The Coppice Primary School

OPAL PLAY POLICY

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Contents of The Coppice OPAL play policy:

1. Commitment
2. Rationale
3. Definition and value of play
4. Aims
5. Rights
6. Benefits of risks
7. Supervision
8. Adults role in play
9. Equality and diversity
10. Environment

1. Commitment

The Coppice will refer to this play policy in all decisions that affect children's play. We are committed to providing the strategic and operational leadership needed to provide and maintain quality play provision for all our children. An enthusiastic OPAL play team has been set up with staff who are committed to developing children's play experiences.
We have moved to serving lunches from two halls enabling all children easier access to the playgrounds. KS2 lunchtime has been extended by 10 minutes to ensure all children get 45 minutes of OPAL play.

2. Rationale

The Coppice 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.***"

Through OPAL we we will continue to embed the school ethos; encouraging children to be ready, respectful and responsible.

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.

At The Coppice 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.

Playing contributes greatly to such diverse areas as language, arts, culture, science, maths and technology. Furthermore, play supports self-regulation as a key developmental mechanism: this ability is increasingly shown to be vital to academic success.
Research provides considerable evidence that play can develop the cognitive abilities needed for formal learning: play aids development of problem-solving capabilities, creativity, representational skills and memory. Another important consideration is the emotional literacy and control needed to learn in school. Playing aids the development of concentration and attention.

4. Aims

In relation to play, The Coppice Primary 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

The Coppice 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.

We always encourage the children at the Coppice to be 'the best they can be'. We do this through empowering our children to be knowledgeable, ambitious, curious, resilient and empathetic. OPAL play has a huge part in enabling children to explore and succeed in all these areas.

All weather play: Children have the right to play outdoors every day in all types of weather (rain, wind, snow) unless it is unsafe. Appropriate clothing must be worn. Parents are asked to provide a suitable coat, wellies and waterproofs. A supply of spare wellies and waterproofs will be provided by the school to ensure inclusivity and prevent poverty-related barriers. We have designated hand washing areas and boot scraping areas to help maintain cleanliness. Outdoor resources are adapted for wet or cold conditions *(e.g., covering sandpits and using water-resistant materials for dens)*

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 practise dynamic risk management with children, encouraging them to identify and manage risks in an environment where adults are present to support them.

Please see Appendix 1 HSE Managing Risk Statement

7. Supervision

The law requires that children in school have supervision but for primary school playtimes there are no stated ratios. As a school, we recognise 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 always beneficial. Our supervisors/playworkers will predominantly 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. Coppice playworkers will wear hi-viz jackets so they are easily seen. They will carry walkie-talkies to enable immediate and effective communication between all staff and a designated first aider, who is positioned in an accessible place, will be contactable at all times.

8. The adult's role in play

The Coppice 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.

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. 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 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.

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.

The gap in educational outcomes, particularly for those children from areas of multiple deprivation and, increasingly, for boys highlights the need for interventions that address the social, emotional and physical needs of pupils as well as their academic needs.

The benefits of play are broad, encompassing:

- ✓ *Health and wellbeing*
- ✓ *Early childhood development*
- ✓ *Cognitive development*
- ✓ *Physical activity & literacy*
- ✓ *Mental health*
- ✓ *Emotional wellbeing*
- ✓ *Social development*
- ✓ *Learning about risk and challenge*
- ✓ *Play as therapy*
- ✓ *Resilience and character*

10. Environment

At The Coppice, 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.

11. GDPR:

Data Protection Statement:

The procedures and practices created by this policy have been reviewed in the light of our GDPR Data Protection Policy and all data will be handled in accordance with it.

Name of policy	Content	Reason for policy	Who does it relate to?	Where is it stored?

OPAL Play policy	Key information concerning our approach to outdoor play and learning	To inform all stakeholders of our commitment to ensuring children get excellent play opportunities.	Children, Teachers, Parents, Trustees and Ofsted.	By the Curriculum Play Leader and shared with Trustees

As such, our assessment is that this policy :

Has Few / No Data Compliance Requirements	Has A Moderate Level of Data Compliance Requirements	Has a High Level Of Data Compliance Requirements
X		

This policy is a working document and is reviewed regularly.

OPAL play in action:























Books make me happy
THE CAT IN THE HAT
Goldilocks and the Three Bears
Bambi

