



Creating a chance to SHINE every day

## OPAL Play Policy

This policy was ratified:

And will be reviewed:

Signed by Headteacher: Samantha Welsby

Signed by Chair: Dave McWhirter

### 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.

Each year the staff, children and governors review the progress we have made and identify areas of focus for continued development for the future. This self-review forms part of our ongoing school development cycle and helps us to devise the "School improvement Plan" or SIP. Children's play is included in our SIP and contributes to the school development planning process and our own strategic direction for the school e.g. OPAL

#### **2. Rationale**

At Newbold and Tredington C of E Primary School School, in line with other schools in our Academy, we aim to provide our children with a broad and exciting curriculum which gives them skills, knowledge and learning to be prepared for their life ahead.

We recognise that the personal development of pupils spiritually, morally, socially and culturally, plays a significant part in their ability to learn and achieve and also to relate fully to the world in which we live.

Our vision is of a school where our children:

- Enjoy and show curiosity to learn, explore and develop
- Feel safe and secure in an environment which hi high quality and well resources
- Have a high regard for staff and children's mental health
- Reach their potential across the core areas and receive the support they need to achieve well.
- Develop a range of skills and have experiences which mean they are confident and ready for the future
- Feel celebrated for their achievements
- Develop the skills necessary to make judgements independently and appropriately
- Develop awareness of their own values and beliefs, whilst respecting the values and beliefs of others as well as an understanding of the school community.

Our school strongly believes in a holistic education for our children. We believe 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 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.”*

Our positive and safe environment encourages pupils to be adventurous and take risks, secure in the knowledge that we will support them. By allowing pupils to learn from mistakes as well as achievements they strengthen their independence, resilience, confidence and determination.

### **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.

Play encourages children to be intrinsically self-motivated and empower them to confidently face different social situations. By its very nature this enables children to improve their oracy skills.

## 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.

Our school has regular opportunities for the children to express their opinions. This information is gathered through class discussions. They are asked for their opinions to discuss playground issues, handle and experiment with new resources, agree on the rules of use and take part in play assemblies. The children across the school have agreed on the following as the general rules of the playground and also used this as a basis to write Newbold and Tredington C of E Primary School's Children's Play Charter:

**Our playground is a happy place, full of friends, imagination and exciting things to do!**  
**In our school, we agree to follow the rules.**

- Before we play, we ensure that we are ready to play.
- Be kind, be fair, take turns, respect our playground and each other.
- We have amazing resources for all, so look after the equipment.
- When we hear the first bell ring or the music play, we work together to tidy efficiently
- We can take things out when we want to, but we must tidy them away
- Respect our adults - they help us by sharing ideas and make us feel safe
- Dream as you play
- Wear appropriate clothing when asked
- Mud and sand stays where it belongs - Outside.

**We are proud of our school grounds and resources.**

This is referred to in play assemblies and during playtimes to encourage purposeful and safe play.

Adults support children with their play by encouraging them:  
to be kind

- to be adventurous
- to challenge themselves
- to be safe
- to join in with play

## 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'.

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.

A weekly part of our Collective Worship will include play assemblies are an integral part of managing risks and negating hazards. The Play worker outlines the safe and responsible use of equipment and encourages feedback from children about its use. The rules are agreed upon through negotiation with the children attending the assembly. The accompanying presentation is updated with any new information and sent out to everyone via email and school's website.

Please see the HSE Managing Risk Statement (see appendix)

## 7. Supervision

The law requires that children in school have supervision. During the school day there should be two 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.

The playground is mapped into zones and supervisors will use ranging and remote supervision models combined with techniques such as scanning, latent listening and peripheral vision to dynamically risk assess and monitor play. Adults continuously move around the perimeter of their zones and are visible to children at all times.

## **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. (See Appendix) 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 that meets 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. To support this, we have merged some of our playtimes so the different year groups can enjoy play times and resources together.

## **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 engage in dynamic risk management and explore for themselves through their freely chosen play; enabling children to learn how to achieve balance between benefit and risk.

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. <http://www.freeplaynetwork.org.uk/pubs/bestplay.pdf>

We have a wonderful PTFA and will continue to strengthen the relationship with our community through Stay and Play events where parent/s can experience playtimes with their child/children. Our playground will undergo many significant changes now that we have begun our OPAL journey (January 2024) and will continue to evolve with the wider plans for larger playground developments in the near future. These are drawn up in consultation with parents, children and staff and shared through the school's usual methods of communication and via the website/Reach More Parents.

APPENDIX

**Loose Parts safe enough risk assessment weekly checklist and schedule**

	Check	Remove item
Monday	Plastic loose parts (stored outside)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sharp edges/corners</li> <li>• Cracks</li> </ul>
Tuesday	Buggies and suitcases	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exposed metal bars with sharp ends</li> <li>• Snapped handles/bars in back of suitcase</li> <li>• Broken wheels</li> <li>• Broken cable ties</li> <li>• Loose, exposed screws/metal rods</li> </ul>
Wednesday	Mud kitchen/small world	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exposed sharp metal (broken saucepan, handles etc)</li> <li>• Broken spoons/cups - sharp plastic or metal edges</li> </ul>
Thursday	Scooters and bikes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Broken wheels</li> <li>• Pointy metal bars/rods</li> <li>• Lost rubber handlebar caps, leaving exposed metal end</li> <li>• Broken chain guards - exposed cassette and chain</li> </ul>
Friday	Buggies and suitcases	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exposed metal bars with sharp ends</li> <li>• Snapped handles/bars in back of suitcase</li> <li>• Broken wheels</li> <li>• Broken cable ties</li> <li>• Loose, exposed screws/metal rods</li> </ul>

**HSE Managing Risk Statement**

**CHILDREN’S PLAY AND LEISURE – PROMOTING A BALANCED APPROACH**

1. Health and safety laws and regulations are sometimes presented as a reason why certain play and leisure activities undertaken by children and young people should be discouraged. The reasons for this misunderstanding are many and varied. They include fears of litigation or criminal prosecution because even the most trivial risk has not been removed. There can be frustration with the amounts of paperwork involved, and misunderstanding about what needs to be done to control significant risks.

2. The purpose of this statement is to give clear messages which tackle these misunderstandings. In this statement, HSE makes clear that, as a regulator, it recognises the benefits of allowing children and young people of all ages and abilities to have challenging play opportunities.

3. HSE fully supports the provision of play for all children in a variety of environments. HSE understands and accepts that this means children will often be exposed to play environments which, whilst well-managed, carry a degree of risk and sometimes potential danger.

4. HSE wants to make sure that mistaken health and safety concerns do not create sterile play environments that lack challenge and so prevent children from expanding their learning and stretching their abilities.

5. This statement provides all those with a stake in encouraging children to play with a clear picture of HSE's perspective on these issues. HSE wants to encourage a focus on the sensible and proportionate control of real risks and not on unnecessary paperwork. HSE's primary interest is in real risks arising from serious breaches of the law and our investigations are targeted at these issues.

### Recognising the benefits of play

*Key message: 'Play is great for children's well-being 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'.*

6. HSE fully recognises that play brings the world to life for children. It provides for an exploration and understanding of their abilities; helps them to learn and develop; and exposes them to the realities of the world in which they will live, which is a world not free from risk but rather one where risk is ever present. The opportunity for play develops a child's risk awareness and prepares them for their future lives.

7. Striking the right balance between protecting children from the most serious risks and allowing them to reap the benefits of play is not always easy. It is not about eliminating risk. The Courts have made clear that when health and safety law refers to 'risks', it is not contemplating risks that are trivial or fanciful. It is not the purpose to impose burdens on employers that are wholly unreasonable (R v Chagot (2009) 2 All ER 660 [27])

Nor is it about complicated methods of calculating risks or benefits. In essence, play is a safe and beneficial activity. Sensible adult judgements are all that is generally required to derive the best benefits to children whilst ensuring that they are not exposed to unnecessary risk. In making these judgements, industry standards such as EN 1176 offer bench marks that can help.

8. Striking the right balance does mean:

- Weighing up risks and benefits when designing and providing play opportunities and activities
- Focussing on and controlling the most serious risks, and those that are not beneficial to the play activity or foreseeable by the user
- Recognising that the introduction of risk might form part of play opportunities and activity
- Understanding that the purpose of risk control is not the elimination of all risk, and so accepting that the possibility of even serious or life-threatening injuries cannot be eliminated, though it should be managed
- Ensuring that the benefits of play are experienced to the full

9. Striking the right balance does not mean:

- All risks must be eliminated or continually reduced
- Every aspect of play provision must be set out in copious paperwork as part of a misguided security blanket
- Detailed assessments aimed at high-risk play activities are used for low-risk activities

- Ignoring risks that are not beneficial or integral to the play activity, such as those introduced through poor maintenance of equipment
- Mistakes and accidents will not happen

### **What parents and society should expect from play providers**

Key message: 'Those providing play opportunities should focus on controlling the real risks, while securing or increasing the benefits – not on the paperwork'.

10. Play providers should use their own judgement and expertise as well as, where appropriate, the judgement of others, to ensure that the assessments and controls proposed are proportionate to the risks involved.

11. They should communicate what these controls are, why they are necessary and so ensure everyone focuses on the important risks.

12. It is important that providers' arrangements ensure that:

- The beneficial aspects of play - and the exposure of children to a level of risk and challenge - are not unnecessarily reduced
- Assessment and judgement focuses on the real risks, not the trivial and fanciful
- Controls are proportionate and so reflect the level of risk

Play providers include those managing or providing play facilities or activities in parks, green spaces, adventure playgrounds, holiday playschemes, schools, youth clubs, family entertainment centres and childcare provision.

13. To help with controlling risks sensibly and proportionately

The play sector has produced the publication *Managing Risk in Play Provision: Implementation Guide* which provides guidance on managing the risks in play. The approach in this guidance is that risks and benefits are considered alongside each other in a risk-benefit assessment. This includes an assessment of the risks which, while taking into account the benefits of the activity, ensures that any precautions are practicable and proportionate and reflect the level of risk. HSE supports this guidance, as a sensible approach to risk management.

If things go wrong

Key message: 'Accidents and mistakes happen during play – but fear of litigation and prosecution has been blown out of proportion.'

14. Play providers are expected to deal with risk responsibly, sensibly and proportionately. In practice, serious accidents of any kind are very unlikely. On the rare occasions when things go wrong, it is important to know how to respond to the incident properly and to conduct a balanced, transparent review.

15. In the case of the most serious failures of duty, prosecution rightly remains a possibility, and cannot be entirely ruled out. However, this possibility does not mean that play providers should eliminate even the most trivial of risks. Provided sensible and proportionate steps have been taken, it is highly unlikely there would be any breach of health and safety law involved, or that it would be in the public interest to bring a prosecution.