



Mayport Church of England Primary School

‘Learn, Achieve and Shine’

Teach your children to choose the right path, and when they
are older, they will remain upon it.

Proverbs 22:6

Play Policy

September 2023

Commitment

Our school undertakes to refer to this play policy in all decisions that affect children's play. Our school is committed to using our school vision, this play policy and the strategic and operational leadership needed to provide and maintain quality play provision for all of our children. Maryport Church of England Primary School recognise that play is an essential part of a happy and healthy childhood. As a school, we aspire to provide consistently high quality, sustainable play opportunities for all children.

Rationale

At Maryport Church of England Primary School we believe that all children need opportunities to play, which allows them to explore, manipulate, experience and understand their environment. The school acknowledges the UN Convention 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. This underpins our Christian belief that we are all God's people and that we all matter. Providing a rich and stimulating play environment ensures that our children have wider opportunities to understand and practice our Christian Values.

In a forever changing society where we experience heavier traffic, busier lifestyles and fewer areas for play, coupled together with an awareness of risk; this has led to 'play deprivation' for many of today's children. This makes play opportunities at school even more vital.

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 accidents, happier staff and a healthier attitude to life."*

Definition and value of play

Play is defined as any freely chosen activity that a child finds satisfying and creative. It may or may not involve equipment or other people. At Maryport Church of England Primary School, we believe that 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, different concepts and different ideas. It allows them to process their experiences of the world.
- 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, investigate 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.

In keeping with our school vision '*Teach your children to choose the right path, and when they are older they will remain upon it. Proverbs 22:6*, we believe that our children deserve a planned play environment with enthusiastic staff that fully understand and value the purpose of play. Our play team will be situated in zoned areas on the playgrounds and will be responsive to children's invitations and requests, observe different play types and carry out dynamic risk assessments to weigh up the risk and benefits of play activities, in order to develop the children's risk awareness. In line with our 'Positive Behaviour Policy,' our staff will also aim to be exemplary role models, where all relationships are based on mutual respect, trust, openness and politeness.

Aims

In relation to play, our school aims to:

- Allow children to take risks and use a common-sense approach to the management of these risks and their benefits.
- Ensure that playgrounds provide a varied, challenging and stimulating environment. We want pupils to develop lively, enquiring minds with the ability to question, discuss and formulate ideas in order to become independent learners.
- Provide opportunities for children to develop their relationships with each other.
- To provide a warm, friendly outdoor environment where the children feel secure and valued. As a Church of England school, we uphold Christian values whilst embracing the diversity of other religions and ways of life.
- 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 play imaginatively, explore and learn about the world around them.
- To include and establish an effective partnership between home and school, church and community.
- Provide a range of environments which will support children's learning and current interests across the curriculum
- Promote independence and teamwork within children.
- Build emotional and physical resilience.

Rights

As a Church of England school, our Christian Values ensure that all children have the right to be listened to and acknowledged. These values underpin the whole curriculum and wider school ethos, this

includes outdoor playtimes. 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. We will do this by carrying out regular class discussions, creating a play council, sharing assemblies and allowing children to be involved in the setting up and design of their play areas.

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 (2012)

Our 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. In doing so, the school will adopt a risk-benefit approach as detailed in *'Managing Risk in Play Provision': An Implementation Guide*.

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. 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 line with our schools' vision, we will create happy, safe and stimulating environments but believe that children should be provided with opportunities to challenge themselves and experience successes and failures. Our school understands that 'risk' is not limited to 'physical risk', it includes the worlds uncertainties, playing with new children, building new friendships and building emotional resilience by trying new experiences with the possibility of failure. As a Church of England School, we commit to provide these opportunities in a managed way which prepares the children to live life in all its fullness.

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. Risk assessments will be discussed and shared during regular assemblies across the whole school and weekly staff meetings with our OPAL team.

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 should be one or more adults present outdoors. Our school recognises OPAL's three models of supervision: Direct, Remote and Ranging. Except for new children in Nursery and Reception, our school does not believe direct supervision is possible or beneficial.

Supervision will take remote and ranging 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. There will be at least 4 members of staff on each playground and each staff member will be wearing a high visibility vest. The staff are given a timetable stating the zones that they hold responsibility for.

On any occasion where a member of staff is absent and cannot be replaced, any 'high risk' zones will be closed down. Low or medium risk zones will be shared with remaining staff. Additional staff members are placed on the infant playground to ensure the safety and supervision of the younger children and children with additional needs.

All play workers are provided with a first aid bum bag which is to be worn when supervising the children on the playground. All minor first aid will be dealt with outdoors. Play Workers hold full responsibility of the replenishment of first aid equipment.

The adult's role in play

The school will help children maximize 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. Our playworkers will enrich the children's play experiences 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, this includes washing, maintaining, replenishing and disposing of any resources when needed. They can also act as a stimulus to children to explore, learn and participate in the play, if invited.

Environment

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.

At Maryport Church of England Primary School we will:

- Strive to continually improve the quality and diversity of our school's grounds to enhance play.
- Use the outdoor space as a natural resource for learning and playing, encouraging the children to value natural or found objects for play.
- Include the children when planning for playing and learning outdoors.
- Ensure that the outdoor area offers all children the opportunity to investigate, take risks and explore and use their imagination and creativity.
- Expect the children to respect the outdoor environment and care for living things.
- Enrich the quality of the environment to maximise variety of play types and increase play value.
- Ensure that the playground is an integrated, safe space which will meet the needs of all children, regardless of age, gender, race, disability or other special educational needs
- Teach the children their responsibilities with regard to maintaining the quality of their outdoor space, and the equipment available and ensure they take an active part in doing this.
- Promote children's pride for the outdoor space that belongs to them.
- We will use the document 'Best Play' to guide us on what a quality play environment should contain. <http://www.playengland.org.uk/resource/best-play/>

Appendix 1

OPAL Team

This is the team working directly with **OPAL** to ensure policy is in place and develop play and outdoor learning at Maryport Church of England Primary School.

It consists of:

Head Teacher & Opal Lead- Mrs Joanne Ormond

Deputy Head Teacher- Mrs S Armstrong

Curricular Lead- Miss Emma Pape

Play Coordinator(s) -Mrs Bell (Juniors) Miss Wood (Infants)

Play Team based on the Infant playground- Miss C Wood, Mrs T Bell, Mrs J Bethwaite, Miss H Bell, Miss G Blamire, Mrs J Nicholson, Miss J Timney, Mrs S McCallig, Mrs B Scholey, Miss O Scholey, Mrs S Minchella, Miss A Cameron, Miss K McNulty, Mrs M Richardson, Mrs A Okudo, Mrs L Stansfield Mrs G Barnes

Play Team based on the Infant playground- Mrs T Bell, Miss H Bell, Mrs N Walling, Mrs S Stansfield, Mrs G Barnes, Mis J Robley, Miss A Cameron, Mrs A Okudo

Opal Play Governor- Steve Newton