play face' (giving the message that 'this is play') and other signals of intention.
- Dramatic play- Making plays, song and dance routines. Dramatisation of conversations and of everyday events.
- Role play- Child enacts adult, or other, behaviours e.g. driving, cooking. Plays a family character, community person or celebrity.
- Social play- Any social or interactive experience. Negotiation of rules and social norms. Board games. Conversation/negotiation. Locomotor games. Creating things together.
- Rough and tumble play- Tests of strength. Physical contact games. Wrestling, playful pushing, shoving and jostling.
- Locomotor play- chase, tig, hide and seek, throw/catch. Climbing, jumping, swinging, ball games, hula hoops, skipping, racing.
- Deep play- Jumping off, climbing up, moving fast. Pushing boundaries, almost out of control. Imaginary monsters or scary animals.
- Fantasy play and imaginative play- Being a fire breathing dragon. Casting spells and 'doing magic'. Unconventional use of props. Being a tree/ship Patting invisible animals/ eating invisible food. Use of objects as other objects, e.g. using a bench as a bus.
- Recapitulative play- Dens, camps, homes and caves. Growing and cooking things.
- Symbolic play- Props given specific symbolic meaning. Camps to symbolise 'home'.

Assemblies Focused on Playtime

OPAL play assemblies will be held regularly with children to discuss, inform and negotiate risks that arise during play. Assemblies will be held at least once every half term when the children and staff are confident in all aspects of their playtime opportunities and risks. Assemblies will aim to:

- Celebrate our school's culture of play and children's creativity.
- Inform children of changes, rights, and agreements.
- Negotiate with children on issues such as risk, tidy-up and expected behaviours.
- Innovate around what children are currently playing to deepen children's engagement.

Play assemblies have dual purposes:

- To ensure that all children, staff and parents understand how much respect and regard your school has for the children's play.
- To ensure all children understand the risks and their responsibilities regarding the play opportunities, and that children and staff are involved in agreeing rules and ways of practice.

As part of our health and safety recording, a brief written log will be kept noting risks discussed in play assemblies and how they will be managed.

Rights

Our school recognises the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which includes *the right to play, recreation and leisure* (Article 31) and the *right of children to be listened to on matters important to them* (Article 12). We acknowledge that we have a duty to take these rights seriously and listen to children's views on their play.

Benefit and Risk

'Play is great for children's wellbeing and development. When planning and providing play opportunities, the goal is not to eliminate risk, but to weigh up the risks and benefits. No child will learn about risk if they are wrapped in cotton wool.'

Managing Risk in Play Provision: An Implementation Guide (Play Safety Forum, 2012) **We will use the Health and Safety Executive guidance document *Children's Play and Leisure – Promoting a Balanced Approach* (September 2012) as the principal value statement informing its approach to managing risk in play.** In doing so, the school will adopt a risk-benefit approach as detailed in *Managing Risk in Play Provision: An Implementation Guide* (Play Safety Forum, 2012).

Risk-taking is an essential feature of play provision and of all environments in which children legitimately spend time at play. Play provision aims to offer children the chance to encounter acceptable risks as part of a stimulating, challenging and managed play environment. As outlined in the play sector publication 'Best Play', play provision should aim to *'manage the balance between the need to offer risk and the need to keep children and young people safe from harm'*.

In addition to standard risk-benefit assessments the school will practice dynamic risk management with children, encouraging them to identify and manage risks in an environment where adults are present to support them. All staff in the playground and those with responsibility for children at play will be aware of the changing nature of the play taking place. They will support children to assess and manage risk as much as possible for themselves, but they will also be vigilant and take action if they think that the risk of serious harm is becoming unacceptably likely. Actions taken by staff when required will balance the reduction of likelihood or severity of harm while preserving as much of the benefit of the play as possible and empowering the children to manage future risk as much as possible.

Dynamic risk management in playwork requires that staff maintain 'relaxed vigilance'. The quality of play will suffer if the adult's attitude is one of hovering, anxious over-attention. There should be an assumption that most play is not dangerous and that children can develop a high degree of competence, given practice, over time. However, staff will also be vigilant, and they will be aware of the kinds of play and resources being used in their zone, who is playing and what the likely risks are.

All play team staff will be trained and reminded that active risk management is an essential part of their job using the OPAL *Playwork Essentials for Primary Schools* course and training book. They should be observant, mobile and attentive at all times.

OPAL schools aim to maximise the use of their site for free-range play. This will be done with consideration to health and safety requirements and evidence that this has been done will be available; this is covered by OPAL's five-point RAPID process, which all OPAL schools must adopt.

- R: Risk-benefit assessment
- A: Assemblies focused on playtime
- P: Policy for play ratified by your governors or equivalent
- I: Inspections carried out regularly
- D: Dynamic risk management embraced by all staff

Supervision

The law requires that children in school have supervision but for primary school playtimes there are no stated ratios. During the school day there will be one or more adults present outdoors. The school recognises OPAL's three models

of supervision: Direct, Remote and Ranging. Except for new children in reception, whose skills and orientation in the school environment need to be assessed, the school does not believe direct supervision is possible or beneficial. Supervisors will use ranging and remote supervision models, so that children can quickly find an adult and adults can patrol large sites to gain an awareness of the kinds of play and levels of risk likely to be emerging.

Type of Supervision

- **Direct**- This is where the supervisor(s) will be able to see all areas of play, and be nearby, around a maximum of 20 metres away. Some play features in these areas, such as playhouses or planting, may offer semi-hidden opportunities.
- **Remote**- This is where a supervisor or supervisors are located at a relatively static location at a good vantage point some distance from an activity, e.g. supervisor on the playground and activity 20 metres or more away, or supervisor in the middle of a flat school field. This style is widely used in other countries and its purpose is for an adult to be present to respond rapidly to an accident or serious behaviour incident.
- **Ranging**- This is where the supervisor moves around the play area, usually on a set course/ schedule. The distance from pupils therefore differs but can be 20 metres or more away. On a large site, supervisors should have zones so that they know which parts of the site they are covering, and they should modify their attention based on the kinds of play and their judgement about areas of highest risk.

Most of the time adults will not need to intervene but should be ready to:

- **stop the activity or manage the risk** if staff think that *serious harm* (meaning death, life-long debilitating injury or hospitalisation) is imminent or probable.
- **remain vigilant and consider negotiating how to manage the risk with the children** if they think that serious harm is possible but not probable.
- **continue ranging supervision** if serious harm is very unlikely.

The Adult's Role in Play

The school will help children maximise the benefits they can gain from play by the provision of trained staff who are informed by and work in accordance with the Playwork Principles. Staff will use and refer to these principles when appropriate interventions are needed, and ultimately will strive for facilitating an environment that nurtures children's self-directed play.

The playworker's core function is to create an environment that will stimulate children's play and maximise their opportunities for a wide range of play experiences. A skilled and experienced playworker is capable of enriching the child's play experience both in terms of the design and resources of the physical environment and in terms of the attitudes and culture fostered within the play setting. Playworkers are a channel of access to new materials and tools and they can act as a stimulus to children to explore and learn. They are also available to participate in the play if invited.

Equality and Diversity

Through providing a rich play offer meeting every child's needs we will ensure all children, regardless of age, gender, race, disability or other special needs, can develop and thrive, build strong relationships and enjoy school.

Environment

We believe that a rich play setting should ensure that all children have access to stimulating environments that are free from unacceptable or unnecessary risks and thereby offer children the opportunity to explore for themselves through their freely chosen play. We will strive to continually improve the quality and diversity of our school's grounds to enhance play. We will use the document 'Best Play' to guide us on what a quality play environment should contain.

A rich play setting supports safeguarding, helps children develop confidence in team building and advocating for their own rights, increases children's social and emotional capabilities and helps develop a love and enjoyment of the outdoors, which is a key foundation for caring for the environment.

Roles and Responsibilities

Play is monitored by the Head Teacher and Deputy Headteacher, supported by the OPAL working group and allocated Governors.

Having identified priorities, the curricular lead for play constructs an action plan which forms part of the School Development Plan. This will form the basis for monitoring and will identify how this is to be implemented.

Parental and Community Involvement

We highly value parent involvement in children's development of play and promote a home-school partnership in the following ways:

- Sharing information – newsletters, parents' leaflets, questionnaires and online through the school website and the school social media page.

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Mrs K. Lee Play Lead