

St John the Baptist Church of England (VA) Primary School



Loving learning, Building
Community, Growing in faith

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OPAL Play Policy

Review

This policy was reviewed by the OPAL Management team in January 2025 and will be reviewed every year.

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Signed: Trudie Colotto, Headteacher

1. Commitment

St John the Baptist Primary 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 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, 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.
- 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. 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.

Supervision at St Johns:

Zone	12.00-12.15	12.15-12.30	12.30-12.45	12.45-13.00
Opal Play Co-Ordinator	Person 1	Person 1	Person 2	Person 1
Walkie Talkies	Wet Play Packed lunches in class	Wet Play Packed lunches in class	Wet Play Packed lunches in class	Wet Play Packed lunches in class
1	Person 2 (2BB)	Person 2 (2BB)	Person 2 (2BB)	Person 2 (2BB)
	Person 3 (2T)	Person 3 (2T)	Person 3 (2T)	Person 3 (2T)
	Person 4 (2H)	Person 4 (2H)	Person 5 (2H)	Person 5 (2H)
2	Person 2 (2BB)	Person 2 (2BB)	Person 2 (2BB)	Person 2 (2BB)
	Person 3 (2T)	Person 3 (2T)	Person 3 (2T)	Person 3 (2T)
	Person 4 (2H)	Person 4 (2H)	Person 5 (2H)	Person 5 (2H)
3	Person 2 (2BB)	Person 2 (2BB)		Person 2 (2BB)
	Person 3 (2T)	Person 3 (2T)	Person 3 (2T)	Person 3 (2T)
	Person 4 (2H)	Person 4 (2H)	Person 5 (2H)	Person 5 (2H)
4	Person 6	Person 6	Person 6	Person 6
5	Person 6	Person 6	Person 6	Person 6
6	Person 6	Person 6	Person 6	Person 6
			Person 7	Person 7
7	Person 1	Person 8	Person 8	Person 8
8	Person 9	Person 9	Person 9	Person 9
9	Person 10	Person 10	Person 10	Person 10
			Person 11	Person 11
10	Not Open Yet			
11	Not Open Yet			
First Aid	Office Staff	Office Staff	Person 12	Person 12
Packed Lunches Year 1 & 2 (Y1 Corridor)	Person 13	Person 13		
Packed Lunches Year 3 & 4 (Intervention Rooms)	Person 14	Person 14		
Packed Lunches Year 5 & 6 (Music and Drama)	Person 15	Person 15		

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.

Further Information on Playwork Principles can be found at

<https://primarysite-prod-sorted.s3.amazonaws.com/st-john-the-baptist-cofe-primary-school/UploadedDocument/7be63929-2d6a-4241-821b-988ad0236f99/5.1-guidance-playwork-essentials-2023-24.pdf>

8. 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.

9. 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

Appendix 1 - Managing Risk Statement (HSE)

1. Overview

As an employer, you're required by law to protect your employees, and others, from harm.

Under the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999, the minimum you must do is:

- identify what could cause injury or illness in your business (hazards)
- decide how likely it is that someone could be harmed and how seriously (the risk)
- take action to eliminate the hazard, or if this isn't possible, control the risk
- Assessing risk is just one part of the overall process used to control risks in your workplace.

For most small, low-risk businesses the steps you need to take are straightforward and are explained in these pages.

2. Steps needed to manage risk

Risk management is a step-by-step process for controlling health and safety risks caused by hazards in the workplace.

You can do it yourself or appoint a competent person to help you.

- Identify hazards
- Assess the risks
- Control the risks
- Record your findings
- Review the controls
- Identify hazards
- Look around your workplace and think about what may cause harm (these are called hazards). Think about:
 - how people work and how plant and equipment are used
 - what chemicals and substances are used
 - what safe or unsafe work practices exist
 - the general state of your premises
 - Look back at your accident and ill health records as these can help you identify less obvious hazards. Take account of non-routine operations, such as maintenance, cleaning or changes in production cycles.

Think about hazards to health, such as manual handling, use of chemicals and causes of work-related stress. For each hazard, think about how employees, contractors, visitors or members of the public might be harmed.

Vulnerable workers

Some workers have particular requirements, for example young workers, migrant workers, new or expectant mothers and people with disabilities.

Talk to workers

Involve your employees as they will usually have good ideas.

Assess the risks

Once you have identified the hazards, decide how likely it is that someone could be harmed and how serious it could be. This is assessing the level of risk.

Decide:

- who might be harmed and how
- what you're already doing to control the risks
- what further action you need to take to control the risks
- who needs to carry out the action
- when the action is needed by
- Control the risks
- Look at what you're already doing, and the controls you already have in place.

Ask yourself:

- can I get rid of the hazard altogether?
- if not, how can I control the risks so that harm is unlikely?
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If you need further controls, consider:

- redesigning the job
- replacing the materials, machinery or process
- organising your work to reduce exposure to the materials, machinery or process
- identifying and implementing practical measures needed to work safely
- providing personal protective equipment and making sure workers wear it
- What reasonably practicable means
- Put the controls you have identified in place. You're not expected to eliminate all risks but you need to do everything 'reasonably practicable' to protect people from harm. This means balancing the level of risk against the measures needed to control the real risk in terms of money, time or trouble.

Record your findings

If you employ 5 or more people, you must record your significant findings, including.

- the hazards (things that may cause harm)
- who might be harmed and how
- what you are doing to control the risks
- To help you, we have a risk assessment template and examples. Do not rely purely on paperwork as your main priority should be to control the risks in practice.

Review the controls

You must review the controls you have put in place to make sure they are working. You should also review them if:

- they may no longer be effective
- there are changes in the workplace that could lead to new risks such as changes to:
- staff
- a process

- the substances or equipment used
- Also consider a review if your workers have spotted any problems or there have been any accidents or near misses.

Update your risk assessment record with any changes you make.

3. Risk assessment template and examples

Template

You can use a risk assessment template to help you keep a simple record of:

- who might be harmed and how
- what you're already doing to control the risks
- what further action you need to take to control the risks
- who needs to carry out the action
- when the action is needed by