



Brunswick House
Primary School



Play Policy

Ratified On: October 2025
Next Review: October 2026
By: OPAL Governor

Commitment

Our school is committed to providing high quality play opportunities for all children. We will use this play policy to guide all decisions that affect children's play experiences. We are committed to providing the strategic and operational leadership needed to provide and maintain quality play provision for all of our children.

Rationale

Our 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 result in a more positive attitude to learning in school with more effective classroom lesson, less staff time spent resolving unnecessary problems, fewer playtime accidents, happier staff and a healthier attitude to life.'

School Values

The school community has identified a set of shared values. We use our values to guide the way we behave, perform and interact with each other. These are explicitly taught and contribute to the development of our positive school ethos and culture of teaching. The school values are: Honesty, Empathy, Respect, Teamwork and Self Belief.

Our school is committed to providing high quality play opportunities for all children. We believe that play is essential for children's development, allowing them to explore, learn and grow. By incorporating play into our curriculum, we aim to foster a positive learning environment that nurtures creativity, problem solving and social skills. We will ensure that our play spaces are inclusive and accessible to all children, regardless of their abilities or background. Our school values of Honesty, Empathy, Respect, teamwork and Self Belief will underpin our approach to play.

Definition and value of play

Play is defined as a process that is 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 the benefits of play include:

- 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 physical and social environments, 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 encourage self-confidence and the ability to make choices, problem solve and to be creative.
- Play maintains children’s openness to new learning, develops their capabilities and allows them to push the boundaries of what they can achieve.

Aims

In relation to play our school aims to:

- Ensure the play setting provides 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 show 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.
- Prove 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.
- Provide opportunities for children to regulate their emotions independently.

Rights

Our school recognizes the UN Convention of 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 play.

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*'.

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, the school recognizes OPAL's three models of supervision: Direct, Remote, 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. 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.

At Brunswick House we will primarily use a Ranging model of supervision, this means that supervisors will move around the play areas checking in on different zones, and adjusting their attention based on types of play and potential risks. While we maintain a presence, we understand that direct constant supervision is not always necessary or beneficial for children's development.

By using a Ranging model, we aim to:

- Encourage independence: Allow children to take appropriate risks and make their own choices.
- Promote social skills: Foster cooperation and problem solving among children.
- Enhance creativity: Encourage imaginative and creative play.
- Ensure safety: Monitor for potential hazards and intervene when necessary.

We believe this approach strikes a balance between safety and allowing children the freedom to explore and learn through play.

Additionally, we will use this time to reinforce our school values of Honesty, Empathy, Respect, Teamwork and Self-belief. We will encourage children to demonstrate these values in their interactions with others and in their approach to play.

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 Play work 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 play workers core function is to create an environment that stimulates children's play and maximize their opportunities for a wide range of play experiences. A skilled and experienced play worker 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 in the play setting. Play workers are a channel of access to new materials and tools and can act as a stimulus to children to explore and learn. They are also available to participate in the play if invited.

At Brunswick House, alongside OPAL play work principles, the Play team believes that an adult's role in the play involves a delicate balance of support and facilitation, by providing opportunities for exploration and creativity. Adults can encourage children to take risks and develop their imagination. Through scaffolding and supporting play, adults can help children build on their own ideas and problem solving skills. It's essential to facilitate play, allowing it to flow naturally without unnecessary intervention. By observing and listening attentively, adults can identify moments to offer gentle guidance or introduce new challenges, encouraging children to push their boundaries and discover new possibilities. Ultimately, an adult's role is to advocate for play, recognizing its intrinsic value and its significant contribution to a child's overall development.

Equality and Diversity

Through providing a rich play offer meeting every child's, we will ensure all children, regardless of age, gender, race, disability or other additional needs, can develop and thrive, build strong relationships and enjoy school.

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 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

