



**Parkhead
Community
Primary School**

Play Policy OPaL

Review of Policy:

Reviewed: September 2024

Next Review: September 2025

PARKHEAD COMMUNITY PRIMARY SCHOOL

PLAY POLICY

Commitment

Parkhead Community Primary School recognises that play is an essential part of a happy and healthy childhood. As a school, we are committed to providing consistently high quality, sustainable play opportunities for all children. These inclusive opportunities in play are achieved by offering carefully considered outdoor spaces, equipment and toys that offer a rich choice of accessible play experiences for every child.

At Parkhead Community Primary School we are committed to using our school vision and this play policy to guide our planning and actions in providing play opportunities for children. We believe play has a vital role in children's health, happiness and wellbeing. It creates children who are independent, confident, imaginative, adaptable, social and able to assess risks. We aim to give our children confidence and a desire to achieve their full potential.

In relation to 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 which will encourage children to explore and play imaginatively.
- provide a range of environments which 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.

We aim to:

- Implement the changes set out in this policy gradually and systematically
- Be informed by the children and work with the children to create a space that is exciting, engaging and enthuses children, where they feel safe to take risks and explore their world
- Work in partnership with parents and the community making use of local expertise
- Build projects collaboratively, respecting existing boundaries

Rationale

Children spend up to 20% of their time in school at play. This time is invaluable and needs clear planning. Changes in society such as heavier traffic, busier lifestyles, less areas for play and awareness of risk have led to 'play poverty' for today's children. This makes their play opportunities at school even more vital.

Better quality play leads to happier children and in turn less behaviour problems, a more positive attitude to school, skills development. As the children improve their quality of play and have more enriching playtimes, there are fewer accidents and classroom learning is enhanced as they come in from playtime happy and ready to learn.

Links to Learning

Play is recognised for the important contribution it makes to education and lifelong learning, a finding confirmed by many studies of early childhood. Research shows that play can enhance problem solving; it is also widely regarded as providing opportunities for social interaction and language development. The contribution of play to educational development is suggested through the inherent value of different play types, e.g. through risk taking and exploratory play in formal and informal settings, allowing children to experiment, try new things and push their boundaries. Research also suggests that “the learning outcomes from play are enhanced when play is ‘properly directed’ by adults.”

The other area of focus for the impact of play and playwork on education and learning is the role of play at school break periods and the impact on children’s behaviour and learning in class. One of the current concerns voiced is that children’s opportunities for imaginative play and its educational benefits are being limited because of the demands of the school curriculum threatening to make school playtimes shorter.

As a result of implementing this policy we believe that children will:

- be happier
- increase self-awareness and self-esteem
- improve language and communication skills
- improve concentration
- improve their imagination, independence and creativity
- improve social skills
- be resilient, confident, good problem solver
- be ready for anything as a result of negotiation and independence of thought
- be better at problem solving
- develop life skills
- improve their physical development, co-ordination and fitness.

Definition and Value of Play

The Government’s Play Strategy defines play as: ‘encompassing 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 – not only for individual children but also for the society in which they live’.

Play is recognised as any activity that a child enters into that is freely chosen, personally directed and intrinsically motivated and that actively engages the child.

Play activity meets the four components of a child's development:

- Physical (direct impact on physical development, co-ordination and fitness)
- Intellectual (cognitive development, imagination)
- Educational (the knowledge and understanding of academic outcomes)
- Social (the development of values, beliefs and self-perception and the parallel communication skills, leadership and teamwork this enhances).

At Parkhead Community Primary School we believe that:

- play is critical to children's health and well-being, and essential for their physical, emotional, social, spiritual and intellectual development
- play enhances children's self-esteem and their understanding of others through freely chosen interactions with 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.
- play allows children to be creative and cooperative
- adults' role in great play is to be responsive to children's invitations and requests, and to carry out dynamic risk assessments to weigh up the risk and benefits of play activities and develop the children's risk awareness
- play may be solitary or social
- play invites investigation and exploration which may test boundaries
- play makes children happy and happy children are healthier children who in turn can learn better
- Children have a right to play with anything they choose from the playground resources and as long as it is safe regardless of age, gender, social or cultural background
- play is something you choose to do and that it is fun!
- Enables children to process their experiences of the world

Rights, Equality and Access

Article 31 of the United Nations 'Convention on the Rights of the Child' states that children have the right to relax and play, and to join in a wide range of cultural, artistic and other recreational activities. Parkhead Community Primary School acknowledges that every child has the right to choose the kind of play that is suitable for them whatever their age, gender or background.

Health, Safety, Benefit and Risk

Risk-taking is an essential feature of play provision and of all environments in which children legitimately spend time playing. Play provision aims to offer children the chance to encounter acceptable risks as part of a stimulating, challenging and controlled learning environment. Therefore, play provision should aim to successfully manage the balance between the need to offer risk and the need to keep children safe from serious harm.

Research shows that the uncertainty and challenge of much of children's play is a very large part of its appeal to them, and that it also enhances the development of their brains and bodies, making them more adaptable and resilient as they grow. Risk and challenge is not limited to physical risk – it includes the uncertainties involved in making new friends, playing with children from different backgrounds and building emotional resilience through trying out new experiences with the possibility of failure.

Children should be encouraged and supported to encounter and manage risk for themselves in an environment that is as safe as it needs to be rather than completely devoid of risk.

At Parkhead Community Primary School we are committed to providing these experiences for our children in a managed way. The health and Safety Executive offer guidance on the provision of play in educational settings and states that:

'HSE fully supports the provision of play for all children in a variety of environments. HSE understands and accepts that this means children will often be exposed to play environments which whilst well managed, carry a degree of risk and sometimes potential dangers.' (HSE 2013)

Parkhead Community Primary School will use the Health and Safety Executive's guidance on Managing Risk in Play and Leisure (Appendix ??) as its principle guiding documents in making decisions relating to risk and play.

Managing Risk in Play Provision

'Children need and want to take risks when they play. Play provision aims to respond to these needs and wishes by offering children stimulating, challenging environments for exploring and developing their abilities. In doing this, play provision aims to manage the level of risk so that children are not exposed to unacceptable risks of death or serious injury'

An essential element of exploration within the medium of play is the opportunity for children to experience freely-chosen activities, where they can take acceptable risks and challenge themselves beyond their existing capabilities. Allowing children to take acceptable risks develops their ability to independently judge risks and learn new skills.

'Without opportunities to take acceptable levels of risk children's development is inhibited, undermining their capacity to deal with the wider unsupervised world.'

The Adults' Role in Play

We, as an entire staff, are fully committed to working with children to provide the play experiences they want and need in their school. We will have a continuing dialogue with children about the play

provision in the playground which will include regular play assemblies, School Council Involvement, pupil conferencing and surveys.

Adult's role will also be to facilitate play and encourage children to assess the risks and benefits of activities within the play setting. The school is working with OPAL to help guide a strategic approach to developing play. In addition to this the Parkhead Community Primary School Play Team will work in collaboration with parents, teachers, teaching assistants, lunchtime supervisors and all other staff as well as the children to implement the changes highlighted in this policy. Teaching assistants and lunchtime supervisors will take on the role of Play Makers. They will ensure that the broadest possible range of play opportunities are available to children, to observe, reflect and analyse the play that is happening and select a mode of intervention or make a change to the play space if needed. Playworkers ensure that the play space is inclusive – supporting all children to make the most of the opportunities available in their own way. At Parkhead Community Primary School we will use the nationally recognised Playwork Principles as key guidance in the development of play staffing.

Children's Role in Play

The children will have access to their own version of the play policy (Appendix ???). It will include the rights and responsibilities of the children to:

- Have ownership of their play and outdoor learning experiences
- Respect and look after each other, the environment, equipment and toys
- To be aware of sanctions surrounding purposely dangerous or unsafe behaviour
- Ensure that playtimes are fun for everyone

Environment

At Parkhead Community Primary School, we will:

- 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 children the opportunity to investigate and explore, problem solve, use their imagination and creativity;
- encourage the children to respect the outdoor environment and care for living things; and
- give children the opportunity to manage, play in and use the space and freedom afforded by the outdoors.
- enrich the quality of the environment to maximise variety of play types and increase play value
- 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

Parkhead Community Primary School has entered into an agreement with OPAL Outdoor Play and Learning to support the development of the quality of our playtime provision.

We will create plans to transform the school grounds over several years to promote the continued creation and recreation of the play space by the children. Our ultimate aim is to have an integrated playground from reception to Year 6.

Loose Parts

Research shows that the greater the range of experiences presented by a play environment, the more children will naturally explore and learn through play. The vital ingredients for these experiences are loose parts: attractive, flexible materials that children can readily change, manipulate and control for themselves.

Monitoring

The school will continue to use the OPAL audit tool and pupil surveys to monitor implantation of its play policy, strategy and action plan. An annual report should be presented to governors.

Health and Safety

All activities, play areas and equipment will be subject to standard checks on a daily and/or periodic basis. These checks will be kept on file in the office.

Risk-benefit assessments for areas, equipment and activities will be held on file in the office for inspection.

All new activities which involve potential significant risk will be subject to individual or generic assessment as part of the planning process. All previous assessments will be reviewed as and when appropriate.

The play workers/Teaching Assistants will be responsible for the site, equipment and resources in general, which are intended to be open access. They will also be responsible for any activities which are directly led by the play workers.

It is the responsibility of all staff to work within agreed policy and procedures and to adhere to all control measures imposed as a result of assessments.

It is the responsibility of the Playleader on duty to act upon any concerns and to ensure that any deficiencies are rectified immediately and to report to the Senior Staff member as soon as possible.

This policy will be reviewed annually.

Next review: September, 2025

CHILDREN’S PLAY AND LEISURE – PROMOTING A BALANCED APPROACH

1. Health and safety laws and regulations are sometimes presented as a reason why certain play and leisure activities undertaken by children and young people should be discouraged. The reasons for this misunderstanding are many and varied. They include fears of litigation or criminal prosecution because even the most trivial risk has not been removed. There can be frustration with the amounts of paperwork involved, and misunderstanding about what needs to be done to control significant risks.

2. The purpose of this statement is to give clear messages which tackle these misunderstandings. In this statement, HSE makes clear that, as a regulator, it recognises the benefits of allowing children and young people of all ages and abilities to have challenging play opportunities.

3. HSE fully supports the provision of play for all children in a variety of environments. HSE understands and accepts that this means children will often be exposed to play environments which, whilst well-managed, carry a degree of risk and sometimes potential danger.

4. HSE wants to make sure that mistaken health and safety concerns do not create sterile play environments that lack challenge and so prevent children from expanding their learning and stretching their abilities.

5. This statement provides all those with a stake in encouraging children to play with a clear picture of HSE’s perspective on these issues. HSE wants to encourage a focus on the sensible and proportionate control of real risks¹ and not on unnecessary paperwork. HSE’s primary interest is in real risks arising from serious breaches of the law and our investigations are targeted at these issues.

Recognising the benefits of play

Key message: ‘Play is great for children’s well-being 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’.

6. HSE fully recognises that play brings the world to life for children. It provides for an exploration and understanding of their abilities; helps them to learn and develop; and exposes them to the realities of the world in which they will live, which is a world not free from risk but rather one where risk is ever present. The opportunity for play develops a child’s risk awareness and prepares them for their future lives.

7. Striking the right balance between protecting children from the most serious risks and allowing them to reap the benefits of play is not always easy. It is not about eliminating risk. Nor is it ¹ The Courts have made clear that when health and safety law refers to ‘risks’, it is not contemplating risks that are trivial or fanciful. It is not the purpose to impose burdens on employers that are wholly unreasonable (R v Chagot (2009) 2 All ER 660 [27]) about complicated methods of calculating risks or benefits. In essence, play is a safe and beneficial activity. Sensible adult judgements are all that is generally required to derive the best benefits to children whilst ensuring that they are not exposed to unnecessary risk. In making these judgements, industry standards such as EN 1176 offer benchmarks that can help.

8. Striking the right balance *does* mean:

- Weighing up risks and benefits when designing and providing play opportunities and activities
- Focussing on and controlling the most serious risks, and those that are not beneficial to the play activity or foreseeable by the user
- Recognising that the introduction of risk might form part of play opportunities and activity
- Understanding that the purpose of risk control is not the elimination of all risk, and so accepting that the possibility of even serious or life-threatening injuries cannot be eliminated, though it should be managed
- Ensuring that the benefits of play are experienced to the full

9. Striking the right balance *does not* mean:

- All risks must be eliminated or continually reduced
- Every aspect of play provision must be set out in copious paperwork as part of a misguided security blanket
- Detailed assessments aimed at high-risk play activities are used for low-risk activities
- Ignoring risks that are not beneficial or integral to the play activity, such as those
- introduced through poor maintenance of equipment
- Mistakes and accidents will not happen

What parents and society should expect from play providers

Key message: 'Those providing play opportunities should focus on controlling the real risks, while securing or increasing the benefits – not on the paperwork'.

10. Play providers² should use their own judgement and expertise as well as, where appropriate, the judgement of others, to ensure that the assessments and controls proposed are proportionate to the risks involved.

11. They should communicate what these controls are, why they are necessary and so ensure everyone focuses on the important risks.

12. It is important that providers' arrangements ensure that:

- The beneficial aspects of play - and the exposure of children to a level of risk and challenge - are not unnecessarily reduced
- Assessment and judgement focuses on the real risks, not the trivial and fanciful
- Controls are proportionate and so reflect the level of risk

² Play providers include those managing or providing play facilities or activities in parks, green spaces, adventure playgrounds, holiday playschemes, schools, youth clubs, family entertainment centres and childcare provision.

13. To help with controlling risks sensibly and proportionately, the play sector has produced the publication *Managing Risk in Play Provision: Implementation Guide* which provides guidance on managing the risks in play. The approach in this guidance is that risks and benefits are considered alongside each other in a risk-benefit assessment. This includes an assessment of the risks which, while taking into account the benefits of the activity, ensures that any precautions are practicable and proportionate and reflect the level of risk. HSE supports this guidance, as a sensible approach to risk management.

If things go wrong

Key message: 'Accidents and mistakes happen during play – but fear of litigation and prosecution has been blown out of proportion.'

14. Play providers are expected to deal with risk responsibly, sensibly and proportionately. In practice, serious accidents of any kind are very unlikely. On the rare occasions when things go wrong, it is important to know how to respond to the incident properly and to conduct a balanced, transparent review.

15. In the case of the most serious failures of duty, prosecution rightly remains a possibility, and cannot be entirely ruled out. However, this possibility does not mean that play providers should eliminate even the most trivial of risks. Provided sensible and proportionate steps have been taken, it is highly unlikely there would be any breach of health and safety law involved, or that it would be in the public interest to bring a prosecution.

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APPENDIX 2 – Types of Play

Play Types There are acknowledged to be a number of different play types (around 16) which provide playworkers, managers and trainers with a common language for describing play. There are in no particular order.

1 Symbolic Play – play which allows control, gradual exploration and increased understanding without the risk of being out of depth eg using a piece of wood to symbolise a person or an object or a piece of string to symbolise a wedding ring.

2 Rough and Tumble Play – close encounter play which is less to do with fighting and more to do with touching, tickling, gauging relative strength. Discovering physical flexibility and the exhilaration of display. This type of play allows children to participate in physical contact that doesn't involve or result in someone being hurt. This type of play can use up lots of energy.

3 Socio-dramatic Play – the enactment of real and potential experiences of an intense personal, social, domestic or interpersonal nature eg playing at house, going to the shops, being mothers and fathers, organising a meal or even having a row.

4 Social Play – play during which the rules and criteria for social engagement and interaction can be revealed, explored and amended eg any social or interactive situation which contains an expectation on all parties that they will abide by the rules or protocols ie games, conversations, making something together.

5 Creative Play – play which allows a new response, the transformation of information, awareness of new connections, with an element of surprise. Allows children to design, explore, try out new ideas and use their imagination. They can use lots of different tools, props, equipment. It can have a beginning and an end, texture and smell eg enjoying creation with a range of materials and tools for its own sake. Self expression through any medium, making things, changing things.

6 Communication Play – play using words, nuances or gestures e.g. mime / charades, jokes, play acting, mickey taking, singing, whispering, pointing, debate, street slang, poetry, text messages, talking on mobiles / emails/ internet, skipping games, group and ball games.

7 Dramatic Play – play which dramatises events in which the child is not a direct participator eg presentation of a TV show, an event on the street, a religious or festive event, even a funeral.

8 Locomotor Play – movement in any or every direction for its own sake eg chase, tag, hide and seek, tree climbing.

9 Deep Play – play which allows the child to encounter risky or even potentially life threatening experiences, to develop survival skills and conquer fear eg light fires with matches, make weapons, conquer fear such as heights, snakes, and creepy crawlies. Some find strength they never knew they had to climb obstacles, lift large objects etc eg leaping onto an aerial runway, riding a bike on a parapet, balancing on a high beam, roller skating, assault course, high jump

10 Exploratory Play – play to access factual information consisting of manipulative behaviours such as handling, throwing, banging or mouthing objects eg engaging with an object or area and, either by manipulation or movement, assessing its properties, possibilities and content, such as stacking bricks.

11 Fantasy Play – This is the make believe world of children. This type of play is where the child's imagination gets to run wild. Play, which rearranges the world in the child's way, a way that is

unlikely to occur eg playing at being a pilot flying around the world, pretend to be various characters/people, be where ever they want to be, drive a car, become be six feet nothing tall or as tiny as they want to be the list is endless as is a child's imagination.

12 Imaginative Play – play where the conventional rules, which govern the physical world, do not apply eg imagining you are or pretending to be a tree or ship, or patting a dog which isn't there.

13 Mastery Play – control of the physical and affective ingredients of the environments eg digging holes, changing the course of streams, constructing shelters, building fires.

14 Object Play – play which uses infinite and interesting sequences of hand-eye manipulations and movements eg examination and novel use of any object eg cloth, paintbrush, cup.

15 Role Play – play exploring ways of being, although not normally of an intense personal, social, domestic or interpersonal nature eg brushing with a broom, dialling with a telephone, driving a car.

16 Recapitulative Play – play that allows the child to explore ancestry, history, rituals, stories, rhymes, fire and darkness. Enables children to access play of earlier human evolutionary stages.

Appendix 3

Children's Play Policy

We have the right to:	We have the responsibility to:
Have fun at playtimes	Make sure that everyone has fun and our play does not stop this
Make our own decisions about play and choose what to do	Make sure our decisions don't affect others in a negative way
Choose who we play with and include others	Make sure that no one is left out of play or forced to do something they don't want to
Play with lots of different toys and have a well looked after environment	Take pride in, respect and look after our environment and toys
Explore to be creative and take thoughtful risks	Think about what we are doing and talk to an adult from the play team about the risks we are taking if they ask us to

Appendix 4

Structure of adult roles in practice

OPAL Team

This is the team working directly with OPAL to ensure policy is in place and develop play and outdoor learning at Parkhead Community Primary School. It consists of:

The Head Teacher
Play Co-ordinator
Play Leader
Parent Representative/ Associate Governor

OPAL Ambassadors

OPAL ambassadors are chosen from every class to represent the children's views on OPAL, support in the maintenance of the environment and lead children's understanding of OPAL.

Parkhead Community Primary School Play Team

All adults working at the school are part of the play team and have a responsibility to follow this policy. When on the playground at playtimes all staff should act as Play Makers.

However more specifically at lunch times the following structure exists:

Play Co-ordinator

(Leads and manages strategy)

Play Leaders

(Leads and manages playtimes)

Play Makers

(Support children's' play as describe in paragraph 5)