

## Our Lady of the Assumption OPAL play policy

### 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.

### 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.

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."*

### 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:

- 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.
- Play enhances children's self-esteem and their understanding of others through freely chosen social interactions 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.
- 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.

Our school mission statement to 'love one another as I have loved you' influences our commitment to encouraging our pupils to live this out in their daily lives, with play being a crucial part of developing this.

### 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.

## 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.

## 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. 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.

#### **Guidelines for supervision:**

- **At least 1 member of staff per zone, ranging in this area. An extra member of staff will be added to 'busier' areas with higher risk elements. When something new, which has an element of risk, is added, a staff will closely supervise while the rules are established for how to use it safely.**
- **Staff will more closely monitor these areas of risk:**

**Large loose parts**

**Swings**

### **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. 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. They are also available to participate in the play if invited. The school will have a dedicated 'curricular lead for play' and a 'play coordinator'. See the attached appendices for details.

### **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](http://www.freeplaynetwork.org.uk/pubs/bestplay.pdf)

## Appendix 1 - Job description- Curricular lead for play

### Curricular lead for play

The curricular lead for play is responsible for driving all play-related initiatives forward within the school. In one form entry schools, they will be in SLT or an experienced teacher. In two form or above, they will be in SLT. This post requires one hour a week during the first year of the OPAL Primary Programme and one hour a fortnight after that.

The curricular lead for play is the person who has responsibility for the school's play action plan and the inclusion of play in the school improvement plan.

The curricular lead for play will report to:

- SLT
- Governors

### What the role entails:

- Evaluating and monitoring play within the school.
- Being responsible for, supporting and managing the play team and their professional development.
- Managing the play coordinator and their professional development.
- Reviewing and updating the school's play action plan at least three times a year.
- Working closely with the play coordinator to deliver the school's play action plan.
- Carrying out observations of playtimes once every half term.
- Liaising with site services officer and the business manager regarding the maintenance and improvements of the outside area.
- Liaising with the play coordinator and the play team regarding the ordering and replenishing of loose parts and resources for play.
- Work with the play coordinator to ensure regular play team meetings are held to train in playwork practice and improve play at the school.
- Incorporating pupil voice for play into the school's communications plan
- Liaising with the play coordinator to ensure regular play assemblies are conducted using OPAL's CINI format.

## Appendix 2 - Job description - Play coordinator

<b>Job title:</b>	Play Coordinator	<b>Reporting to:</b> Headteacher
<b>Contract / hours:</b>	11 hours per week	

### Purpose

The play coordinator will support and facilitate meaningful and productive child-initiated play during the school day **in accordance with the play policy.**

### Line management:

The post holder is responsible to the headteacher and Curricular Leader for Play for fulfilling the duties set out in this job description.

### Statutory requirements:

The post holder will have a responsibility to promote and safeguard the safety and welfare of children in accordance with the schools' safeguarding incorporating child protection policy; anti-bullying policy; behaviour policy; and in line with the school's values and mission statement.

### Responsibilities

#### Ensure wellbeing of pupils

- Ensure that all play team staff are completing their main duties to a high standard and that all staff are facilitating play development.
- Ensure that you and your play team have read the play policy and are fully supportive of it.
- Ensure the safety, welfare and general conduct through appropriate application of the school's policies and procedures.
- Establish safe and proper behaviour, by appropriate intervention or referral to senior staff, as appropriate.
- Identify and report any unauthorised visitors on school premises.
- Complete any relevant documentation required by the school in relation to incidents occurring during the lunchtime break period.
- Participate in OPAL/team around the child (TAC)/medical meetings, as required.
- Ensure you and your play team are aware of children's special medical conditions and the relevant precautions and treatments necessary.
- Take any immediate action to attend to sickness or accidents by carrying out minor first aid and summoning relevant assistance.
- Report any major accidents or bumped heads to the class teacher, headteacher and pastoral leader and record in the accident book.

#### Ensure a diverse range of playable resources are provided for, and are accessible to, all children

- Ensure there are sufficient resources to promote each of the 'play types' as listed in the play policy.
- Check the quality and condition of resources and repair or remove any resources that are not of a suitable condition.
- Ensure resources are stored appropriately.

#### Discuss resources with the children (school council) and use their views to create development plans

Organise and carry out the replenishment of resources through:

- Securing funding from internal or external sources.
- Purchasing resources as required.
- Coordinating appeals within school and local communities for resources.

- Collecting resources from sources such as the Scrapstore.

**Provide support and training for other school staff or pupils as required**

- Build play team members expertise and practice.
- Organise and support pupil playground leaders with their role.
- Facilitate peer led play opportunities.
- Provide suggestions for playmaker activities and games.

**Ensure enriching play events or opportunities are created**

- Discuss and plan with pupils/staff and school council.
- Implement planned activities which promote play development.
- Review activities to promote self-evaluation and play development.

**Create opportunities for play to support the social and behavioural development of pupils**

- Ensure a rich and varied set of play opportunities is available to all children.
- Provide engaging playwork interventions for pupils who find positive behaviour choices challenging.

**Resources and support:**

This post will carry an entitlement to appropriate support from the headteacher and Curricular Lead for Play.

**Review:**

The job description sets out the principle responsibilities for the post but does not describe each of the tasks that it may be necessary to carry out.

The job description may be reviewed from time to time in consultation with the post-holder in order to address the changing circumstances of priorities within the school.

**Knowledge, experience and training:**

Essential:

- Prior experience of working with children in an educational or playwork setting is essential.
- Relevant qualifications or experience of working with children.

Desirable:

- Playwork level 2 or above.



Appendix 3 – HSE – “Children’s Play and Leisure – promoting a balanced approach.”

[Health and safety + risk\4.6 GUIDANCE Health and Safety Executive \(HSE\) – Managing Risk in Play and Leisure \(1\).pdf](#)

