

St John & St James' Play Policy



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St John and St James CoE Primary School Play Policy

1. Commitment

St John and St James staff will 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.

There are key members of staff with specific responsibility for play in their job description, they are:

Curricular Leads for Play

- Poppy Bienias (Deputy Head Teacher)
- Wade Charles (Sports Lead)

Playleaders

- Sharon Rees (Home Liaison Officer)

The Play Team

- All adults, who have a break or lunchtime duty on the playground, are part of the play team, whose role it is to support play during break and lunchtime. These individuals, along with parent ambassadors, form the OPaL working party.

Parent Ambassadors

- A member of the school community, with a child at St John and St James, who supports the school with the implementation of this policy and forms part of the OPaL working party.

2. Rationale

Our school believes that all children need opportunities to play that allow them to explore, manipulate, experience and affect their environment. The school acknowledges the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, especially Article 31, which supports the child's right to both rest and play. Equally, wellbeing is at the heart of everything we do as a school and fostering a positive, supportive, engaging playground environment where children feel included, safe and inspired is pivotal to this.

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 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 any freely chosen activity that a child finds satisfying and creative. It may or may not involve equipment or other people. We believe play has many benefits, including:

- It is to children's health and wellbeing, and essential for their physical, emotional, social, spiritual and intellectual development.
- It enables children to explore the physical and social environment, different concepts and different 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.

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 which 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.

We will be carrying out regular pupil voice on the children's playtime experiences and making improvements in line with their suggestions.

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 (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 principle 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. Risk-taking is an essential feature of play provision, and of all environments in which children legitimately spend time at play.

The school will create a risk-benefit document for each new piece of equipment introduced into the playground and this will be shared with children in play assemblies. These risk assessments will take into consideration the weather and which pieces of equipment cannot be used when it is wet or icy.

Play provision aims to offer children the chance to encounter acceptable risks as part of a stimulating, challenging and managed play environment. In the words of 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 practise dynamic risk management with children, encouraging them to identify and manage risks in an environment where adults are present to support them.

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, each playground has adults who are assigned to them to lead on supervision on that specific playground. There are also additional "float" adults assigned to being responsible for moving between playgrounds depending on where more children are playing to ensure safety and adequate supervision at all times.

The school recognizes OPAL's three models of supervision: Direct, Remote and Ranging.

The role of the play team is not necessarily to create activities, games and ideas for the children to engage in at playtime.



The Role of the Play Team IS:

1. Flexibly moving around the playground with the children and engaging in the activities with them.
2. Assessing the playground for which activities are popular and which are not. If an activity is not being used, the Play Team are responsible for supporting children to engage with the activity or liaising with the Play Lead and changing the activity all together.
3. Engaging in conversations with the children about their play.
4. Supporting the children in conflict resolution and engaging in respectful play.
5. Managing risk and alerting pupils to this. In some circumstances, this may include removing equipment that is deemed unsafe or restructuring equipment to make it safe. The pupils should be informed why the play team are doing this, so they learn to independently manage risk themselves.
6. Being cautious of weather conditions. E.g. removing equipment, which children may slip on if it has been raining.
7. Supporting in the tidying up of resources and putting resources away into storage at the end of playtime.
8. Carry out tasks or activities given by the Play Lead.

The Role of the Play Team IS NOT:

- Standing still in one area of the playground.
- Chatting to other members of staff.
- Observing children from a distance.

We also have child representatives who look after the wellbeing and safety of children on the playground. These children volunteered for this role and provide additional supervision to all children on the playground.

Due to their age, reception children will wear high-vis jackets to ensure they can be located and best supervised at all times.

8. The Adult's Role in Play

The school will help children maximize 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.
<http://www.playengland.org.uk/resource/best-play/>

11. Play Charter

There are 2 children elected in each class as the St John and St James Student Government, who also work with the OPAL working groups on continuing to develop the play opportunities at St John and St James. They have also devised a play charter, which is shared with the other children in their class. All children are asked to sign to agree with the play charter.

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Changes accepted and agreed by the LAB	

We would like to acknowledge the work of other colleagues in drafting this policy. We have drawn on a range of sources including policies from other schools, good practice guides, published schemes and LA and Statutory guidelines where appropriate.

