

## **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 Development Plan or SDP. Children's play is included in our SDP and contributes to the school development planning process and our own strategic direction for the school e.g. OPAL

### **2. Rationale**

At Daubeney Primary School, in line with the other schools in our Federation, we aim to provide our children with a broad and exciting curriculum which gives them the 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 a curiosity to learn, explore and develop
- feel safe and secure in an environment which is high quality and well resourced
- have a high regard for staff and children's mental health and wellbeing
- 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 a Junior Play Team which is formed from one member of each class. They meet on a weekly basis to discuss playground issues, handle and experiment with new resources, agree on the rules of use and take part in play assemblies. The Junior Play Team have agreed on the following as the general rules of the playground and also used this as a basis to write Daubeney's Children's Play Charter:

Welcome to our playground!  
We have amazing resources for all  
Our playground is a happy place, full of joy, imagination and exciting things to do!

In our school, we agree to follow the rules.  
Our rules are fair – follow them to respect our playground and each other  
Be kind to all, include everyone and take turns  
Look after the playground resources  
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  
Smile and be happy  
Dream as you play  
Remember to be safe and have fun  
Wear appropriate clothing when asked  
Mud stays where it belongs – Outside.

Hear the whistle?  
Pick up three things and tidy with me!  
We tidy together because this is our playground and these are our 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.

Weekly play assemblies are an integral part of managing risks and negating hazards. The Playworker outlines the safe and responsible use of equipment and encourages feedback from children about its use. The rules are agreed upon through negotiation between the Junior OPAL Team and 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 (attached)

## **7. Supervision**

The law requires that children in school have supervision. During the school day there should be three 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. [www.freeplaynetwork.org.uk/pubs/bestplay.pdf](http://www.freeplaynetwork.org.uk/pubs/bestplay.pdf)

We have a wonderful PTA 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 has undergone many significant changes since we began our OPAL journey in 2021 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.

