



Bourne Westfield Primary Academy Play Policy

1. Commitment

Article 31 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child states that 'A child has the right to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts.'

At Bourne Westfield Primary Academy (BWPA), we recognise that play is an integral part of a happy and healthy childhood. As a school, we believe in providing consistently high-quality, sustainable play opportunities for all children. These inclusive opportunities in play are achieved by offering carefully considered outdoor spaces, equipment, and toys that offer a rich choice of accessible play experiences for every child. We believe play has a vital role in children's health, happiness, and wellbeing. It creates children who are independent, confident, imaginative, adaptable, social and able to assess risks.

Our school undertakes to refer to this play policy in all decisions that affect children's play. BWPA is committed to providing the strategic and operational leadership needed to provide and maintain quality play provision for all of our children.

2. Rationale

Children spend up to 20% or 1.4 years of their time in school at play. Therefore, this time needs to be coherent and planned for. Changes in society such as heavier traffic, busier lifestyles, fewer areas for play and awareness of risk have led to 'play deprivation' for many of today's children. This makes their play opportunities at school even more essential.

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 which is vital for all our children and in particular for EAL learners and those children with deprived speech and language. The contribution of play to educational development is suggested through the inherent value of different play types e.g. through risk-taking and exploratory play in formal and informal settings, allowing children to experiment, try new things and push their boundaries in a safe environment.

BWPA 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.*"



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Our Play policy is underpinned by the aims of our **CORE** values:

- Commitment**
 - shows loyalty to friends, colleagues and the school
 - is willing to support and show care for those who need help
 - is willing to work to the highest level
 - keeps the school rules
- Opportunity**
 - develops confidence through participation
 - volunteers in a variety of school situations
 - considers their own strengths and
 - sets personal goals for improvement
 - pursues individual interests in a manner which broadens horizons
- Respect**
 - values all members of the school community
 - displays good manners at all times
 - displays tolerance of others with different points of view and beliefs
 - shows respect for the school buildings, facilities and environment
- Excellence**
 - is proud of personal achievement
 - produces work of the highest quality

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.



Approved: January 2023

Review Date: January 2024



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- Play 'ignites a passion for learning'.

4. Aims

In relation to play BWPA 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.
- Improve pupil's behaviour during unstructured times through valuing children's ideas and empowering them to make their own decisions about the type of play they are involved in.
- Promote 'self- efficacy' and responsibility for managing own play.
- Promote our Westy Way:
 - We are brave.
 - Every day we try our best.
 - Stick at it! We are resilient.
 - Trust us; we are caring and respectful.
 - Yes! We are a team!

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.

All our children have a right to fulfil our CORE values with equity.

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)

Approved: January 2023

Review Date: January 2024





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BWPA will use the Health and Safety Executive guidance document

[‘Children’s Play and Leisure – Promoting a Balanced Approach’](#) 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.

We are committed to promoting play that supports our children with their creative, critical and scientific thinking in order for them to thrive in an ever-changing world. Our aim is to nurture our children to be resilient and thoughtful in their play in an environment where they have a sense of belonging and value. This is echoed in our Curriculum Statement as we recognise that the quality and authenticity of play experience in the primary years has a significant impact on more formal learning.

[See appendix 1.HSE Managing Risk.](#)

[Bourne Westfield RBA – see Appendix 4](#)

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.

We have identified different types of play areas/ zones and will adapt supervision styles as appropriate for the area.

For example: **Remote** supervision will be in operation on the school field where there is good visibility of play. **Direct** supervision would be appropriate in the small world area enclosed by trees and bushes. **Roaming** supervision for areas of play where there are construction activities and children may need support in managing risk when moving and building with equipment and loose parts.

[See appendix 2. Guidelines for Supervision](#)

Approved: January 2023

Review Date: January 2024



8. The adult's role in play

BWPA 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. Regular dialogue with children about the play provision in the playground which will include play assemblies, school council meetings, surveys, and other pupil voice outlets will ensure positive and mutually respectful relationships are maintained.

The playworker's role will also be to facilitate play and encourage children to assess the risks and benefits of activities within the play setting. The school is working with OPAL (www.outdoorplayandlearning.org.uk) to help guide a strategic approach to developing play. In addition to this, the **Play Team (Appendix 5)** will work in collaboration with parents, teachers, teaching assistants, governors, and all other pupils to implement the changes highlighted in this policy. They will ensure that the broadest possible range of play opportunities are available to children: to observe, reflect and analyse the play that is happening and select a mode of intervention or make a change to the play space if needed. Playworkers ensure that the play space is inclusive – supporting all children to make the most of the opportunities available in their own way.

Link below outlines the 16 types of play our play team will support and facilitate.

<https://outdoorplayandlearning.org.uk/16-playtype-videos/>

See appendix 3. Play work principles.

9. Children's role in play

The children will all have access to their own version of the play policy – **Opal Play Charter (Appendix 6)**. They will be asked to agree to uphold the charter and sign their name to demonstrate their understanding. Responding to the children's feedback, the charter has been simplified to the following 4 rules:



This children's charter will be shared and explained to all children regularly as part of ongoing assemblies, discussions, and dialogue in class and with the School Council Representatives. It will be displayed in classrooms and form an integral part of BWPA behaviour policy.

10. Equality and diversity



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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.

11. Environment

BWPA will use the document 'Best Play' to guide us on what a quality play environment should contain.

www.freeplaynetwork.org.uk/pubs/bestplay.pdf

We will:

- Use the outdoor space as a natural resource for learning and playing, encouraging the children to value natural or found objects for play
- Include the children when planning for playing and learning outdoors
- Ensure that the outdoor area offers all children the opportunity to investigate, take risks and explore and use their imagination and creativity
- Expect the children to respect the outdoor environment and care for living things
- Give children the opportunity to manage the space and freedom afforded by the outdoors
- Enrich the quality of the environment to maximize the variety of play types and increase play value
- Ensure that the playground is an integrated area where all children from Reception to Year 6 can play safely
- Teach the children their responsibilities with regard to maintaining the quality of their outdoor space, and the equipment available and ensure they take an active part in doing this
- Promote children's pride for the outdoor space that belongs to them

We will reflect on how a rich play setting supports safeguarding, helps children develop confidence in team building 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.

Our play policy is a live document that will continue to be updated and modified in line with the needs of the children as we grow and develop our play provision for all.

Approved: January 2023

Review Date: January 2024





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Appendix: 1. Health and Safety Executive: Managing Risk

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

Approved: January 2023

Review Date: January 2024





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- 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

Approved: January 2023

Review Date: January 2024





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Approved: January 2023

Review Date: January 2024



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Appendix 2:

Guidelines for Supervision from “Play work Essentials” written by Louise Scott-McVie and Theresa Casey. Adapted by Michael Follett.

Ranging supervision of play

Under UK law there is no recommended ratio for how many adults should supervise play, nor is there any guidance to what form supervision should take. This is left to the discretion of the school leadership. Ranging supervision has been introduced into OPAL schools because schools have been underusing much of their grounds (typically for just 17% of available days) because of confusion about the purpose and style of supervision, or because of appearance issues.

If you are being asked to practice ranging supervision you will need to include the following;

1. Understand your range. How big is it? Are there areas that are hidden or have greater potential risk? How do you communicate with colleagues in a hurry?
2. Where are your children? What are they doing? You will need to be walking your range for much of your shift. You should know who is playing in the different parts of it, what and who they are playing with, and how risky the play is.
3. You should, and the children should, keep your range free of hazards and litter. Are there any planks with nails, are there sharp bits of plastics or are there glass bottles in the bushes? Are there any really sharp branches just at child eye level?

Rope play requires special vigilance and care (see the OPAL guidance sheet).

Wires and twine should be removed altogether.

‘Heads up’ playwork

You can effectively patrol your range and practice good playwork so long as you keep your eyes ‘up’ at all times. You are not there to entertain or chat to children (or colleagues) when on duty unless your Play Coordinator tells you otherwise, e.g. for delivery of playwork. You can take a resource from one place to another, you can observe the play that is unfolding and you can ask children what they need in order for it to develop, all while remaining vigilant. You can set up resources in a new and inviting way for children to find and adapt and still keep your ‘eyes on the prize’ – child safety. The skill inherent in your job is the ability to balance involvement in playwork with alertness and awareness. Even if you are deeply involved in some playwork intervention, you will also need to keep your ‘head up’, so you know what is happening elsewhere in your zone.

Dynamic risk management

You will need to read the OPAL guidance sheet on risk-benefit management and discuss it with your line manager and the rest of your play team. When children are able to take managed risks, supported by adults who are looking out for them and supporting them in their judgements, they will eventually end up having fewer accidents. However, OPAL is not about a free-for-all, anything-goes attitude to risk: it is about you using your common sense, skill and judgement to balance the needs of children to experience beneficial, challenging play with your responsibility to protect them from unnecessary, serious harm.

Approved: January 2023

Review Date: January 2024



Appendix 3: from “Play work Essentials” written by Louise Scott-McVie and Theresa Casey. Adapted by Michael Follett.

Play work Principles:

The playwork principles

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.



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Appendix 4 - Bourne Westfield Primary Academy – Risk Benefit Assessment

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1YTxFuR8e7pspgg7Xc4kmdcfEXksA-vE2/edit?usp=share_link&ouid=110289437778927486655&rtpof=true&sd=true

Approved: January 2023

Review Date: January 2024





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Appendix 5

Structure of Adult Roles in Practice

OPAL Team

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

- Curricular Lead: Mrs Jo McCullough
- Play Governor: Mr Phil Tordoff
- Play Co-ordinator: Mrs Judi Main
- Play Team: Mrs Julie Girt, Mrs Dee Sleeman, Mrs Sandra Allen, Mrs Hannah Fawcett, Mrs Mary Gadd, Mrs Julie Gardner, Mrs Emily King, Miss Christina Lee, Mrs Gaynor Lewis, Miss Esther Tubby, Mrs Lisa McPherson, Mrs Gemma Jacob, Mrs Jade Barker Magowan, Mrs Lucy Cooke, Mrs Stacy Grimmer.
- Parent Representative: Esther Tubby

Play Team

All adults working at the school are part of the play team and have a responsibility to follow this policy. When on the playground at playtimes, all staff should act as Play Leaders.

However, more specifically at lunchtimes, the following structure exists:

- **Curriculum Lead for Play** (Leads and manages strategy)
Mrs Jo McCullough
- **Play Co-ordinator** (Leads and manages playtimes)
Mrs Main
- **Play Team** (Facilitate and provide rich play experiences)
All staff

Approved: January 2023

Review Date: January 2024



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Appendix 6 – Children’s Play Charter

Our OPAL charter

We have the right to play and enjoy OPAL.

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

- ✓ everyone chooses what to play
- ✓ we share equipment fairly and kindly
- ✓ we take care of the equipment
- ✓ we treat each other how we like to be treated
- ✓ we keep everybody safe
- ✓ we are kind to others
- ✓ we help people if they need us
- ✓ we allow people to join in games
- ✓ we ask grownups if we need help to sort out our problems
- ✓ we listen to one and another
- ✓ we play safely.

Signed:

Approved: January 2023

Review Date: January 2024