



Dringhouses Primary School

Play Policy (OPAL)

Signature of Chair of Governors

Signature of Headteacher

Date of Adoption: Spring 23

Date of Review: Spring 24

Reviewing Committee: FGB

Statutory/Non-Statutory

1. Commitment

Dringhouses Primary School undertakes to refer to this play policy in all decisions that affect children's play. Dringhouses Primary 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

Dringhouses Primary school believes 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.*"

Children spend 1.4 years of their primary school attendance in playtimes. This is a considerable amount of potentially valuable time which needs careful planning. In 1992, Play England drew up The Charter for Children's Play which sets out a vision for play that we still believe is relevant today (<https://www.playengland.org.uk/charter-for-play>). It states that:

- Children need time and space to play at the school;
- Adults should let children play;
- Children value and benefit from staffed play provision;
- Children's play is enriched by skilled playworkers;
- Children sometimes need extra support to enjoy their right to play.

Dringhouses Primary School has 5 key characters, all of which are integral to our play offer:

- Curious
- Confident
- Creative
- Collaborative
- Community-minded

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.

At Dringhouses Primary school play is recognised for the important contribution it makes to education and lifelong learning, a finding confirmed by many studies of early childhood. Research shows that play can enhance problem solving; it is also widely regarded as providing opportunities for social interaction and language development. The contribution of play to educational development is suggested through the inherent value of different play types e.g. through risk taking an exploratory play in formal and informal settings, allowing children to experiment, try new things and push their boundaries.

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.
- Build and maintain important relationships with friends, carers and family members.
- Play can be therapeutic. It helps children to deal with difficult or painful circumstances such as emotional stress or medical treatment.

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.

At Dringhouses Primary school we promote these rights as a central focus in all we do. 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. In addition:

- Children have the right to be happy therefore to respect this right the children must follow instructions, use equipment without hurting others and have fun. Adults respect this right by providing opportunities for creative, exciting play, use conflict resolution and emotion coaching in line with our behaviour policy, to support all children.
- Children have the right to be safe therefore to respect this right children must follow instructions, use equipment without hurting others, assess risk and tidy equipment away. Adults respect this right by assessing risk daily, encouraging children to assess risk also and helping children to tidy up.
- Children have the right to play and relax therefore to respect this right the children must follow instructions, use equipment without hurting others and help others who need it. Adults respect this right by developing new opportunities for play, listening to children's ideas about play and supporting children who have additional needs to access 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 practise dynamic risk management with children, encouraging them to identify and manage risks in an environment where adults are present to support them.

At Dringhouses Primary school we feel taking risks in play has 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
- Prepares them to stay safe outside of the school environment

It is the school's responsibility to strike a balance between the risks and the benefits of play.

To manage the level of risk within our play provision we will do the following:

- Recognise the need for professional judgements in setting the balance between safety and other goals
- Ensure risks are as apparent as possible to staff and children
- Design spaces where risks of hazards are clearly apparent
- Ensure that hazards that children may not appreciate will be controlled and managed
- Providing trained staff to supervise play settings
- Consult our play experts (OPAL) to ensure our policies and procedures follow legislation

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

Decisions and policies are made following the guidance in 'Managing Risk in Play Provision - second edition 2012'

Any accidents which require first aid treatment are recorded. This allows the monitoring of more risky activities to ensure the chance of serious injury is not too high.

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.

At Dringhouses Primary school we recognise and accept that we may not be able to see every child all of the time, especially when the children are playing amongst the bushes and trees. It is expected that staff will move around throughout 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.

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.

This is the team working directly with OPAL to ensure this policy is in place and develop play and outdoor learning at Dringhouses Primary school. It consists of:

Head Teacher

Play Co-Ordinator - (leads and manages strategy)

Play Leader - (leads and manages playtimes)

Parent Representative

Associate Governor

Other staff members with an interest in developing play

8. The adult's role in play

Dringhouses Primary school aims to maximise the benefits they can gain from play by training all staff who supervise playtimes in 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. 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. Playground rules will be kept to the minimum required to maintain safety and all playground rules will be agreed by the Play working party.

9. Equality and diversity

Through providing a rich play offer and 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.

To manage risks

- Our site manager performs regular Health & Safety checks of the play areas
- The Opal working party and all playtime supervision staff will check for dangers/risks when outside with the children.
- The children will be made aware of possible risks and help to manage those via staff alerting them, for example slippery and wet surfaces.
- Separate the play areas into zones to maintain a risk/benefit management system creating quiet areas as well as areas for physical 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