



St Peter's C of E Primary Academy Mansfield

Play Policy

Policy:	Play Policy
Approved by:	
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Review Cycle:	Annually

Version	Date	Author	Changes
2025	12.09.25	Kyra Kennedy	New policy

Commitment

St Peter's C of E Primary Academy Mansfield undertakes to refer to this play policy in all decisions that affect children's play. Our school is 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 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 a process that is intrinsically motivated, 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 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, 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 encourages self-confidence and the ability to make choices, problem solve 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.

Aims

Our visions and values

"Loving, Living and Learning with Jesus."

At St Peter's C of E Primary Academy Mansfield, we educate for wisdom and aspiration with the help of the church and the community through a culture of dignity and respect. We aim to cultivate the inner values of all pupils to give them the opportunities to succeed in life.

"Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth." Corinthians 1 13

At St Peter's, the worth of each child impels us to work to fulfil their God-given potential, whatever the religion or other tradition with which their family identifies, and with special consideration given to those who are disadvantaged. The belief that we are created and sustained by God for living in families is at the root of our dedication to working with our community. We seek to model to children an ethos of living well together: the flourishing of pupils goes hand in hand with the flourishing of staff, parents, governors and friends of the school. Through play, we aim to:

- Ensure play settings provide 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 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 explore and play imaginatively.
- Provide 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.
- Reflect our Christian values of **love, respect, listen, persevere, forgive and aspire** in all aspects of play.

The values which are most pertinent to this policy are detailed below:

Love:

We encourage pupils to show kindness and compassion towards each other during play. Love fosters an environment where everyone feels safe and valued. Love embodies everything that we do, allowing us to put other's needs above our own and support those within our community.

"Let all that you do be done in love." (Corinthians 16:14)

Respect:

We encourage pupils to value each other's differences, ideas, and personal space. A culture of understanding and acceptance is something we strive for at St Peter's. The flourishing of pupils goes hand in hand with the flourishing of our wider community: staff, families, governors and wider connections.

"Whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them." (Matthew 7:12)

Listen:

A person who actively listens develops the skills to understand and respond to others' needs and feelings. We seek for children to actively listen to each other's perspectives, negotiate roles, and understand different feelings, creating an accepting environment throughout the school.

"My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry." (James 1:19)

Persevere:

It is of utmost importance that children are encouraged to try their best, even when faced with challenges. Through play, pupils practice and persist even when they find it challenging, developing resilience and a growth mindset.

"...but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope..." (Romans 5:3-5)

Forgive:

We strive to teach pupils the importance of forgiveness and reconciliation when conflicts arise. Pupils learn to apologise, accept apologies, and move on from disagreements, understanding the importance of forgiveness in maintaining positive relationships.

"Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you." (Colossians 3:13)

Aspire:

Inspiring pupils to reach their full potential is something we strive for at St Peter's, fostering a sense of ambition and self-belief. We want pupils to set goals, plan, and work collaboratively to achieve their desired outcome, fostering a sense of accomplishment and aspiration.

"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." (Philippians 4:13)

Rights

St Peter's 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.

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)

St Peter's uses 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'*.

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.

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 recognises OPAL's three models of supervision: Direct, Remote and 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. 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.

At St Peter's, the Play Team will use the Ranging model. Each Play Team member will have their own area (zone) that they will continue to roam throughout OPAL times. These will be timetabled so different members of the team will rotate around all areas. All team members will have walkie talkies and their will be regular communication

The adult's role in play

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. 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.

Equality and diversity

Through providing a rich play offer meeting every child's needs we will ensure all children, regardless of age, gender, race, disability or other special 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 their 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

A rich play environment strongly supports safeguarding, creating a safe, engaging space where children can explore, express themselves, and build relationships while under the supervision of trusted adults. Through varied play opportunities, children learn how to manage risks, communicate their needs, and develop resilience. By encouraging inclusive and well-structured play, it helps protect children's emotional, social, and physical safety, ensuring that every child feels valued, listened to, and secure.

Appendices

Please follow the hyperlinks to the following documents:

Appendix 1: [4.6 GUIDANCE Health and Safety Executive \(HSE\) –](#)