



J H Godwin Primary School

OPAL Play Policy

Approval	Headteacher
Review Cycle	1 years
Approved by Governing Body	Autumn 2025
Next Review Date	Autumn 2026
Signed	<i>L.Cartledge</i>

OPAL 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.

2. Rationale

This policy sets out JH Godwin Primary School's commitment to ensuring that quality play opportunities are available for all children. In line with article 31 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Play Principles and the Department for Children, Schools and Families publication 'Managing Risk in a Play Provision', our school believes that all children need opportunities to play which allows them to explore, manipulate and experience their environment, free from unacceptable levels of risk. 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. At J H Godwin, we recognise 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.

Children spend up to 20% or 1.4 years of their time in school at play. This means that play opportunities at school are even more vital. 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."*

The OPAL Primary Programme rationale aligns with our school values are based on Rita Pearson's philosophy, 'How powerful would our world be if we had kids who were **not afraid to take risks**, who were not afraid to think, and who had a champion?'

Our school vision is *to equip our pupils to be become well-rounded, confident and responsible global citizens*, encourage them to '**Inspire and Believe**' through the school rules of being **ready, respectful and safe, enable us to work and play in a considerate and happy environment**.

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, being fluidly individual. It may or may not involve equipment or other people.

At JH Godwin 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 and develop confidence in team building skills.
- 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, be creative and develop resilience..
- Play maintains children's openness to learning, develops their capabilities and allows them to push the boundaries of what they can achieve.
- Play allows children to realise its okay to make mistakes and take risks in a safe environment.
- Opal play develops a love and enjoyment of the outdoors.

4. Aims

Our aims at J H Godwin Primary School are:

- To provide children with a play setting which is both stimulating and challenging.
- To develop social skills, enhancing communication, collaboration and problem solving.
- To encourage children to develop a sense of independence and freedom, where they take responsibility for themselves and others.
- To allow children to take risks and use a common-sense approach to the management of these risks and their benefits.
- To develop skills in self-assessing and managing risk.
- To enable children to develop respect for their surroundings and each other.
- To aid children's physical, emotional, social, spiritual and intellectual development.
- To provide children with a range of environments which will support their learning across the curriculum and about the world around them.
- To promote self-confidence and the ability to make choices, problem solve and to be creative.
- To build emotional and physical resilience.
- To encourage fluid individuality that promotes happiness for them and others.

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. A Children's Play policy is used to highlight this (Appendix 1).

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)

7.

'Without opportunities to take acceptable levels of risk, children's development is inhibited, undermining their capability to deal with the wider unsupervised world'. (Department for Children, Schools and Families)

Many research studies have found that the social, physical and mental benefits to children of managed risks are vast. Children become more resilient, adaptable and are keen to try new experiences. Children should be provided with opportunities to challenge themselves and also to experience successes and failures. Risk and challenge is not limited to physical risk - it includes the uncertainties involved in making new friends, playing with children from different backgrounds and building emotional resilience through trying out new experiences with the possibility of failure.

J H Godwin Primary School will use the Health and Safety Executive's guidance on Managing Risk in Play and Leisure (www.hse.gov.uk) (Appendix 2) as its principle guiding documents in making decisions relating to risk and play.

Our role as play providers is to facilitate the maximum amount of enriching opportunities for children to encounter. They need to learn to manage risk for themselves in an environment that is as safe as it needs to be, rather than completely devoid of risk. The benefit to children of challenging play opportunities should be balanced with any potential risk when carrying out risk assessments. We will adopt a risk-benefit approach and use dynamic risk assessments (Appendix 3) to manage our duty of care to protect and provide for children's needs. These risk assessments will be discussed by the OPAL Play Working Group (Appendix 4). A new activity will be discussed with at least 2 members of the working party and shared/ reviewed with the Play Team at their weekly meeting with the Play Supervisor or Play Curriculum Lead.. The Benefit-Risk Management will be shared with pupils before it is introduced onto the school grounds.

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 there should be one 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. 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.

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 (Appendix 5). 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 play team's (Appendix 4) core function is to create an environment that will stimulate children's play and maximise their opportunities for a wide range of play experiences. The school is working with OPAL (www.outdoorplayandlearning.org.uk) to help guide a strategic approach to developing play at J H Godwin Primary School. A skilled and experienced play work team 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. Play work team members 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. www.freeplaynetwork.org.uk/pubs/bestplay.pdf

11. Clothing

Children will be given the opportunity to play outside at all times of the year regardless of the weather where possible. Therefore, it is vitally important that all children must have wellies in school at all times. All children and staff must wear the appropriate footwear when walking on the school field or in the forest. Welly storage will be provided for children to store their wellies. All footwear/clothing must be labelled. Children should also wear coats during cold/wet weather. Children will be outside in light rain, wind or light snow - therefore the correct clothing/footwear is vital to their enjoyment of play. It will be the decision of the head teacher, deputy head teacher, Play Curriculum lead or play supervisor to decide if play can go ahead.

Appendix 1

Children's Play Policy

We have the right to:	We have the responsibility to:
• have fun at playtimes	• make sure that everyone has fun and our play does not stop this.
• make our own decisions about our play and choose what we do.	• make sure our decisions don't affect others in a negative way.
• choose who we play with and include others.	• make sure that no one is left out of play or forced to do something they don't want to.
• play with lots of different toys and have a well looked after environment.	• take pride in, respect and look after our environment and toys.
• explore be creative and take thoughtful risks.	• think about what we are doing and talk to an adult from the play team about the risks we are taking if they ask us to.



Play Charter



We have the right to play and enjoy playtimes.

We have the responsibility to make sure everyone enjoys playtime by making sure:

- We respect others and be kind
- We respect the equipment so it lasts longer
 - We share fairly and take turns
 - We play safely and help other
- We ask for help from grown ups if we need it
 - We help to tidy up
 - We listen to each other
- We have the right to choose who we play with
 - We have **fun**!

Everyone chooses what to play

Appendix 2

<https://www.hse.gov.uk/entertainment/childs-play-statement.htm>



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

¹ The Courts have made clear that when health and safety law refers to 'risks', it is not contemplating risks that are trivial or fanciful. It is not the purpose to impose burdens on employers that are wholly unreasonable (*R v Chagot* (2009) 2 All ER 660 [27])

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

² Play providers include those managing or providing play facilities or activities in parks, green spaces, adventure playgrounds, holiday playschemes, schools, youth clubs, family entertainment centres and childcare provision.

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 3

Benefit-Risk Assessment Record Sheet

Benefits of _____

- *Bullet points of benefits*

Risks	Risk Management



Appendix 4

J H Godwin Primary School Play Team

OPAL Play Working Group:

This is the team working directly with OPAL to ensure policy is in place and develop play and outdoor learning at J H Godwin Primary School. It consists of:

The Head Teacher: Mrs L. Cartledge

Curriculum Play Lead: Mrs R .Begum

Play Co-ordinator/supervisor: Mrs K.Coppack

Site Manager: Mr C.Essam

Bursar: Mrs S Jefferson

Lead Governor for Play: TBC

OPAL Play Work team

This team range the various outdoor zones:

All teachers and teaching assistants

OPAL Play Rangers

This team of children feedback to the Play coordinator and staff on the Play Work team about the effectiveness of activities:

Pupil Play/Sports' Leaders



Appendix 5

Play Work Principals

1. UNDERSTAND NEED

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.

2. UNDERSTAND PROCESS

Play is a process that 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.

3. SUPPORT PROCESS

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.

4. ADVOCATE FOR PLAY

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

5. CREATE SPACES

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

6. LEARN AND REFLECT

The playworker's response to children and young people playing is based on a sound up to date knowledge of the play process, reflective practice.

7. UNDERSTAND ADULT IMPACT

Playworkers recognise their own impact on the play space and also the impact of children and young people's play on the playworker.

8. CHOOSE INTERVENTION STYLES

Playworkers choose an intervention style that enables children and young people to extend their play. All playworker interventions must balance risk with the developmental benefit and well-being of children.