



Play Policy

St John's & St Peter's C of E Primary

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St John's and St Peter's CE Primary is a welcoming school family that seeks to serve the Ladywood community by equipping its children and families for success.

By placing God's love in action at the heart of everything we do, we hope to see our children flourish, our culture transformed, and our community thrive.

Through **high-quality education** and an **enriching curriculum**, we will equip every child with the knowledge and skills they need to **overcome challenges** and therefore **achieve their full potential**.

Our hope is that every child at St John's and St Peter's CE Primary can uniquely contribute to the community and make it a place they are proud to call home.

1. Introduction

Our children are at the heart of everything we do. The provision and affordances we offer extends to play and breaktimes.

We believe that play is an important part of childhood and an essential part of school life. We will provide the leadership, resources and support needed to develop and maintain a rich, inclusive and stimulating play environment. Our approach to play reflects who we are as a school.

Play Zones are designed to offer a range of activities for all years in Key Stage One and Two. Activities are selected by our Headteacher, the SLT, play leaders with the addition of School Council's recommendations.

We want our children to flourish academically, emotionally and spiritually. OPAL is one way in which we can help children to develop confidence, independence, resilience and strong relationships, while giving them opportunities to explore, create, take appropriate risks and discover what they are capable of.

Leaders continually review the impact of all loose parts, activities and themes that run in school.

2. Rationale

At St John's & St Peter's, we believe 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 their background, circumstances, identity or individual abilities.

Better, more active and creative playtimes can contribute to happier and healthier children. They can also support a more positive attitude to learning, more effective classroom learning, less staff time spent resolving unnecessary behavioural difficulties, fewer playtime accidents and a healthier attitude to life.

We recognise that children arrive at school with different experiences, confidence and skills in play. Our provision will therefore deliberately develop children's 'play literacy' through opportunities to explore, experiment, create, collaborate and make meaningful choices.

Our play environment will also provide opportunities for children to learn about the world around them and apply skills and knowledge from across the curriculum in different contexts.

For St John's & St Peter's, OPAL forms part of our wider commitment to giving every child opportunities that help them flourish, develop their unique contribution and overcome barriers to achieving their full potential

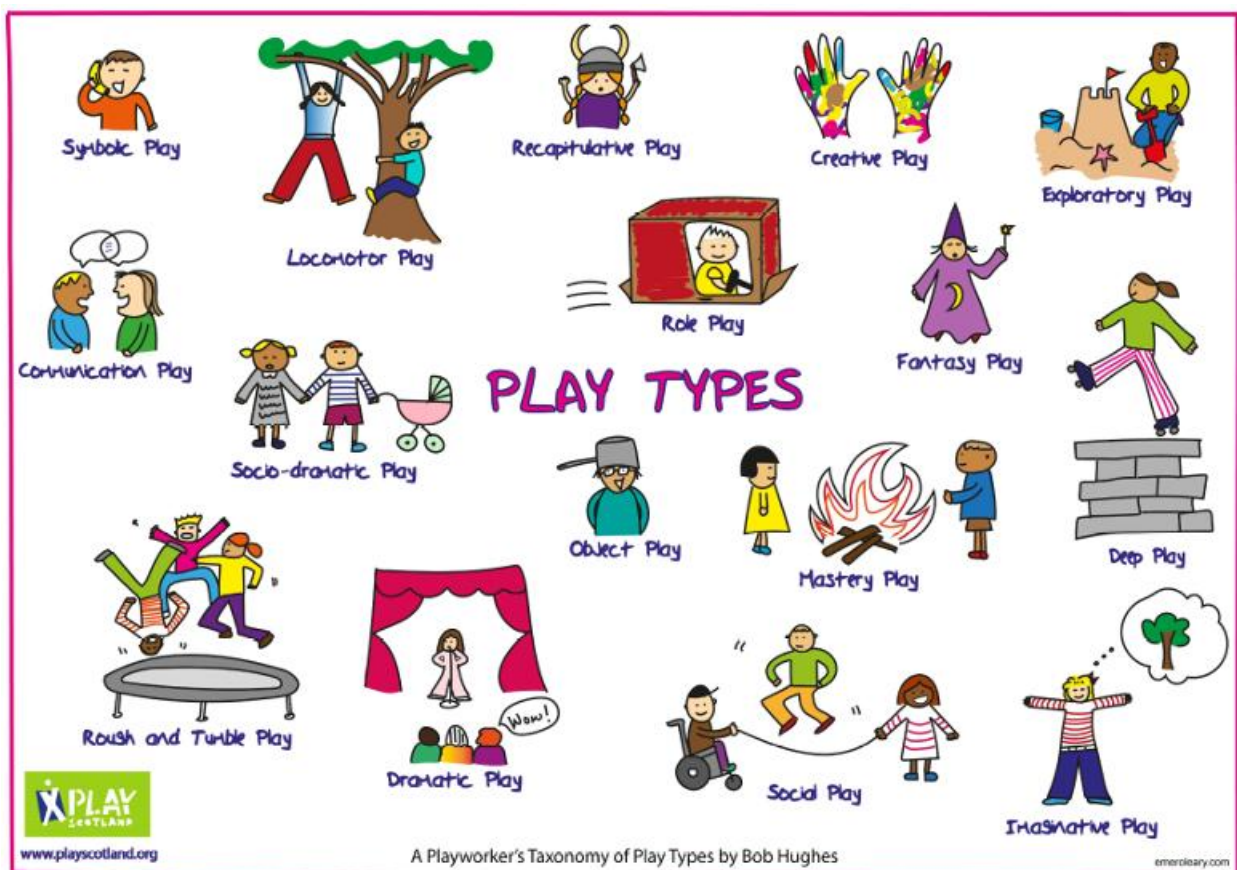
3. Definition and Value of Play?

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 with individuals and groups of different ages, abilities, interests, genders, ethnicities and cultures.
 - Play requires ongoing communication and negotiation, 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, solve problems and 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 is the only way the highest intelligence of humankind can unfold." ~ Joseph Chilton Pearce

Leaders will regularly review the offer of play to ensure it is meeting as many of the below play types as possible. Leaders will work closely with their OPAL mentor and OPAL play team to develop knowledge and skill around this crucial part of the day.



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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.
- Support children's physical, emotional, social, spiritual and intellectual development.
- Provide a range of environments that encourage children to explore and play imaginatively.
- Provide opportunities for children to support their learning across the curriculum and learn about the world around them.
- Promote independence and teamwork.
- Build emotional and physical resilience.
- Provide opportunities for children to discover and develop interests and talents.
- Listen to children's views and use these to inform the development of our play provision.

5. Rights

St John's & St Peter's recognises the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, including Article 31, which recognises children's right to rest, leisure, play and recreation, and Article 12, which recognises children's right to express their views on matters that affect them and to have those views taken seriously.

We acknowledge our responsibility to take these rights seriously and to listen to children's views about their play.

Children will have genuine opportunities to make choices about how they spend their playtime. With this freedom comes responsibility: children are expected to consider the impact of their choices on themselves, others and the environment through regular pupil voice, democratic voting and a wide and varied offer.



6. Benefit and Risk

We believe that children need opportunities to experience manageable risk as part of their play.

‘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 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.

In addition to standard risk-benefit assessments, the school will practise dynamic risk management with children, encouraging them to identify and manage risks in an environment where adults are present to support them.

Our aim is not to eliminate challenge, but to manage the balance between the need to offer appropriate risk and the need to keep children safe from harm.

7. Supervision

The law requires that children in school have supervision, but for primary school there are no stated ratios.

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 will use remote and ranging supervision wherever this enables children to play with greater independence while remaining appropriately safe. Our play leaders will be given Zones in which to range and this will be coordinated by the OPAL play co-ordinator.

Play leaders and the site supervisor will maintain an overview of the play environment, enabling children to quickly find an adult while allowing adults to monitor the kinds of play taking place and emerging levels of risk.

The specific staffing model and deployment of adults across play zones will be reviewed as the provision develops.

8. The Adults Role in Play

St John's & St Peter's will support children to maximise the benefits they can gain from play through adults who understand the principles of playwork and who create the conditions for self-directed play. The adult's core role is to create and maintain an environment that stimulates children's play and maximises opportunities for a wide range of play experiences. Skilled adults can enrich children's experiences through the design and resources of the physical environment and through the attitudes and culture they foster.

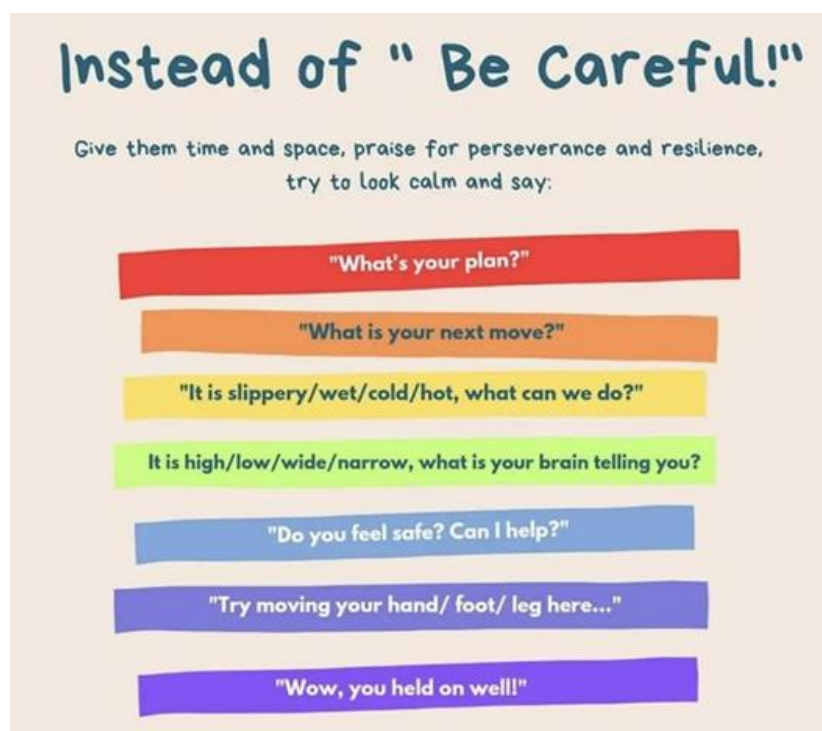
Adults can act as a channel of access to new materials, tools and possibilities. They may stimulate children to explore and learn and can participate in play when invited.

A key principle for all adults working with children will be:

Interact, don't interfere.

- The adult should observe play and avoid unnecessarily directing or taking over children's play.
- The adult should maintain an overview of the environment and be a first point of support for children who need assistance.
- Adults should give children time and space to negotiate, experiment, problem-solve and find their own solutions.
- When inappropriate behaviour or play is observed, adults should explain why it is not acceptable, support children to make better choices and, where appropriate, help them become involved in purposeful play.

Non-interference does not mean non-involvement. Skilled adults will know when to step in, when to step back and when a small intervention can enrich a child's experience.



9. Equality and Inclusivity

Through providing a rich play offer that meets children's different needs, we will ensure that all children, regardless of age, gender, race, disability or additional needs, have meaningful opportunities to develop, thrive, build strong relationships and enjoy school.

Our approach will recognise that children may need different things from play and that equal access does not always mean identical provision.

We will consider the needs of children with SEND, physical disabilities, communication needs, sensory needs and other individual needs when planning and developing our play environment.

We will provide a variety of opportunities and spaces, which may include active, imaginative, construction, creative, social, exploratory, nature-based, quiet and sensory play, so that children can find meaningful ways to participate.

We will make reasonable adaptations and provide additional support where needed. Our ambition is that no child feels that playtime is something that happens around them; every child should feel that they have a place within it.

10. Environment

We believe that a rich play setting should provide stimulating environments that are free from unacceptable or unnecessary risks, while offering children opportunities to explore for themselves through freely chosen play.

We will continually improve the quality and diversity of our school grounds to enhance play and will use OPAL guidance, including the principles outlined in Best Play, to inform our development of a quality play environment.

We will make purposeful use of open-ended resources and natural materials, recognising that these can be used in many different ways according to children's ideas and imagination.

Our developing OPAL environment may include:

- loose parts and natural materials;
- sand, water and digging;
- gardening and growing;
- construction materials;
- tyres and other large-scale resources;
- wheeled equipment;
- creative materials;
- spaces for imaginative play;
- spaces for physical challenge;
- quieter spaces for children who need them.

We will encourage children to see resources as possibilities rather than objects with one predetermined purpose.

Our environment should prompt children to think:

“What could I do with this?”

rather than simply:

“What is this for?”

As OPAL develops at St John's & St Peter's, we will continue to listen to children and respond to their interests, needs and ideas. Our school grounds belong to our whole school family. Children will be encouraged to take responsibility for the spaces they use, including looking after equipment, respecting plants and growing areas, keeping spaces tidy and reporting hazards.

Our OPAL Commitment

OPAL is not simply about improving what happens at lunchtime. It is part of our wider culture and our commitment to giving children opportunities to learn, grow and flourish.

We want our playtimes to reflect the school we aspire to be:

a welcoming school family where every child matters, every child has a unique contribution to make, and God's love is put into action.

Through OPAL, we will encourage:

Aspiration: children who are willing to try, explore, challenge themselves and discover what they can achieve.

Wisdom: children who can make thoughtful choices, understand consequences, solve problems and manage appropriate risk.

Compassion: children who care for one another, include others, build positive relationships and look after the community they share.

In doing so, OPAL will contribute to our vision of seeing our children flourish, our culture transformed and our community thrive.