



Dowson Primary Academy

PLAY POLICY

Review Cycle: Bi-annually

October 2023



Authors: The Play Team



Play Policy



'Play is the work of children.'

Piaget

Rationale

Our school believes that today's generation of children should have the opportunity to make a positive difference to tomorrow's world; we therefore aim to prepare children with the skills, knowledge, values, and attributes needed to succeed and achieve in an unknown future. We understand and believe that play can complement the work of the classroom and provide opportunity for pupils to practise the values of our school during unstructured times.

As a school, we have undertaken a project with OPAL (Outdoor Play and Learning) specialists. 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."*

*'Play turns out to be so stunningly essential to childhood,
it's like love, sunshine and broccoli all juiced together.'*

Lenore Skenazy

Definition and Value of play

Play is learning for children; it is how they explore and get to know their world. It is as a process that is intrinsically motivated, directed by the child and freely chosen.

We believe play has many benefits:

- Play provides an opportunity for pupils to explore and demonstrate our school values PACT of Pride and Respect, Aspiration and Achievement, Citizenship and Care and Teamwork in independent and social contexts.
- Play is critical to children's health and wellbeing, and essential for their physical, emotional and social development.
- Play enhances children's self-esteem and their understanding of others through freely chosen social interactions.
- Play provides an opportunity for children to develop their relationships with each other.
- Play requires ongoing communication and negotiation skills, enabling children to develop 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.
- Play encourages self-confidence and the ability to make choices, problem solve and to be creative.
- Play enables children to use their imagination and experience a sense of freedom.

Equality and Access

At Dowson and within our Trust, we value the individuality of all our children and we are committed to enabling all pupils to take part as fully as possible in every part of academy life by developing each child's self-confidence, recognising their strengths and encouraging them to achieve their full potential. Through a rich play offer, we aim to meet every child's needs regardless of their age, gender, race, disability or other special needs.

'There are no seven wonders of the world in the eyes of a child...

There are seven million.'

Walt Streighttiff





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Benefit and Risk

At Dowson, we want to ensure our setting provides a varied, challenging and stimulating environment where we allow children to take risks and use a common-sense approach to the management of these risks and their benefits. 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'.

'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)*. 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.

*'We don't stop playing because we grow old...
we grow old because we stop playing.'*
George Bernard Shaw

Supervision and The Adults' Role in Play

The school recognises OPAL's three models of supervision: Direct, Remote and Ranging. Except for new children in Nursery and Reception, whose skills and orientation in the school environment need to be addressed, 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. Whenever new equipment/resources are added to an area, we will carefully consider the level of supervision required and create a supervision plan; supervision plans will be reviewed at least half termly. All supervisory staff will be responsible for dynamic risk management whereby they will decide to stop play that is deemed too risky or remove hazards; decide to mitigate the risk by supporting children to make changes to their play; proactively monitor situations or take no further action but stay alert as part of normal supervision.

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. We acknowledge that the play space requires specific and skilled work to manage it. Therefore, we support our staff with annual CPD around play work, supervision and risk management.





Play Policy



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.

