Bushfield Road Infant School Play Policy

1. Commitment

At Bushfield Road Infant School, we will refer to this policy when making decisions that affect children's play. We are committed to providing the leadership, organisation and resources needed to provide and maintain high-quality play opportunities for all our pupils.

Our approach reflects our values of **Kindness, Teamwork and Curiosity**. We want playtimes to be welcoming, enjoyable and safe places where pupils can explore, make choices, learn with and from one another, and develop independence.

2. Rationale

We believe all pupils need opportunities to play that allow them to explore, manipulate, experience and influence their environment. Our play provision should be welcoming and accessible to every pupil, irrespective of gender, sexual orientation, economic or social circumstances, ethnic or cultural background or origin, or individual abilities.

We recognise that our infant pupils are at an important stage in developing communication, relationships, physical skills, confidence and independence. Play provides valuable opportunities to practise these skills in different ways. It also supports our commitment to kindness, teamwork and curiosity, and to creating a nurturing environment in which pupils feel happy, cared for and ready to learn.

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."

We will consider how our play provision supports pupils' wellbeing, relationships, learning and readiness to learn. We will also listen to pupils and staff when reviewing what is working well and what could be improved.

3. Definition and value of play

Play is a process that is intrinsically motivated, directed by the child and freely chosen by the child. Play has its own value and purpose. It may or may not involve equipment or other people.

We believe play has many benefits:

- 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 understanding of others through freely chosen social interactions: with peers, individuals and groups of different ages, abilities, interests, genders, ethnicities and cultures.
- Play involves ongoing communication and negotiation. It helps pupils balance their freedom to act with their responsibilities to others.
- Play enables pupils to experience a wide range of emotions and develop their ability to cope with these. These may include 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, solve problems and be creative.

- Play maintains pupils' openness to learning, develops their capabilities and allows them to extend what they can achieve.

We will value the different ways pupils play and recognise that their interests and prior experiences may vary. Adults will help pupils access a broad range of play experiences, including where a pupil needs support to join in or try something unfamiliar.

4. Aims

Through our play provision, we aim to:

- Ensure play settings provide a varied, challenging and stimulating environment.
- Allow pupils to take risks, using a common-sense approach to managing risks and recognising their benefits.
- Provide opportunities for pupils to develop relationships with one another.
- Enable pupils to develop respect for their surroundings and each other, showing kindness in how they play and work through disagreements.
- Support pupils' physical, emotional, social, spiritual and intellectual development.
- Provide a range of environments that encourage pupils to explore and play imaginatively.
- Provide environments that support learning across the curriculum and help pupils learn about the world around them.
- Promote independence and teamwork.
- Build emotional and physical resilience.

5. Rights

Bushfield Road Infant School recognises the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. This 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 take these rights seriously. We will listen to pupils' views about their play and consider them when reviewing our provision. In doing so, we will promote our values: showing **kindness** by respecting one another, **teamwork** by making play

inclusive, and **curiosity** by giving pupils opportunities to explore and try new things.

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. We 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 environments in which children legitimately spend time at play. Our provision aims to give pupils 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'.

We want pupils to develop confidence, independence and resilience, and to learn how to recognise and manage risk with appropriate adult support. This is consistent with our values: pupils can explore with curiosity, learn to act kindly towards others, and work together to keep play safe and enjoyable.

In addition to standard risk-benefit assessments, staff will use dynamic risk management with pupils. They will encourage pupils to identify and manage risks in an environment where adults are present to support them. The school will include the full HSE Managing Risk Statement as an appendix to this policy.

Appendix to be attached: the full HSE Managing Risk

7. Supervision

The law requires children in school to be supervised, but there are no stated ratios for primary school playtimes. During the school day, one or more adults should be 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 that direct supervision is possible or beneficial as the usual approach. Supervisors will use ranging and remote supervision so pupils can quickly find an adult and adults can patrol larger areas, remain aware of the play taking place and notice risks that may be emerging.

8. The adult's role in play

The school will help pupils gain the greatest benefit from play through staff who are informed by, and work in accordance with, the Playwork Principles. Staff will use and refer to these principles when intervention is needed, while striving to create an environment that nurtures pupils' self-directed play.

The playworker's core function is to create an environment that stimulates children's play and maximises their opportunities for a wide range of play experiences. A skilled and experienced playworker can enrich a child's play through the design and resources of the physical environment and through the attitudes and culture fostered within the play setting. Playworkers provide access to new materials and tools, and can stimulate children to explore and learn. They are also available to participate in play when invited.

In practice, adults will:

- Prepare and maintain environments and resources that invite different types of play.
- Be present and available, so pupils know how to find help.
- Observe before intervening, giving pupils time and space to direct their own play.
- Support pupils to include others, communicate, negotiate and resolve difficulties.
- Intervene when needed to support safety or wellbeing, or to help pupils access play.
- Model kindness and teamwork, and encourage curiosity and exploration.

These examples describe how the Playwork Principles can inform practice. A copy of the Playwork Principles should be appended to this policy.

9. Equality and diversity

Through a rich play offer that meets pupils' needs, we will support every pupil—regardless of age, gender, race, disability, additional needs or other individual circumstances—to develop and thrive, build strong relationships and enjoy school.

We will consider whether our environments, resources and adult support enable all pupils to take part. Where a pupil needs help to access an activity, communicate with others or join play, staff will consider what support or adaptations may be appropriate.

10. Environment

We believe a rich play setting should provide all pupils with access to stimulating environments that are free from unacceptable or unnecessary risks. This gives pupils opportunities to explore for themselves through freely chosen play.

We will strive to improve the quality and diversity of the school grounds to enhance play. We will use *Best Play* to guide our thinking about the features of a quality play environment. The original policy identifies the resource at **www.freeplaynetwork.org.uk/pubs/bestplay.pdf**.

Policy appendices to include:

- The full HSE Managing Risk Statement

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 risks[1] 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 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

[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 Chargot (2009) 2 All ER 660 [27])

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
- 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 providers[2] 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.

[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.

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

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.