



# Durham Trinity School & Sports College

Nurture, Believe, Thrive, Succeed

## OPAL Play Policy 2025

### 1. Commitment

Our school undertakes to 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.

Durham Trinity School and Sports College value and are committed to children's play and made a decision to extend the lunchtime period by 20mins each day - to provide opportunities for children to play and learn as part of our whole school curriculum.

### 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."*

#### Our School Vision is:

Fully inclusive and appropriate education is provided for the whole child.

A holistic and nurturing approach to support pupil's social, emotional, communication, mental health and wellbeing at the appropriate level to the child.

A curriculum that develops skills and knowledge, alongside opportunities to apply and develop life skills.

Physical activities to develop creativity, resilience and risk taking whilst becoming healthy and active young people.

Staff specialism and bespoke skill set ensures that each child is inspired, and reaches their full potential – physically, mentally and academically

Creative and innovative activities to challenge and develop thinking skills for all pupils no matter their SEND.

Pupil's achievements and milestones are celebrated no matter how small.

Pupils are society ready and ready to take on their next steps in life – aiming high in life.

Staff are outward looking – (beyond the norm, outside the box) to ensure all pupils needs are met and to drive the school forward.

## **Nurture, Believe, Thrive, Succeed.**

### **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.
- Play supports pupils to be regulated through the opportunities of physical movement outside.
- Play allows pupils to learn through play in a fun, challenging and creative approach.
- Play is critical part of our curriculum to learn and transfer new skills whilst developing life-long learners – preparing them for their next stage in their lives.(ref – DTS&SC Curriculum Toolkit and Teaching & Learning policy)

### **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, sensory, 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.

Our School Council have opportunities throughout the school year to represent their peers and share the views of pupils across their pathway. As part of the EHCP process every pupil has a pupil voice document that is shared as part of their annual EHCP review.

## 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.

With reference to Durham Trinity's School Vision – we aim to provide a curriculum that develops skills and knowledge, alongside opportunities to apply and develop life skills, this includes risk-benefit assessments and developing children's resilience.

## 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, whilst there will be additional adult's outside to support pupils with challenging behaviours and medical needs. The adults are easily identified by wearing hi-vis. This allows for adults to allocate a zone/play area to supervise, whilst children can quickly find an adult and adults can patrol our

large sites to gain an awareness of the kinds of play and levels of risk likely to be emerging. On some occasions some zones will need to be closed when there are limited adults available to supervise the zones/areas, this is particularly during transition periods at lunchtimes.

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,

Remote supervision Play workers may not be able to see every child all of the time, especially when the children are playing in the trees. It is expected that Play workers will move around throughout lunchtime in their designated area, finding out what the children are doing and where the children are playing. Play Workers can then check in on the children's play throughout lunchtime.

Additional Organisation To enable children to enjoy the vast space and activities in all weather, they are encouraged to wear wellington boots/change in footwear. Boot/shoe storages have been created at 2 main door entrances and within each class that has outdoor areas attached.

#### End of Lunchtime Organisation

A different 'change in lesson' recorded tune is played at 1:00pm for children to tidy zones/areas and change their footwear ready for the 1:10pm 'change in lesson' recorded tune so that they are back in class and ready to learn at 1:10pm.

### **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. 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.

At the start of the school day Class Playworkers (TAs) are responsible for setting up and changing a designated play area/zone. Playworkers use the Playwork Principles and the Five Finger Rule to support the development of play.

### **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)

Policy written by HT and Play Lead: Rachel Grimwood and Tracey Seymour May 2025

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