



'We can and we will'
GLEBE PRIMARY SCHOOL

OPAL PLAY POLICY

1. Mission Statement

Our school undertakes to refer to this play policy in decisions that affect children's play, alongside direction from members of the senior leadership team. Our school is committed to providing the strategic and operational leadership needed to provide and maintain quality play provision for all of our children.

2. 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."

Better, more active and creative playtimes align perfectly with our school's values of high expectations and positive learning attitudes. By encouraging children to engage in purposeful play, we are fostering resilience, collaboration, and problem-solving skills, which are essential for academic, social, and emotional growth. This approach helps every child strive to reach their full potential, supporting them in becoming well-rounded individuals who excel both in and out of the classroom.

3. 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.
- These play opportunities align with our school ethos, fostering children's awareness of their own identity while respecting others. Play promotes partnership in learning, where children are self-motivated, independent and strive for excellence. Additionally, play encourages children to lead healthy lifestyles, supporting their physical fitness and overall wellbeing.

4. Aims

In relation to play our school aims 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.

5. Rights

Our school recognises that children should be listened to on matters important to them, provided they are also respecting and following the school rules and expectations.

6. 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) to inform its approach to managing risk in play, alongside guidance from the senior leadership team. 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.

Children should experience play that involves risk and challenge as it is essential for their development. Engaging in activities that push their boundaries helps them build resilience, problem-solving skills and the ability to assess and manage risks independently. This type of play fosters confidence, encourages creativity, and supports emotional regulation as children learn to navigate both success and failure. By overcoming challenges in play, children develop perseverance, self-reliance, and a sense of accomplishment, which benefits their overall growth and prepares them for the complexities of life. In doing so, children are encouraged to continue using the school's Zones of Regulation more effectively, and as they learn to manage their emotions more independently, they may steadily require less support from others.

7. 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.

Glebe school will always ensure that children are supervised and safe. Staff will be trained in using language that helps assess whether children can manage their own risk before intervening. For example, "Are you still having fun? How could you do that differently? Do you think that's stable? How could you make it more stable?" Additionally, staff will be encouraged to observe children's body language for signs of discomfort or hesitation, and ensure that children understand how to seek help if needed, creating a balance between independence and safety. Regular training on risk management will also help staff make informed decisions when to step in or allow children to explore challenges safely.

8. 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 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 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.

9. 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. Advancing equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not and fostering good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not, as per the Glebe way. Glebe school wants all children to feel that they are a valued part of our school community, respecting the fact that children have different educational and behavioural needs and aspirations, require different strategies for learning, acquire and assimilate and communicate information at different rates.

10. 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 champion our school's grounds to enhance play.

Play in natural environments fosters a deep connection to the outdoors, sparking a love for nature that lays the foundation for environmental stewardship. At Glebe, we are fortunate to have substantial green space, allowing children to experience the benefits of outdoor play. This access to nature not only enhances physical well-being but also inspires a sense of responsibility for caring for the environment, supporting their holistic development. Our commitment to outdoor play aligns with the broader goal of promoting lifelong well-being and environmental awareness.

Key

Appendix documents:

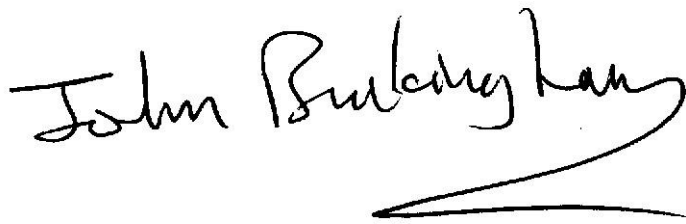
[Playwork Principles - Childhood, Play and the Playwork Principles.](#)

[HSE CHILDREN'S PLAY AND LEISURE – PROMOTING A BALANCED APPROACH](#)

Risk-Benefit Assessment (to be added when this is introduced in the Autumn term 2025)

Reviewed: April 2025

To be reviewed: April 2027

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John Buckingham". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

John Buckingham
Chair of Governors