

Policy: Play Policy

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Authorised by: Executive Head Teacher

Updated by: Play Lead



Building foundations for a love of life, a love of learning and a love of one another.

Commitment

At Upton St Leonards Church of England Primary School, we are committed to using this Play Policy to guide our planning and actions in providing play opportunities, and quality environments for play and informal recreation for our children. We believe that play has a vital role in promoting children's happiness and wellbeing, and therefore, should be planned collaboratively with the children. Our Play Policy encourages our children to be respectful of each other and the environment in which they are playing and therefore fully embraces our vision, 'Building foundations for a love of learning, a love of life and a love of on another.'

Rationale

This policy sets out the school's commitment to ensuring that quality environments for play and informal recreation are available to all its children, and aims to improve the way we think about, and provide, opportunities for play. The school believes that all children need opportunities to play which allow them to explore, manipulate, experience and affect their environment within challenging settings, taking acceptable levels of risk.

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

Purpose

- Play is defined as any freely chosen activity which a child finds satisfying and creative. It may or may not involve equipment or other people.
- Play is essential for physical, emotional, social, spiritual and intellectual development.
- Play can be physical, imaginative, creative and explorative.
- Play enables children to explore the physical and social environment, different concepts and ideas.
- Play promotes self-confidence and the ability to make choices, as well as encouraging children to co-operate and take responsibility.
- Play is critical to children's physical and emotional health, and enables them to explore and develop the balance between the right to act freely and their responsibilities to others.
- Free play can have a direct positive impact on a child's ability to meet formal educational goals.
- Play is a chance to form social and communication skills and recognise boundaries of relationships across age-groups.
- Play is taking managed risks and being challenged – helping children to make informed and adapted decisions in play and life.
- Above all, play should be a fun, enjoyable, memorable and exciting experience.

Building foundations for a love of lif, a love of learning and a love of one another

In this policy, Play Lead refers to Mrs King, who oversees our outdoor lunchtime provision. Kitchen Team refers to Miss Possee and her kitchen team who oversee our indoor eating arrangement, and Play Leaders refer to our team of staff who work during lunchtime to provide children with a positive lunchtime experience. Previously this team was known as our midday team.

Aims

We recognise that playtime is approximately 20% of a child's school day. With such a large proportion of time spent at 'play' we recognise the need to:

1. Continue to keep children at the heart of decisions and provide a consistent message

- For those whose role is to plan for or provide for play within the school, to gain a greater understanding of play, its principles, qualities and benefits and be kept up to date with training.
- To consult children in decision-making on the planning, design, creation and supervision of play opportunities.
- To give clear and consistent messages to children about what are acceptable boundaries in regards to loose parts, causing direct harm etc.

2. Improve the quality of the play environment

- Give our children opportunities to encounter challenge, stimulation and acceptable levels of risk in their experience of play so they can blossom in all areas of development across age groups.
- Give children regular opportunities to make and shape their play environment with loose parts and decision making about playground development.
- Make sure that care routines for disabled children or behaviour management strategies do not mean that children miss out on any of their play time.
- Make sure that children can play out in almost all weathers through the provision of storage for wet weather clothes and footwear. There will, however, be some circumstances of extreme weather in which the Play Lead or Senior Management Team may make the decision to not allow children outdoors. This is where our duty of care for the children's safety, outweighs the benefits of play.
- We ensure that there is minimum risk to children whilst playing in school by ensuring adequate adult supervision and first aid trained staff being present around the school grounds and at a designated first aid area.
- This policy should be read in conjunction with the Whole School Behaviour Policy and the Lunchtime and Break Supervision Risk Benefit.

Our school acknowledges and supports the Outdoor Play and Learning (OPAL) principles: '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'.

Benefits and Risks

Risk is understood to be an integral aspect of children's play: most children are naturally curious, and development often requires some experimentation and risk taking (think about how children learn to walk). The thrill in taking risks (physical, social and emotional) is what brings play its vitality and therefore benefits.

In addition, taking physical risks helps children understand what their bodies can do and the process of assessing risks. It is understandable that adults want children to be safe, but there is a growing body of evidence that shows that over-protection may be counterproductive and that healthy play encompasses risk-taking on children's own terms.

As a school, we feel taking risks in play can have these benefits:

- Enables children to develop their own boundaries, knowing where and when to take a risk
- Builds confidence
- Develops independence
- Promotes peer interaction and reciprocity
- Extends experiences and develops life skills for the future

It is the school's responsibility to strike a balance between the risk and the benefits of play. This policy sets out the school's overall objectives for risk management in play provision, and the school recognises the challenges that this brings. To manage the level of risk within our play provision, the school will use a 'risk benefit' approach to balance its duty of care to protect and its duty of care to provide.

Carefully considered and comprehensive assessments of all play provision within the school will be reviewed on an annual basis, or whenever significant change/development in play provision takes place. Our 'Risk Benefit' document will be updated on an ongoing basis and will be accessible to all stakeholders on our website.

Vision

Play should enable a child to experience a love of life through discovery. Children should experience a love of life in all its fullness (John 10:10).

A Child-Centred Approach

Children are the most frequent users of the outdoors and spend approximately 40% of their playtime travelling from one place to another.

Because of this, two factors are important:

1. **Choice/Access:** The diversity of environments within the school grounds and the available access to the children are the most important factors for child development.
2. **Safety:** The safety of the environment for children. At Upton St Leonards C of E Primary, we recognise that the environment in which children spend their time is an essential backdrop to play, which must be safe whilst allowing children to balance risk within play.

The School will:

- Work towards the provision of a hierarchy of well-maintained areas/spaces within school, offering a rich environment for play.
- Ensure the provision of a varied and interesting physical environment – different levels; spaces of different sizes; e.g., places to hide; trees and bushes; places that inspire mystery and imagination.
- Ensure green spaces will welcome children and minimise prohibited/limited access areas.
- Have regard to the fact that communities go through stages and their needs change over time.

Health and Safety

All activities, play zones and equipment will be subject to standard checks on a daily and/or periodic basis. Risk-benefit assessments for areas, equipment and activities will be held on file on the website for inspection. All new activities which involve potential significant risk will be subject to individual or generic assessment as part of the planning process. All previous assessments will be reviewed approximately half-termly.

The Play Lead and Play Leaders will be responsible for the site, equipment and resources in general, which are intended to be open access. They will also be responsible for any activities which are directly led by the Play Leaders. Volunteers, teachers and parents/carers will be responsible for the conduct and behaviour of those in their care. They will be responsible for ensuring that those persons in their care use the site and equipment in a safe, controlled and appropriate manner to ensure the wellbeing of ALL users on site.

It is the responsibility of all visitors and staff to work within agreed policy and procedures and to adhere to all control measures imposed as a result of assessments.

It is the responsibility of all carers to bring any potential hazard or concerns regarding the site, equipment or activities to the attention of the Play Lead or member of teaching staff on duty.

It is the responsibility of the Play Leaders to act upon any concerns and to ensure that any deficiencies are rectified immediately and to report to the Play Lead as soon as possible.

Supervision

From guidance developed in partnership with the schools Health and Safety Team at South Gloucestershire Council, the Play Leaders will follow the 'Ranging' model, where the supervisor moves around the play area, usually on a set course/schedule. The distance from pupils therefore differing, but can be 20 metres or more away. All risks have been assessed using this model of supervision. Our team of staff have been re-named as 'Play Leaders' and this is because their job is not to purely supervise. We cannot feasibly supervise every child for the entire lunchtime or playtime period. We must rely on children to show our values in the way they act and to show independence. We want our Play Leaders to lead playtime activities and engage/stimulate children in play, not supervise them.

The Adults' Role in Play

'Play Leaders' will strive for facilitating an environment which nurtures self-directed play. The Play Leaders' core function is to create an environment which will stimulate children's play and maximise their opportunities for a wide range of play experiences. A skilled and experienced play-worker 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 attitude and culture fostered within the play setting. Play-workers 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 available to participate in the play if invited.

Environment

We believe that a rich play setting should ensure that all children have access to a stimulating environment that is free from unacceptable risk and thereby offer the opportunity to explore, through their freely chosen play.

At Upton St Leonards C of E School we will:

- Use the outdoor space as a natural resource for learning and playing.
- Include the children when planning for playing and learning outdoors.
- Ensure that the outdoor area offers children the opportunity to investigate and explore, problem solve, use their imagination and creativity.
- Encourage children to respect the outdoor environment and care for living things.
- Give children the opportunity to manage, play in and use the space and freedom afforded by the outdoors.
- Enrich the quality of the environment to maximise variety of play types and increase play value.

On a typical day, the following zones are able to be used at lunchtimes

- Classic Games Zone - skipping, hula hoops, pogo jumpers, stilts, limbo, parachutes
- Climbing Zone - large adventure playground
- Den Building Zone - pallets, tyres, tarpaulin, pipes, crates
- Library
- Mini Adventure Zone - slide, trim trail
- Pushchair Zone
- Quiet Zone - small world toys, crafts, books
- Real World / Role Play Zone - kitchens, workbenches, fancy dress
- Sandpit
- School Field - football
- Sports Zone - netball, basketball, rackets
- Wheeled Zone - balance bikes, trikes, scooters, roller racers

On some days, due to reasons such as adverse weather, not all zones will be open. The decision as to what zones are open will be made daily by the Play Lead or Senior Management Team.

Eating Arrangements

One of the primary benefits to moving to a playtime rooted in the principles of OPAL, is that children spend more time during their lunch session active. It is well documented how obesity levels amongst children are rising and we are determined to do everything we can as school to ensure every child leaves us in Year 6 a fit, active and healthy child.

With this at forefront of our decision making, we have introduced a 'free-flow' approach to lunchtimes for children from Y2 upwards. Children in Reception and Y1 will be taken to the hall at the beginning of their lunch session to eat. Once they have finished eating, they can go outside to play for the remainder of the session.

Children from Y2 upwards do not have a set time within the lunch period where they must eat. They can choose at which point they eat. If they are having a school dinner, they may want to wait until the queue is short so as not to waste time queueing. If they are having a packed lunch, they can eat outdoors in our covered eating area. Children who are a packed lunch have the choice of whether to eat indoors in the school hall or outdoors in our eating area. On days of warm, bright weather, we will encourage children to eat outside to create a calmer atmosphere in the dining hall.

If a child is having a school dinner but hasn't arrived for their dinner within the lunch period, the kitchen team will radio the Play Lead and Play Leaders to locate them outdoors. The child will then be directed to the hall to ensure they have received their food.

Our Play Leaders cannot feasibly monitor what every child eats. There are 420 children in the school, making it impossible for us to monitor what each child eats. We encourage all children who eat a packed lunch to keep hold of their wrappers and litter so that parents/carers can see what has been eaten on a daily basis. If we know a child is not eating, we can put in place plans to ensure they eat all of their lunch. Please speak to your child's class teacher if you feel your child is continuously not eating their lunch. The Play Lead will also report to class teachers, if they (or the Play Leaders) notice a child isn't eating and will monitor this thereafter.

The benefits to the free-flow system include less waiting time and children spending more time playing.

** During wet weather playtimes, children will all eat indoors in either their classroom or the dining hall. The decision as to whether it is wet play or not will be taken by the Play Lead.

APPENDIX A

PLAY TYPES

Play Types

There are acknowledged to be a number of different play types (around 16) which provide playworkers, managers and trainers with a common language for describing play. They are listed below, in no particular order.

- 1 **Symbolic Play** – play which allows control, gradual exploration and increased understanding without the risk of being out of depth e.g., using a piece of wood to symbolise a person or an object or a piece of string to symbolise a wedding ring.
- 2 **Rough and Tumble Play** – close encounter play, which is less to do with fighting and more to do with touching, tickling, gauging relative strength. Discovering physical flexibility and the exhilaration of display. This type of play allows children to participate in physical contact that doesn't involve or result in someone being hurt. This type of play can use up lots of energy.
- 3 **Socio-dramatic Play** – the enactment of real and potential experiences of an intense personal, social, domestic or interpersonal nature e.g. playing at a house, going to the shops, being mothers and fathers, organising a meal or even having a row.
- 4 **Social Play** – play during which the rules and criteria for social engagement and interaction can be revealed, explored and amended e.g., any social or interactive situation which contains an expectation on all parties that they will abide by the rules or protocols i.e., games, conversations, making something together.
- 5 **Creative Play** – play which allows a new response, the transformation of information, awareness of new connections, with an element of surprise. Allows children to design, explore, try out new ideas and use their imagination. They can use lots of different tools, props, equipment. It can have a beginning and an end, texture and smell e.g. enjoying creation with a range of materials and tools for its own sake. Self-expression through any medium, making things, changing things.
- 6 **Communication Play** – play using words, nuances or gestures e.g. mime / charades, jokes, play acting, mimicry, singing, whispering, pointing, debate, street slang, poetry, text messages, talking on mobiles / emails/ internet, skipping games, group and ball games.
- 7 **Dramatic Play** – play which dramatizes events in which the child is not a direct participator e.g. presentation of a TV show, an event on the street, a religious or festive event, even a funeral.
- 8 **Locomotor Play** – movement in any or every direction for its own sake e.g. chase, tag, hide and seek, tree climbing.
- 9 **Deep Play** – play which allows the child to encounter risky or even potentially life-threatening experiences, to develop survival skills and conquer fear e.g. conquer fear such as heights, snakes, and creepy crawlies. Some find strength they never knew they had to climb obstacles, lift large objects etc e.g. leaping onto an aerial runway, riding a bike on a parapet, balancing on a high beam, roller skating, assault course, high jump.

- 10 **Exploratory Play** – play to access factual information consisting of manipulative behaviours such as handling, throwing, banging or mouthing objects e.g. engaging with an object or area and, either by manipulation or movement, assessing its properties, possibilities and content, such as stacking bricks.
- 11 **Fantasy Play** – This is the ‘make believe’ world of children. This type of play is where the child’s imagination gets to run wild. Play, which rearranges the world in the child’s way, a way that is unlikely to occur e.g. playing at being a pilot flying around the world, pretend to be various characters/people, be where ever they want to be, drive a car, become six feet tall or as tiny as they want to be the list is endless as is a child’s imagination.
- 12 **Imaginative Play** – play where the conventional rules, which govern the physical world, do not apply e.g. imagining you are or pretending to be a tree or ship, or patting a dog which isn’t there.
- 13 **Mastery Play** – control of the physical and affective ingredients of the environments e.g. digging holes, changing the course of streams, constructing shelters, building fires.
- 14 **Object Play** – play which uses infinite and interesting sequences of hand-eye manipulations and movements e.g. examination and novel use of any object such as: cloth, paintbrush, cup.
- 15 **Role Play** – play exploring ways of being, although not normally of an intense personal, social, domestic or interpersonal nature e.g. brushing with a broom, dialling with a telephone, driving a car.
- 16 **Recapitulative Play** – play that allows the child to explore ancestry, history, rituals, stories, rhymes, fire and darkness. Enables children to access play of earlier human evolutionary stages.