

OPAL Play Policy

Avonwood Primary School
The best in everyone™
Part of United Learning

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OPAL play policy

1. Commitment

Our school undertakes to refer to this play policy in all decisions that affect children's play. Our school is committed to providing the strategic and operational leadership needed to provide and maintain quality play provision for all of our children.

2. Rationale

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, sexual orientation, economic or social circumstances, ethnic or cultural background or origin, or individual abilities. The OPAL initiative aligns seamlessly with our school vision, school values, behaviour and anti-bullying policy.

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."*

3. 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.

As part of the United Learning Trust ethos and values, children are encouraged to be confident and have the courage of their convictions to take risks.

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4. Aims

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.

5. 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.

To link with United Learning's values children will develop their *confidence* in taking risks, use *creativity* to be imaginative, be *determined* to overcome obstacles and be *respectful* to others in all they do.

6. 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)

The school 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'***.

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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.

You will need to add the full HSE Managing Risk Statement (Doc 4.6) as an appendix to your play policy.

6a. Legislation

The relevant legislation is the Health and Safety at Work Act, which requires that the employer ensures the health, safety and welfare of persons at work and those affected by the work. The HSE no longer regards free play as a work activity. It is therefore not governed by the rules covering safety and reporting of accidents at work. However, it is still covered by the broader 'duty of care', and so providers must demonstrate their procedures are reasonable in the context of their responsibility for care and wellbeing.

When planning and providing play opportunities, our goal is not to eliminate risk, but to weigh up the risks and benefits. Those providing play opportunities focus on controlling the real risks, while securing or increasing the benefits – not on the paperwork. Accidents and mistakes do happen during play.

7. 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 should be one or more adults present outdoors. The school recognises OPAL's three models of supervision: Direct, Remote and Ranging. For new children in Reception, whose skills and orientation in the school environment need to be assessed, direct supervision will be used. Across the rest of the school remote and ranging models of supervision will be used, 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. Definitions of reh supervision types are:

Direct	Remote	Ranging
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. This will be most common in nursery and reception classes.	This is where a supervisor or supervisors are located at a relatively static location at a good vantage point some distance from an activity, eg 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.	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.

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8. 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.

9. 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.

10. 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. www.freeplaynetwork.org.uk/pubs/bestplay.pdf

Being a Earth Charter school we encourage children to increase their social and emotional capabilities and develop their love and enjoyment of the outdoors.

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Appendix 1: Structure of Adult Roles in Practice

This is the team working directly with OPAL to ensure policy is in place and develop play and outdoor learning at Avonwood Primary School. It consists of:

Deputy Head Teacher – Mrs Williams
Curricular Lead for Play – Mrs Millington
Play Co-ordinator – Mrs Power
Play leaders – Miss Prague
Assistant Play Leaders (LSA's - Learning Support Assistants)
Site Manager – Mr Ellement
OPAL Champion Governor – Mr Mather
OPAL Parent Champion – Mrs Bilboe

All adults working at the school are part of the play team and have a responsibility to follow this policy.

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