

# Shottery St Andrew's CE Primary School



Anchored in faith we shine!



This policy is underpinned by our school vision based on the scripture,  
*'Let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.'*

Matthew 5:16

## Play Policy

<b>Date adopted by Governors:</b>	<b>March 2026</b>
<b>Date for policy review:</b>	<b>March 2028</b>
<b>Person responsible for review:</b>	<b>Headteacher</b>
<b>Signed by Chair of Governors</b>	<i>L. Cranelly</i>

**Governor responsible:** Mrs A Bedi

## **Commitment**

Our school undertakes to refer to this Play Policy in all decisions that affect children's play. We are committed to providing the strategic and operational leadership required to ensure high-quality, inclusive and sustainable play provision for all children.

We recognise that play is a fundamental part of childhood and is essential to children's wellbeing, development and learning. Through the OPAL (Outdoor Play and Learning) Primary Programme, we commit to improving the quality, quantity and inclusivity of play opportunities available to all 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 that play provision should be welcoming and accessible to every child, irrespective of gender, sexual orientation, economic or social circumstances, ethnic or cultural background, or individual abilities.

The OPAL Primary Programme rationale states 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.”

This policy aligns with our school values of Hope and faith, show respect, inspire one another, nurture our gifts, embrace opportunities, and supports our commitment to developing confident, resilient, respectful and independent learners.

## **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 that play has many benefits, including:

- Play is critical to children's health and wellbeing and is essential for their physical, emotional, social, spiritual and intellectual development.
- Play enables children to explore the physical and social environment, as well as different ideas, roles and concepts.

- Play enhances children's self-esteem and understanding of others through freely chosen social interactions with peers of different ages, abilities, interests, cultures and backgrounds.
- Play develops communication, negotiation and cooperation skills, enabling children to balance their own rights with responsibilities to others.
- Play allows children to experience and manage a wide range of emotions, including joy, frustration, fear, excitement, success and disappointment.
- Play encourages creativity, problem-solving, decision-making and independence.
- Play maintains children's openness to learning and supports their ability to take on challenges and push boundaries safely.

## **Aims**

In relation to play, our school aims to:

- Provide a varied, stimulating and challenging play environment.
- Allow children to take appropriate risks and develop their own risk-management skills.
- Promote positive relationships, cooperation and inclusive play.
- Enable children to develop respect for themselves, others and their environment.
- Support children's physical, emotional, social, spiritual and intellectual development.
- Provide environments that encourage imaginative, creative and exploratory play.
- Support learning across the curriculum through high-quality outdoor play.
- Promote independence, teamwork and leadership.
- Build emotional resilience and physical confidence.

## **Rights**

Our school recognises the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), particularly:

- **Article 31:** The right to play, rest, leisure and recreation.
- **Article 12:** The right of children to be listened to and taken seriously.

We are committed to listening to children's views about play and involving them in decisions that affect their play opportunities, environments and resources.

## **Benefit and Risk**

Play is essential for children's development, and risk-taking is a vital and positive element of play.

“The goal is not to eliminate risk, but to weigh up the risks and benefits.”  
*Managing Risk in Play Provision: An Implementation Guide (Play Safety Forum, 2012)*

The school will use the Health and Safety Executive document *Children’s Play and Leisure – Promoting a Balanced Approach (2012)* as the principal guidance informing its approach to managing risk in play.

We adopt a **risk-benefit approach**, recognising that:

- Children need opportunities to experience challenge and uncertainty.
- Avoiding all risk limits children’s learning, resilience and independence.
- Risks will be managed, not removed, unless they are unreasonable or unacceptable.

The school will use both written risk-benefit assessments and **dynamic risk management**, supporting children to identify, assess and manage risks with appropriate adult guidance.

The full HSE Managing Risk Statement is included as an appendix to this policy.

## **Supervision**

The law requires that children are supervised during the school day; however, there are no statutory supervision ratios for primary school playtimes.

Our school adopts OPAL’s three models of supervision:

- **Direct supervision** – used where necessary, particularly with new Reception children or specific activities.
- **Ranging supervision** – adults moving around the site, observing play and responding as needed.
- **Remote supervision** – adults positioned so children can easily locate support while maintaining independence.

We believe that constant direct supervision is not always beneficial. Staff will use professional judgement to balance safety, independence and play quality.

## **The Adult’s Role in Play**

The school is committed to supporting high-quality play through trained staff who understand and apply the **Playwork Principles**.

Adults will:

- Create and maintain an environment that supports child-led play.
- Intervene only when necessary to support safety, inclusion or wellbeing.

- Facilitate access to resources and spaces that extend play opportunities.
- Respect children's play choices and autonomy.
- Join play only when invited or when it enhances the play experience.

Adults recognise that their role is to **enable play**, not control it.

## **Equality and Diversity**

Our school is committed to ensuring that all children, regardless of age, gender, race, disability or additional needs, can access and enjoy high-quality play.

Through inclusive play provision we aim to:

- Remove barriers to participation.
- Celebrate diversity and difference.
- Support children with additional needs to engage meaningfully in play.
- Promote positive relationships and mutual respect.

This policy aligns with our Equality and Diversity Policy.

## **Environment**

We believe that a rich play environment is essential to high-quality play. Our school will ensure that children have access to stimulating, varied environments that support physical, imaginative, social and creative play.

We will continually improve the quality and diversity of our grounds, using the publication *Best Play* to guide development.

A high-quality play environment:

- Encourages exploration, creativity and challenge.
- Supports social interaction and collaboration.
- Helps children develop confidence, resilience and independence.
- Encourages a love of the outdoors and respect for the environment.
- Supports safeguarding by enabling visibility, engagement and positive play.

## **Monitoring and Review**

This policy will be reviewed annually, or sooner if required, to ensure it remains relevant and effective. Children, staff and governors will be involved in the review process.

**Approved by Governors:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

## **Appendix: Key Documents and Links**

The following documents and guidance inform and support this OPAL Play Policy and the school's approach to play, supervision and risk management.

### **Appendix A: Managing Risk in Play**

#### **Health and Safety Executive (HSE)**

#### **Children's Play and Leisure – Promoting a Balanced Approach (2012)**

<https://www.hse.gov.uk/entertainment/childrens-play-july-2012.pdf>

This document provides the principal value statement guiding the school's approach to managing risk in play.

#### **Play Safety Forum**

#### **Managing Risk in Play Provision: An Implementation Guide (2012)**

<https://playsafetyforum.wordpress.com/risk-benefit-assessment/>

This guide supports the use of risk-benefit assessment and dynamic risk management in play provision.

### **Appendix B: Quality Play Provision**

#### **Free Play Network**

#### **Best Play: What Play Provision Should Do for Children**

<https://www.freeplaynetwork.org.uk/pubs/bestplay.pdf>

This publication is used to guide the development of a high-quality, inclusive and stimulating play environment.

### **Appendix C: OPAL and Playwork Principles**

#### **OPAL – Outdoor Play and Learning**

<https://outdoorplayandlearning.org.uk>

Provides guidance, training and support for improving the quality of playtimes in primary schools.

#### **Playwork Principles Scrutiny Group**

#### **The Playwork Principles**

<https://www.playworkprinciples.org.uk>

These principles underpin staff understanding of the adult role in supporting child-led play.

### **Appendix D: Children's Rights**

## **UNICEF**

### **United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)**

<https://www.unicef.org.uk/what-we-do/un-convention-child-rights/>

In particular:

- Article 12 – Respect for the views of the child
- Article 31 – The right to play, rest and leisure

### **Appendix E: School Policies (Linked Documents)**

This policy should be read in conjunction with:

- Behaviour Curriculum
- Building Positive Relationships Policy
- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- SEND Policy