



# Outdoor Play and Learning Policy

**Last Review Date:** Summer 2021  
**Reviewed by:** Opal Working Party  
**Next Review Date:** Summer 2022



## **Rationale**

We believe that all children need opportunities to play which allow them to explore, manipulate, experience and affect their environment. We acknowledge the UN Charter on the Rights of the Child, especially Article 31, and support the child's right to play. 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 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 behavioral problems, fewer playtime accidents, happier staff and a healthier attitude to life"*.

Broadwood school site, if quality play opportunities are provided, is a perfect environment for children to experience self-initiated play and develop a range of essential life-long skills.

## **The Value of Play**

Play is any freely chosen activity which a child finds satisfying and creative. It is children's work, and they give a tremendous amount of energy and effort to it. It may or may not involve equipment or other people.

Learning opportunities through play can include: -

- Increase in self-awareness, self-esteem and self-respect.
- Development of social interactions - understanding of others through freely chosen interactions e.g. within peer groups, with individuals, with groups of different ages, abilities, interests, gender, ethnicity and culture.
- Making choices, problem solving, being creative.
- Achieving success and also coping with failing.
- Communication and negotiation skills.

## **Aims:**

- To ensure our outside area provides varied, challenging and stimulating play and learning zones.
- To provide a range of areas which will support children's learning across the curriculum and help them to understand the world around them.

Children will then have opportunities to:

- take risks and use a common-sense approach to these risks and their benefits.
- develop relationships across school.
- develop respect for their surroundings and each other.
- develop physically, emotionally, socially, spiritually and intellectually.
- develop independence and team work.
- build emotional and physical resilience.



## **Benefit and Risk**

An essential element of exploration within the medium of play is the opportunity for children to experience freely chosen activities, where they can take acceptable risks and challenge themselves beyond their existing capabilities.

‘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’ *Managing Risk in Play Provision: Implementation guide is published for Play England 2012*

Allowing children to take acceptable risk develops their ability to judge risk independently and learn new skills. All children both need and want to take risks in order to explore limits, venture into new experiences and develop their capacities, from a very young age and from their earliest play experiences. Children would never learn to walk, climb stairs or ride a bicycle unless they were strongly motivated to respond to challenges involving a risk of injury.

Our carefully considered and comprehensive risk assessment of our play provision within the school will be reviewed on an annual basis, or whenever significant change or development in play provision/equipment or child circumstances takes place.

To manage the levels of risk we will follow the guidelines below:

- Recognise the need for professional judgment in setting the balance between safety and goals.
- All staff should self-assess and manage risk, e.g. red tape should be used to section off play areas or equipment which are deemed to be ‘high risk.’
- Ensure risks are as apparent as possible to staff and children.
- Ensure risks that children may not appreciate are controlled and managed.
- Ensure staff are trained to supervise play setting.
- We may not be able to see every child all of the time, especially when the children are using the trees.
- All staff are assigned a zone on a termly rotation and it is expected that staff will move around throughout the playtime, finding out what the children are doing and where the children are playing.

## **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 will be two or more adults present outdoors. The school recognizes OPAL’s three models of supervision Direct, Remote and Ranging. Except for new children in reception, the school does not believe direct supervision is possible or beneficial. Supervision will take remote and ranging 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.



## **The Adults' Role in Play**

Staff will use and refer to '*The Playwork Principles*' when appropriate interventions are needed, and ultimately will strive for facilitating an environment which nurtures self-directed play.

The play-worker's 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 attitudes 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.

## **First Aid**

All lunchtime supervisors carry a waist bag, which contains basic First aid equipment. Any head bumps must be recorded and reported to parents/carers. All First Aid accidents must be recorded.

## **Clothing**

We would advise that all children come prepared for outdoor/ all weathers play. During the colder and wet weather, wellies should be worn when walking on the school field or in the wooded areas. Children should also wear coats during cold weather. Children need to be responsible for managing their outdoor clothing. This includes being prepared before they go outside to play. During the summer, children will need sun cream and hats to protect themselves. Part of outdoor play means children may get muddy. We will endeavour to reduce this as much as possible but free play means allowing children to explore the areas they like.

## **Equality and Access**

All children are entitled to access our outdoor 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 policy will be closely monitored by the SLT and the OPAL working party and reviewed based on the needs of the adults and children's in the school.

The policy will be reviewed in line with the SEND code of practice to ensure all children are able to access the play provision (this may mean with support for some children). All parts of play provision can be accessible. Please see our Accessibility Policy which can be found on the school website.

## **Equipment**

- Our caretaker performs regular health and safety checks of the area.
- The OPAL working party and other staff will check for risks/ dangers when they are outside with the children.
- Children will be made aware of possible risks and will alert staff if required.
- The playground will be divided into zones to help staff supervise children and to keep a sensible risk/ benefit management system in place i.e. not all 'riskier' items together.