



Play Policy

November 2024

Approved by the Governing Body Strategy Group 07/11/24

**This Policy is due for renewal in Term 6
2024–25**

OPAL PLAY POLICY
OF
GODINTON PRIMARY SCHOOL

SECTION ONE: COMMITMENT

Godinton Primary 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 and values the importance of play in a child's life.

SECTION TWO: RATIONALE

At Godinton Primary School, we believe that all children need opportunities to play which allow them to explore, manipulate, experience and affect their environment. We endeavour to provide stimulating play experiences which are welcoming and accessible to every child and allow them the opportunity to develop their creativity, imaginations and social skills.

Active and creative playtimes can mean happier and healthier children which in turn can 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.

The importance of play is reflected in our school values which shape the ethos of our school. Further information about our school values can be found in our school's Behaviour Policy.

SECTION THREE: DEFINITION AND VALUE OF PLAY

3.1 Benefits 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 helps to support children's understanding of our Guiding Stars – the learning behaviours that we want all children to develop. 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.

3.2 The Aims of Play

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.

We use the framework of ‘OPAL Play’ to support our children in their play. OPAL is a mentor supported school improvement programme that addresses all the areas that schools must plan for if they want to strategically and sustainably improve the quality of their play opportunities.

SECTION FOUR: THE RIGHTS OF CHILDREN TO PLAY

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. This is achieved through different pupil voice activities including meetings with our Mini Management Team (School Council made up of children from each class).

SECTION FIVE: BENEFIT AND RISK

Our school recognises the importance of assessing risk in children’s play and provides our children with guidance on how to manage risks safely and supportively as outlined by our ‘Risk Taking’ Guiding Star. We are guided by the document: *Managing Risk in Play Provision: An Implementation Guide* (Play Safety Forum, 2012) which states:

‘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.’

The school uses 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.

<https://www.hse.gov.uk/entertainment/assets/docs/childrens-play-july-2012.pdf>

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).

<https://playsafetyforum.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/managing-risk-in-play-provision.pdf>

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.

The HSE 'Managing Risk' Statement is attached as Appendix One.

SECTION SIX: SUPERVISION OF PLAY

The law requires that children in school have supervision but for primary school playtimes there are no stated ratios. 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 and unless a child has a significant level of SEN and it would be unsafe to adopt a different approach, 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.

At Godinton Primary School, we employ 5 outdoor supervisors (Outdoor Play Team) as well as a Play Co-ordinator. At any given time, a minimum of 4 adults will remain outside to supervise.

In addition to lunchtime supervisors, additional adults may be on duty to provide support for children whose level of SEN need has been assessed as requiring closer supervision.

SECTION SEVEN: 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 OPAL Playwork Principles – these members of staff are our Outdoor Play Team. The Play Team 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.

The principles of Playwork are attached as Appendix 2.

SECTION EIGHT: 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

SECTION NINE: RESOURCES

Godinton Primary School will allocate a proportion of the school budget each year to ensure that Play is suitably resourced. This will include consumables, materials to make/adapt resources and on-going replacement of larger pieces of equipment such as wheeled items.

The school welcomes the donation of resources to supplement those provide by the school – all items will be suitably checked before they are used for play activities, to ensure that they are safe for use e.g. types, palettes, crates, large cable reels.

SECTION TEN: DESIRABLE CLOTHING FOR ALL WEATHER OUTDOOR PLAY

Unless the weather is exceedingly wet the children will be able to play on both the playing field and the playground at lunchtime. In places, the field may therefore be wet and muddy. ; it is therefore important that the children have clothing which keeps them warm and dry. Spare clothing and wellies are available at school in the event that these cannot be provided.

Desirable clothing for outdoor all-weather play includes:

- Warm, waterproof coat
- Wellington boots
- Children may bring additional layers to put on over their uniform and under their coat at lunchtime e.g. sweatshirt.
- Puddle suits or waterproof trousers may be worn.
- Spare socks are advisable.
- Children may want to keep a change of clothes on their peg.

SECTION TEN – EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

At Godinton Primary School, we are committed to ensuring equality of opportunity for all members of our school community irrespective of race, religion or belief, gender, gender reassignment, disability, sexual orientation, age, pregnancy or maternity, marriage and civil partnership or socio-economic background. We are determined to develop a culture of inclusion and diversity in which all those connected to the school feel proud of their identity and ability to participate fully in school life.

We tackle discrimination through the positive promotion of equality by challenging stereotypes and by creating an environment that champions respect for all. At Godinton Primary School, we believe that diversity is a strength that should be respected and celebrated by all those who learn, teach and visit us.

All school policies have an explicit aim of promoting equality and will be reviewed in terms of their contribution and effectiveness in achieving this aim.

SECTION ELEVEN – CHILDREN IN CARE As for all our pupils, Godinton Primary School is committed to helping every Child in Care to achieve the highest standards they can. Staff are aware that Children in Care can be at risk of underachieving at school because they have experienced disruption to their family life and education. Some may have low expectations, poor emotional and psychological health and a lack of family support. Godinton Primary School will support Children in Care with all aspects of play provision.

SECTION TWELVE – MONITORING AND REVIEW

The implementation of this policy is monitored by the Headteacher – this includes gaining feedback from children, staff and parents as to the success of playtimes and monitoring the frequency of play-related incidents. This policy is due for renewal every two years.



APPENDIX ONE:

HSE CHILDREN'S PLAY AND LEISURE – PROMOTING A BALANCED APPROACH



Health and Safety
Executive

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 risks¹ 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. 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 providers² 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

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.

September 2012

APPENDIX TWO: THE EIGHT PRINCIPLES OF PLAYWORK

ALL CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE NEED TO PLAY

The impulse to play is innate. Play is a biological, psychological and social necessity, and is fundamental to the healthy development and well being of individuals and communities.

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PLAY IS A PROCESS

It is freely chosen, personally directed and intrinsically motivated. That is, children and young people determine and control the content and intent of their play, by following their own instincts, ideas and interests, in their own way for their own reasons.

THE FOCUS

The prime focus and essence of playwork is to support and facilitate the play process and this should inform the development of play policy, strategy, training and education.

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THE PLAY PROCESS

For playworkers, the play process takes precedence and playworkers act as advocates for play when engaging with adult led agendas.

THE PLAYWORKER'S ROLE

The role of the playworker is to support all children and young people in the creation of a space in which they can play.

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