

Outdoor Play and Learning (OPAL) POLICY

Document History	
CREATED:	April 2023
By:	OPAL Team
REVIEW FREQUENCY:	Annually
Version:	1
REVIEW DATE:	Autumn Term 25

Rationale

The school undertakes to refer to the play policy in all decisions which affect children's play.

At Easterside Academy, we believe that all children need opportunities to play which allow them to explore, manipulate, experience and affect their environment. The school acknowledges the UN Charter on the Rights of the Child, especially Article 31, and supports the child's right to play. 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 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 incidents, happier staff and a healthier attitude to life.”***

The Value of Play

‘Play is defined as any freely chosen activity which a child finds satisfying and creative.’

It may or may not involve equipment or other people. We believe the learning opportunities of play include:

- Emotions e.g. learning about oneself and others, sadness/gladness, rejection/acceptance, frustration/achievement, boredom/fascination, fear/confidence.
- Social Interactions – enhancing self-esteem and understanding of others through freely chosen interactions e.g. within peer groups, with individuals, with groups of different ages, abilities, interests, gender, ethnicity and culture.
- Making choices, problem solving, being creative.
- Playing with scrap materials, tyres and other multipurpose objects.
- Achieving and also coping with failing.
- Communication and negotiation skills.

The Adults Role in Play

The school will help children maximize the benefits they can gain from play by provision of trained staff who are informed by and work to the Playwork Principles.

- Play is essential for physical, emotional, social, spiritual and intellectual development.
- Play enables children to explore the physical and social environment, different concepts and ideas.
- Encourages self-confidence and the ability to make choices.

- Play is critical to children's physical and emotional health, and enables them to explore and develop the balance between their right to act freely and their responsibilities to others.
- Free play can have a direct positive impact on a child's ability to reach their potential.

Aims

The school aims to address the provision of improved play opportunities.

- To ensure play settings provide a varied, challenging and stimulating environment.
- To allow children to take risks and use a common-sense approach to these risks and their benefits.
- To provide opportunities for children to develop their relationships with each other.
- To enable children to develop respect for their surroundings and each other.
- To aid children's physical, emotional, social, spiritual and intellectual development.
- To provide a range of environments which will encourage children to explore and play imaginatively.
- To provide a range of environments which will support children's learning across the curriculum and learning about the world around them.
- To promote independence and teamwork within children.
- To build emotional and physical resilience.

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: Implementation guide – Published for Play England 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 principle value statement informing its approach to managing risk in play. It will adopt a benefits/risk approach as detailed in the 'managing Risk in Play Provision' Implementation Guide. Risk-taking is an essential feature of play provision, and of all the environments in which children and young people legitimately spend time at play. Play provision aims to offer children and young people the chance to encounter acceptable risks as part of a stimulating, challenging and controlled learning environment. In the words of 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 additions 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.

At Easterside Academy we are committed to providing these experiences for our children in a managed way. The Health and Safety Executive offer guidance on the provision of play in educational settings states that:

‘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 dangers.’ (HSE 2013)

Easterside Academy will use the Health and Safety Executive’s Guidance on Managing Risk in Play and Leisure (www.hse.gov.uk) (Appendix 1) as its principle guiding documents in making decisions relating to risk and play.

Supervision

‘The school recognises OPAL’s three models of supervision – Direct, Remote and Ranging.’

The law requires that children in school have supervision but for primary 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.

The Adults’ Role in Play

‘Play-workers are a channel of access to new materials and tools and they can act as a stimulus to children to explore and learn.’

Staff will use and refer to ‘The Principles of Playwork’ when appropriate interventions are needed, but ultimately will strive for facilitating an environment which nurtures self-directed play.

The play-worker’s core function is to create an environment which 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.

Play-workers 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 available to participate in the play if invited.

Environment

‘... a rich play setting should ensure that all children have access to stimulating environments ...’

We believe that a rich play setting should ensure that all children have access to stimulating environments that are free from unacceptable risk. Thereby

offer the opportunity to explore both themselves, through their freely chosen play.

Supervision

Supervisor – This is the competent adult provisioning the supervision and can be a play team member, teacher, teaching assistant, lunch supervisor or a volunteer. In each case, they will have been assessed as competent to provide the supervision necessary and been trained on what is acceptable practice, what to do if unacceptable practice occurs and what to do in case of accidents.

Types of supervision:

- **Direct** – This is where the supervisor(s) will be able to see all areas of play and be close at hand.
- **Remote** – This is where a supervisor or supervisors are located at a relatively static location some distance away from an activity.
- **Ranging** – This is where the supervisor moves around the play area. On a large site, supervisors should have zones so that they know which parts of the site they are covering.

Easterside Academy Zones

Zone 1 – Indoors – Library Area

Reading for pleasure – **ranging**

Chill zone

Zone 2 – KS2 Playground

Podley Building materials – **direct**

Physical challenges, activities and games – **direct**

Playground games - **ranging**

Small world Area – **ranging**

Chill zone

Zone 3 – KS2 Hall

Just Dance – **direct**

Zone 4 – Ball Court

Football – separate KS1 and KS2 – **direct**

Zone 5 – Stage and Retreat

Role Play – **ranging or direct (if requested)**

Dressing-up - **ranging**

Music - **ranging**

Musical instruments - **ranging**

Tyres – **ranging**

Zone 6 – Outdoor Classroom

Small World - **ranging**

Water play - **ranging**

Chill Zone

Zone 7 – Allotment

Gardening – **direct**

Zone 8 – Wellbeing Pod and Sensory Garden

Craft Activities – **direct (Headstarters)**

Thrive Activities - **direct (Headstarters)**

Chill Zone

Zone 9 – Wild Wood Area

Den building – **direct or ranging**

Outdoor crafts – **direct or ranging**

Mud kitchen play - **ranging**

Zone 10 – Field

Large loose parts construction / play – **direct**

Sand – **ranging**

Digging area – **direct**

Zone 11 – Bird Hide

Lego – **ranging**

Small construction – **ranging**

Zone 12 – KS1 Playground

Wheeled vehicles e.g. scooters – **direct**

Our OPAL Team

Curricular Leads for Play - Mrs H Seymour / Mrs C Thomas

Supporting Curricular Leads for Play - Mrs T Sharp (Pupil Wellbeing Lead)

Play Coordinators – Miss Castleton and Mrs Allison

Play Leads - All lunchtime supervisors and TAs

OPAL Champion Governor - Mr D Elliott

Caretaker - Mr N Close

All adults working at the academy are part of the play team and have a responsibility to follow the policy.