



Orchard Primary and Nursery School Play Policy



April 2024 Review April 2026

At Orchard Primary School our mission statement is at the heart of everything we do.

“Orchard provides the Opportunity to unlock the Potential, which is the key to your future Success.”







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 our children.

2. Rationale

Orchard Primary and Nursery 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.

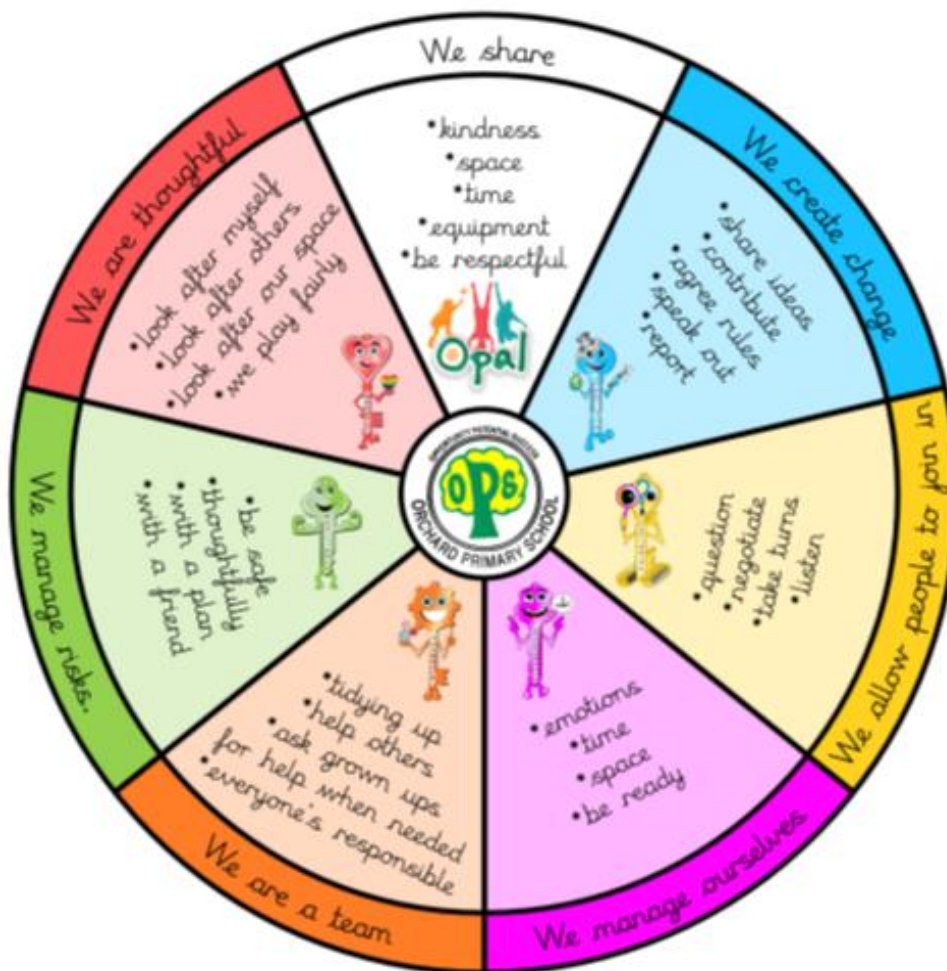
The OPAL Primary Programme rationale is that “... better, more active and creative playtimes can mean happier and healthier children, and having happier, healthier, more active children usually results in a more positive attitude to learning in school, with more effective classroom lessons, less staff time spent resolving unnecessary behavioural problems, fewer playtime accidents, happier staff and a healthier attitude to life.”

	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Creativity</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use imagination to invent games/ use the resources creatively • Solve problems • Choose resources to develop personal play preferences • Opportunity to express themselves 		<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Resilience</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learn how to take risks • Develop coordination and gross motor skills • Problem solving • Develop dexterity
	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Curiosity</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experiment with different types of play and resources • Experience different types of play • Engage in limitless play • Participate in sensory play 		<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Respect</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage happily in play • Communicate positively - make positive interactions with peers • Show kindness and respect to others when playing • Use equipment respectfully and safely
	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Independence</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop independent play that follows child’s own play type and interests • Develop life skills • Nurture emotional wellbeing • Take responsibility for own actions • Language development 		<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Teamwork</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cooperate and negotiate in play • Learn conflict resolution skills • Be inclusive with friendships and wider relationships

Intent

It is our intent that OPAL play provision will allow all children the opportunity to exhibit our School Virtues within their play. To ensure children know how to achieve this, the Play Charter below is displayed around the school site and regularly shared with children:

Opal Play Charter



3. 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.

Implementation

4. 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.

5. 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.

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.

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. During the school day there will be adequate supervision to meet the needs of all pupils. 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. The Play Team and staff 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 a large group of adults involved in our Play Team. This includes the staff formerly known as Midday Supervisors, the OPAL Working party including the Head and Deputy Head, Curriculum Lead for play a Senior Teaching Assistant and our sports coach. They will be identifiable by wearing hi-visibility vests.

As a school we implement a ranging supervision at break times and dinner times.

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.

See Playworker Principles – Appendix 2.

9. Wet Playtimes

We take the Opal approach that we play outside whatever the weather. ALL children have wellingtons in school as part of our school uniform policy. As part of the updated uniform policy for September 2025 puddle suits/ suitable outdoor waterproofs are now a requirement. We continually risk assess zones in line with the weather and in extreme conditions a particular zone may be sectioned off. The Play Team have suitable clothing and boots/ wellingtons. All staff are aware of and agree to what constitutes as a 'wet play' and know the system in place for this. This is communicated to staff via Teams.

10. 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.

11. 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

We are welcoming this turn in culture, recognising the digital world we live in, but also the limitations and difficulties faced by some of our families when it comes to providing a space to play outdoors safely. With this model, all pupils will have the same opportunity to experience outdoor play in all weathers, learn about team building with a variety of ages, cultures and gender, standing up for their own thoughts and beliefs therefore increasing their social and emotional capabilities as well as developing an enjoyment of outdoors that they may not have yet fostered.

OPAL will increase our community cohesion with friends of Orchard sharing their unwanted items and giving them one more lease of life. This is an exciting way to reuse, recycle and repurpose and aiding a more sustainable and creative way of living.

Impact

As a school, we believe that:

- allowing opportunities for rich, creative and more active play will result in children being able to practice life skills, build confidence and resilience.
- allowing children the opportunity to play in a 'flow' state, they will be more able to transition into afternoon learning and therefore are able to maximise every moment of the school day.
- well-prepared play will allow children's play literacy to develop and for them to experience learning opportunities that they may not in the classroom.