

Philosophy

Article 31 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child states that ‘A child has the right to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts.’

Our school recognises that play is an essential part of a happy and healthy childhood. As a school, we provide consistently high quality, sustainable play opportunities for all children. These inclusive opportunities in play are achieved by offering carefully considered outdoor spaces, equipment and toys that offer a rich choice of accessible play experiences for every child. We believe play has a vital role in children’s health, happiness and wellbeing. It creates children who are independent, confident, imaginative, adaptable, social and able to assess risks by teaching essential life skills across the whole school day.

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.” This aligns with our school motto of learning, caring, sharing and our school expectations – be kind and helpful, be respectful and be the best you.

Aims

Our school aims are:

- To provide children with play settings which are both stimulating and challenging.
- To allow children to take risks
- To provide children with a range of environments which will support their learning across the curriculum and about the world around them

We aim to give the children the opportunity to:

- Explore the world around them through playful experimentation
- Develop social skills, enhancing communication, collaboration and problem solving
- Encourage resilience and self-confidence.
- Think creatively
- Develop independence and take responsibility for themselves and others
- Develop physical health
- Develop emotional health, allowing the balance between acting freely and allowing everyone to have their rights
- To develop skills in self-assessing and managing risk in a safe environment, supported by trained staff

What is Play?

Play is any freely chosen activity which a child finds satisfying and creative. It may or may not involve equipment or other people. It may be serious or light hearted. It may produce something or it may be done simply for its own sake. It allows children an opportunity to be creative and make decisions. We recognise that play may need to make a noise, get dirty, make a mess and sometimes be out of the direct gaze of adults. We believe the role of the adults is to support the play process. Children will also have the opportunity for 'free range' play within the school grounds.

Rights

All children have a right to relax and play and to join in a wide range of activities (Article 31). United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

Through our belief in children's rights, we aim to provide a secure, caring environment where all children are happy, intrinsically motivated, relaxed and able to reach their potential.

Children's rights include:

the right to be happy

the right to be safe

the right to relax and play (Article 31)

the right to say what I think and to be listened to (Article 12)

These are reflected in our Play Charter, created with the children in Play Assemblies, and in our practice.

Risk Assessment and Play

'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)

'Without opportunities to take acceptable levels of risk, children's development is inhibited, undermining their capability to deal with the wider unsupervised world'. (DCFS)

An essential element of exploration within the medium of play is the opportunity for children to experience freely chosen activities, where they can take acceptable risks and challenge themselves beyond their existing capabilities. Allowing children to take acceptable risk develops their ability to judge risk independently and learn new skills.

'All children both need and want to take risks in order to explore limits, venture into new experiences and develop their capacities, from a very young age and from their earliest play experiences.

Children would never learn to walk, climb stairs or ride a bicycle unless they were strongly motivated to respond to challenges involving a risk of injury.' Play England

Carefully considered and comprehensive risk assessments of all play provision within the school should be reviewed on an annual basis, or whenever significant change or development in play provision/equipment or child circumstances takes place.

To manage the levels of risk we will follow the guidelines below:

- Recognise the need for professional judgment in setting the balance between safety and goals.
- All staff should self-assess and manage risk
- Ensure risks are as apparent as possible to staff and children
- Ensure risks that children may not appreciate are controlled and managed
- Provide staff with training to supervise play setting.
- All staff are responsible for ensuring that adults are in place before the children are allowed outside.

Supervision

The school recognises OPAL's three models of supervision: Direct, Remote and Ranging. Except for new children in nursery and reception and children with particular needs, supervision will take the form of the remote and ranging models, so that children can quickly find an adult, and adults can gain an awareness of the kinds of play and levels of risk likely to be emerging. It is expected that staff will move around throughout the playtime, finding out what the children are doing and where the children are playing. Staff can then check in on the children's play throughout playtime.

Clothing

During the colder and wet weather, wellies or walking boots should be worn by staff and children when walking on the school field. Children should also wear coats during cold weather. There are waterproofs available for the children to wear if they want to play in or around the mud kitchen area, digging area and sandpit.

Inclusion

All children are entitled to welcoming and accessible play provision, irrespective of gender, economic or social circumstances, ethnic or cultural background or origin or individual abilities. It is our responsibility to ensure adequate provision is provided.

Environment

Our school will:

- use the outdoor space as a natural resource for learning and playing, encouraging the children to value natural or found objects for play
- include the children when planning for playing and learning outdoors
- ensure that the outdoor area offers all children the opportunity to investigate, take risks and explore and use their imagination and creativity
- expect the children to respect the outdoor environment and care for living things

- give children the opportunity to manage the space and freedom afforded by the outdoors
- enrich the quality of the environment to maximise variety of play types and increase play value
- ensure that the playground be an integrated area where all children from reception to Year 2 can play safely
- Teach the children their responsibilities with regard to maintaining the quality of their outdoor space, and the equipment available and ensure they take an active part in doing this
- Promote children's pride for the outdoor space that belongs to them