

# OAKDENE PRIMARY SCHOOL

## PLAY POLICY



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This policy applies to all sections of the school including the Early Years Foundation Stage.

### Why is play important?

Play is important because it is the elemental learning process by which human kind has developed. Children have an instinctive desire to play whatever culture they are born into. Play encompasses children's behaviour which is freely chosen, personally directed and intrinsically motivated. It is performed for no external goal or reward and is a fundamental and integral part of healthy development. Physical, social, mental, emotional and creative skills, all of which underpin academic development, are all developed through play. It also allows the beneficial exposure of children to some levels of risk and challenge, giving them the chance to learn about the real consequences of risk taking. Play provides the opportunities for children to apply skills taught formally into real life situations. Play is such a vital component of a child's life that the child's capacity for positive development could be inhibited or constrained if denied free access to the broadest range of environments and play opportunities.

In Oakdene's Early Years we do not see teaching as separate from play or infer teaching to mean one fixed view of how things should be done. We see teaching as the many different ways in which adults, consciously or otherwise, helped children to learn. *This aligns with the Statutory Framework for EYFS 2021 which says: 1.14 This framework does not prescribe a particular teaching approach. Play is essential for children's development, building their confidence as they learn to explore, relate to others, set their own goals and solve problems. Children learn by leading their own play, and by taking part in play which is guided by adults. Practitioners need to decide what they want children in their setting to learn, and the most effective ways to teach it. Practitioners must stimulate children's interests, responding to each child's emerging needs and guiding their development through warm, positive interactions coupled with secure routines for play and learning.*

Oakdene Primary School will seek every opportunity to support play and create an environment that fosters it not only in Early Years, but also through KS1 and 2 where possible.

### Definition of Play

At Oakdene Primary School we define play in the following way:

Children following their own ideas and interests, in their own way and for their own reasons, and having fun while respecting themselves, others and the environment.

Wherever appropriate, children will be involved in the process of planning activities so that children feel some ownership. Children access a selection of

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natural and non-specific materials and resources to mould into and create whatever ideas and experiences their young and exciting minds see fit.

Accurate assessment is at the heart of successful teaching and play at Oakdene Primary School. An effective start with young children relies on getting to know their strengths and weaknesses, interests and fascinations, aptitudes and attitudes quickly. Only then can we provide with the right balance of activities to suit their needs, interests and abilities. When children settle quickly and have access to teaching and learning experiences that challenge and engage them, they make rapid progress, regardless of their age and stage of development.

The contributory factors that we use at Oakdene Primary School when making decisions about how we teach through 'play' in Early Years are:

- an accurate assessment of children's starting points
- an understanding of each child's interests and fascinations
- an appreciation of how each child learns best
- the subject content that needed to be taught
- the context in which learning should be introduced and developed
- the child's age and stage of development.

Learning Outside the Classroom (LOtC) is a key feature and strength of the curriculum provision we provide at Oakdene Primary School, and is fully embedded into our curriculum throughout school. Opportunities for play throughout KS1 and KS2 carefully planned for at break times and lunch times through the use of outdoor equipment and resources. In addition, clubs promoting indoor and outdoor play are also organised for break, lunchtimes and after school.

### **Benefits of Play Provision**

#### **Places to Play**

Children need and have the right to play, and play provision offers them places where they can play freely in the ways they choose, without direction from adults.

#### **Spaces to Have Fun**

##### **A Chance to Encounter Nature**

Children value the chance to interact with nature, and such experiences help them to appreciate the importance of the natural world and the environment. There is evidence of the health benefits to access to green, outdoor environments.

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### **A Place to Make Friends**

The opportunity to make friends and develop friendships is one of the most important experiences of childhood. In addition to this, such opportunities help children build their confidence and social competences.

### **Encourages Physical Activity**

Play allows children to move in different ways.

### **Learning How to Manage Risks**

Rich, challenging, engaging play environments allow children to test themselves and explore their abilities. They can learn the penalties of misjudging a risk – or simply having bad luck – in managed environments that reduce the likelihood of serious harm.

### **Developing a Sense of Ones Abilities**

Self-directed play experiences give children the opportunity to try out for themselves ways to solve problems and achieve goals, without the interference of adults. These experiences are likely to foster children's abilities and resilience.

### **Aims and Objectives of Playing Outside**

*\*See also Learning Outside the Classroom (LOtC) Policy.*

- ✓ Learning outdoors is to share equal status with indoor learning.
- ✓ The importance of teachers interacting with children outside not as supervisors but as educators.
- ✓ To encourage physical development by participating in outdoor activities.
- ✓ To have opportunities to develop socially, personally and emotionally, as well as developing language and intellectual skills.
- ✓ To promote creativity and imagination.
- ✓ To promote awareness of safety issues when playing outside.
- ✓ To learn to share, take turns, take part in activities and show respect to others.
- ✓ To extend the children's learning from the inside out.
- ✓ To have opportunities to experience a wide variety of outside activities.
- ✓ To inform parents and others about the importance of outdoor learning for their children.
- ✓ To enable each child to develop self-confidence and a sense of achievement.
- ✓ To provide materials to enable children to reach their potential.
- ✓ To enable time to let off steam and enjoy free play.

### **The Role of the Adult in Play**

- ✓ To plan and resource a challenging environment,
- ✓ To consider health and safety issues when planning outdoor activities.
- ✓ To support children's learning through planned play activity.
- ✓ To extend and support children's spontaneous play.

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- ✓ To extend and support children's language and communication in their play.
- ✓ To consider the age range of the children and the available space in our environment.
- ✓ To make the playground/indoor and outdoor classrooms a stimulating and enjoyable environment.
- ✓ To promote awareness of equal opportunities i.e. showing respect for cultural issues, an understanding that whatever the child's ability they are able to play and explore.
- ✓ To promote care of the environment and nature.
- ✓ To regularly check the equipment and to report broken equipment and any accidents straight away and in line with our Health and Safety Policy.
- ✓ To contribute ideas for new activities and equipment.

### Aims

#### **1. To improve the quality of play provision at school we will:**

- Apply whole school play policy consistently.
- Establish and maintain a high profile for play.
- Relate play issues directly to the school's values and ethos.
- Ensure decision making at all levels within the school includes consideration of the impact of those decisions on children's opportunities to play.

#### **2. To make play a priority for all those associated with the school including pupils, parents, teachers and governors we will:**

- The Senior Leadership Team to devise a play strategy, lead improvement work and monitor progress.
- Involve children, staff and parents in play development work.
- Use our Early Years welcome pack and parent meeting to promote our play strategy.
- Keep the whole school community informed of play issues and opportunities in newsletter items.
- Keep Governors up to date through regular feedback.

#### **3. To develop a framework which defines expectations, roles and responsibilities and promotes consistency in carrying out designated tasks we will:**

- Structure our play policy in line with school priorities, developing a knowledge of play and informed decision making e.g. staff training, consulting children.
- Improved quality of the play environment both inside and outside – sharing with staff our agreed non-negotiable expectations.
- Maintain unambiguous play procedures that the whole school community is aware of.
- Ensure our children encounter challenge, stimulation and acceptable levels of risk in their experience of play.

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- Resource our play facilities in line with our belief that play is fundamental to children's all round development and that natural resources provide children with a blank canvas in which to create their own adventures.
- Recognise that learning is a shared process and that children learn most effectively when, with the support of a knowledgeable and trusted adult, they are actively involved and interested.

#### **4. To manage the level of risk within our play provision we will:**

Adopt the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) Principles of sensible risk management as follows:

#### **Sensible and benefit risk management is about:**

- Providing overall benefit to society by balancing benefits and risks, with a focus on reducing real risks-both those which arise more often and those with serious consequences.
- Enabling innovation and learning, not stifling them.
- Ensuring that those who create risks manage them responsibly and understand that failure to manage real risks responsibly is likely to lead to robust action.
- Enabling individuals to understand that as well as the right to protection, they also have to exercise responsibility.
- Ensuring that children and staff are properly protected.

At Oakdene Primary School we will ensure a proportionate balance between the benefits of play and the need to protect the children.

- Early Years risk assessments are carried out daily inside/outside.
- KS1 / KS2 Playground risk assessments are carried out daily outside on the yard/field/outdoor areas.
- There are specific risk benefit assessments for individual pieces of equipment and areas within the school grounds, including an outdoor learning area risk assessment.
- The outdoor and indoor classrooms receive planning, management, evaluation, resourcing, staffing and adult interaction.
- Supervision is carried out by staff with an in-depth knowledge of children, play and its role in the lives and development of children; their understandings of the different types of risk inform any action.
- An annual inspection report is received from a registered play inspector for the Early Years outdoor climbing equipment and recommendations are carried out.
- The School's Site Manager and School Business Manager will be informed of all potential risks and immediate remedial action will follow. (Following our Health and Safety Policy).

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### **5. To provide support, advice and guidance to pupils and parents we will:**

- As a whole staff act as positive role models for play.
- Highlight play issues, particularly managing risk in Assemblies and newsletters.
- Invite parents to join in play with their child e.g. Early Years 'Stay and Play' held weekly. Key messages and information will be shared with parents in order to support their understanding of the importance of play and how it supports their child's development; and the steps involved.
- Seek to understand individual responses to the risk taking element of play when communicating with parents.
- In Early Years use children's play as a means to assess their knowledge, skills and understanding.
- In Key Stage 1 use children's natural desire to play as a vehicle to promote learning opportunities through effective use of continuous provision both indoors and outdoors.

### **6. Give play a pivotal role in the planning and assessment of young children.**

- Use formal/informal observations and learning stories to assess and plan the next steps for children.
- Use open ended and differentiated questions during play to challenge the thinking and understanding of children.
- Plan themed activities within areas of continuous provision to give children the opportunity to reinforce understanding and application of formally taught skills during play.
- Plan and design play opportunities within the outdoor environment that mirror those indoors and cater for the hard to reach target areas such as boys writing.

### **Rights Respecting Schools**

**Article 31** is adhered to at Oakdene Primary School. Every child has the right to relax, play and join in a wide range of cultural and artistic activities.