



Longshaw Primary Academy - OPAL (Outdoor Play And Learning) Lunchtime Play Policy and Procedures

Document Control	
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Date of Next Review:

1. Commitment

Our school will 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.

Our school will ensure that during lunchtime children will have a safe, happy and worthwhile break from school teaching sessions in the middle of the day. The experiences should be positive, and pupils will be supported by our Play Team who are also our support staff in the school.

2. Rationale

Our 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 and children with SEND.

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..."

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.

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, whilst also ensuring that all children are safe.
- Provide opportunities for children to develop their relationships with each other.
- Enable children to develop respect for their surroundings, each other and adults.
- 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.
- To create an enjoyable and calm lunchtime environment, where children can enjoy eating appropriately and socialising with their friends and other classmates.

5. Behaviours

To ensure that we achieve our aims we have detailed what behaviours we should see from children and adults during lunchtime

Children

- Pupils will walk quietly and sensibly through the corridors.

- Pupils talk at a reasonable volume to each other in the hall so people can hear each other.
- Pupils are to demonstrate good table manners in the hall, such as eating with their mouth closed and using cutlery appropriately.
- Pupils are to use 'please' and 'thank you'.
- Pupils are to play and enjoy playing with each other which is in line with our school values of being kind and gentle and look after school property.
- Pupils are to be fair and encourage others to join in.
- Pupils are given cooling off time should conflicts occur, they will be provided with a calm space to reflect and gather their thoughts.
- Pupils return to class calm and are ready to learn.
- Pupils are to follow the direction of all adults who are supervising at lunchtime.

Adults

- Adults will walk quietly and sensibly through the corridors.
- Adults will use calm and assertive voices when talking to pupils, as they would in the classroom.
- Adults are to use 'please' and 'thank you'.
- Adults will supervise pupils at all times.
- Adults will refrain from eating during lunchtime whilst working with the children.
- Adults will ensure that they follow the timings given to ensure pupils are supervised safely outside.
- Adults will initiate games with pupils.
- Adults will actively engage with the pupils whilst supervising lunchtime play.
- Adults will listen to all pupils involved in a conflict and to help resolve the issue, including walking with a pupil who needs to calm down.
- Adults must wear high visibility jackets so they are easily recognisable to children and other staff.
- An adult must be based at the first aid station at all times.
- Adults will watch out for children who appear to be alone at lunchtimes encouraging and supporting them in playing with others.
- Adults will have a greater awareness of all children when they are in the dining hall to ensure that pupils are not waiting longer than necessary to eat their pudding or go out to play.
- Adults will encourage but not pressurise children to eat.
- Adults will smile and have fun with pupils who are enjoying their free time.

6. 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.

7. 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. (see Appendix 1 – the HSE Managing Risk Statement)

8. 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 Longshaw Primary Academy we stagger our lunchtimes to ensure that children have enough time to eat, and that the playground is a pleasant place to play.

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. 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.

Playworkers will be given relevant training during INSET days to ensure consistency when assisting with behaviour issues during lunchtime. They will also receive training when new equipment/apparatus is introduced to the playground.

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. Rewarding Positive Behaviour

At Longshaw, Playworkers have an important responsibility to use Conscious Discipline in the dinner hall and playground as well as the transitions to and from.

10. Dealing with conflict

If a child has not followed the Longshaw values, then they are spoken to by a Playworker to explain what behaviours are expected. If serious incidents of behaviour occur, then the Playworker is to listen to all pupils involved and find out the facts.

Once the facts are established and they deem the incident to be serious, then they are to bring the pupils to a senior member of the leadership team in line with the school's behaviour policy. Consequences for behaviour will be dealt with by the SLT. As much as possible, Playworkers are to encourage children to deal with minor incidents themselves using the following sentence stems. 'I didn't like it when you.....because it made me feel....' The Playworker role is to ensure that the pupils are able to speak to one another directly to come to a conclusion that all pupils are satisfied with.

Wet Day Arrangements

On very wet days, children will still be given the opportunity to play outside, provided they are wearing appropriate waterproof outerwear. On the rare occasions when extreme weather conditions make outdoor play unsafe, alternative arrangements will be made for indoor supervision. Pupils will return to their classrooms and be supervised by

their Playworker, where structured class-led activities or calm activities such as colouring and drawing will take place.

11. Playground Rangers

Their roles include: playing games and encouraging the children to play with those who may be sitting by themselves, having no one to play with, minor problem solving including restorative justice.

12. First Aid

Where possible, first aid is to be administered to a pupil on the playground, at the first aid station. All accidents/bumps/scrapes are reported on ARMS. Parents will receive an email notification for a head bump. If a pupil has received a more serious bump to the head, parents will also receive a phone call.

13. 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 as per our equality policy.

14. 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

In addition, a rich play setting supports safeguarding, helps children develop confidence in teambuilding and advocating for their own rights, increases children's social and emotional capabilities and helps develop a love and enjoyment of the outdoors, which is a key foundation for caring for the environment. Appendix 1 – HSE Managing Risk Statement

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 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.

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])

8. Striking the right balance does mean:

- Weighing up risks and benefits when designing and providing play opportunities and activities
- Focusing 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 providers

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.