



**Play Policy**  
**Using OPAL for Unstructured Times**

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The ability to play is critical not only to being happy, but also to sustaining social relationships and being a creative, innovative person.

-Dr. Stuart Brown

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## Play Policy

### 'Learning Together We Can Reach For The Stars'

Learning together is at the heart of Race Leys Infant School where we all create exciting and creative opportunities. We have high expectations and build each other's confidence to enable us to work hard to be the best we can be. Our stimulating curriculum helps us to learn skills for the future, recognise each other's differences, strengths and celebrate success. Our school values help us to use good manners, develop respectful, caring relationships and support us to feel safe, be happy and make good choices.

Our school motto is "Learning together we can reach for the stars!" and we strive to achieve this in all that we do with high aspirations for our Race Leys Family.

We proudly provide high quality learning experiences for our school community and adapt, evolve and enhance our practices and environments to ensure all pupils thrive.

We continue to build on our proud traditions by providing a high-quality learning environment and experiences for our pupils. Our newly adapted whole school curriculum provides a wide range of opportunities for our children. Underpinned by the National Curriculum, our curriculum considers the needs of our children, their interests and the local area, which we are very proud to be a part of.

Our school values of: Fairness, Teamwork, Care, Honesty, Respect and Perseverance promote high expectations and ensure all of our children to work hard and behave well. These attitudes are reflected in the excellent standards of learning and progress we achieve.

We encourage our children to be thoughtful and confident individuals. We welcome parents to join in with the life of the school and encourage them to share and support with their child's learning.

At Race Leys Infant School, we want the pupils to leave as well-rounded young people with a growth mind-set that anything is possible, we believe we achieve this every day for our whole school community.

**This school is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment.**

<b>Policy Title</b>	Play Policy
<b>Responsible committee</b>	Curriculum and standards
<b>Commitment</b>	Our school 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.
<b>Rationale</b>	<p>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.</p> <p>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."</p> <p>Children are in our school for 3 years and we recognise that at least 20% of this time will be with the children in play, that is 114 days of play. We believe that our children deserve the very best experiences and opportunities to play, learn and explore.</p> <p>Montessori said, "Play is the work of the child." When children are allowed to explore their world through meaningful activities, they can learn an unfathomable amount about their world. In a prepared environment, children can both experience and play at the same time. That results in satisfaction, because the child is able to satiate their curiosity about the world while having fun. Play is the essence of childhood, an enchanting journey that spans a lifetime. Cooperative play fosters a sense of belonging, builds resilience, and prepares children for future social interactions and group dynamics. To promote cooperative play, we aim to allow children the time to become engaged in free play experiences, playing, collaborating and coordinating with friends. Providing opportunities for problem solving, take turns, listen to others' ideas, and work together towards a shared outcome.</p>
<b>Definition and value of play</b>	<p>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.</p> <p>We believe play has many benefits, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Play is critical to children's health and wellbeing, and essential for their physical, emotional, social, spiritual and intellectual development.</li> <li>• Play enables children to explore the physical and social environment, as well as different concepts and ideas.</li> <li>• Play enhances children's self-esteem and their understanding of others through freely chosen social interactions, within peer groups, with</li> </ul>

	<p>individuals, and within groups of different ages, abilities, interests, genders, ethnicities and cultures.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Play requires ongoing communication and negotiation skills, enabling children to develop a balance between their right to act freely and their responsibilities to others.</li> <li>• 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.</li> <li>• Play encourages self-confidence and the ability to make choices, problem solve and to be creative.</li> <li>• Play maintains children's openness to learning, develops their capabilities and allows them to push the boundaries of what they can achieve.</li> </ul>
Aims and Values	<p>In relation to play our school aims to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure play settings provide a varied, challenging and stimulating environment.</li> <li>• Allow children to take risks and use a common-sense approach to the management of these risks and their benefits.</li> <li>• Provide opportunities for children to develop their relationships with each other.</li> <li>• Enable children to develop respect for their surroundings and each other.</li> <li>• Aid children's physical, emotional, social, spiritual and intellectual development.</li> <li>• Provide a range of environments that will encourage children to explore and play imaginatively.</li> <li>• Provide a range of environments that will support children's learning across the curriculum and learning about the world around them.</li> <li>• Promote independence and teamwork within children.</li> <li>• Build emotional and physical resilience.</li> </ul>
Rights and Values	<p>At Race Leys Infant School, we believe that our children should be afforded the very best opportunities to thrive both in and out of the classroom. Play-based learning is an integral part of our school improvement plan. We believe that our children need to learn the values of <b>teamwork, perseverance, respect and fairness</b>. Playtime is a great opportunity for the children to adapt and practice these values. We encourage our children to be independent learners and creative thinkers within the classroom and aim for our playtimes to mirror these same experiences.</p> <p>Following the school's most recent Ofsted Inspection (2023) the school are rapidly acting to improve behaviour in school.</p> <p><i>'Leaders should ensure that there is a clear and concise behaviour policy that is consistently applied to allow pupils to be engaged with their learning and to behave appropriately during less structured times.'</i></p> <p>The Foundation Stage curriculum provides a strong starting point for our children to learn the characteristics of effective learning. Our aim is to continue this as the children move through Key Stage 1.</p>

	<p><b>Playing and exploring:</b> Children investigate and experience things, and 'have a go'. Children who actively participate in their own play develop a larger store of information and experiences to draw on which positively supports their learning.</p> <p><b>Active learning:</b> Children concentrate and keep on trying if they encounter difficulties. They are proud of their own achievements. For children to develop into self-regulating, lifelong learners they are required to take ownership, accept challenges and learn persistence.</p> <p><b>Creating and thinking critically:</b> -Children develop their own ideas and make links between these ideas. They think flexibly and rationally, drawing on previous experiences which help them to solve problems and reach conclusions.</p> <p>Our school 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.</p>
Benefit and risk	<p>'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.'</p> <p>Managing Risk in Play Provision: An Implementation Guide (Play Safety Forum, 2012)</p> <p><b>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.</b> 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).</p> <p>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'.</p> <p>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.</p> <p><i>HSE Managing Risk Statement (Appendix 1)</i></p>

<p><b>Supervision</b></p>	<p>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.</p> <p>During morning and lunchtime play we will always have at least three members of staff on duty outside during these unstructured times.</p>
<p><b>The adult's role in play</b></p>	<p>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 (appendix 2). 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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>The 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 (<a href="http://www.outdoorplayandlearning.org.uk">www.outdoorplayandlearning.org.uk</a>) to help guide a strategic approach to developing play at Race Leys Infant School. In addition to this, Race Leys Play Team (Appendix 3) will work in collaboration with parents, teachers, teaching assistants, MDS, governors, and all other pupils to implement the changes highlighted in this policy. 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.</p>
<p><b>The children's role in Play</b></p>	<p>The children will all have access to their own version of the play policy (Appendix 4). It will also include the rights and responsibilities of the children to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have ownership of their play and outdoor learning experiences;</li> <li>• Respect and look after each other, their environment, equipment, and toys;</li> <li>• To be aware of sanctions surrounding purposely dangerous or unsafe behaviour;</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure that play times are fun for everybody.</li> </ul> <p>This children's policy will be shared and explained to all children regularly as part of ongoing assemblies, discussions, and dialogue in class and with the School Council.</p>
<b>Equality and diversity</b>	<p>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.</p>
<b>Environment</b>	<p>We believe that a rich play setting should ensure that all children have access to stimulating environments that are free from unacceptable risk and thereby offer the opportunity to explore both themselves, through their freely chosen play.</p> <p>At Race Leys Infant School we will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use the outdoor space as a natural resource for learning and playing, encouraging the children to value natural or found objects for play;</li> <li>• Include the children when planning for playing and learning outdoors;</li> <li>• Ensure that the outdoor area offers all children the opportunity to investigate, take risks and explore and use their imagination and creativity;</li> <li>• Expect the children to respect the outdoor environment and care for living things;</li> <li>• Give children the opportunity to manage the space and freedom afforded by the outdoors;</li> <li>• Enrich the quality of the environment to maximize the variety of play types and increase play value;</li> <li>• Ensure that the playground is an integrated area where all children from Reception to Year 2 can play safely;</li> <li>• 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;</li> <li>• Promote children's pride for the outdoor space that belongs to them.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Managing the children's behaviour at lunchtime</b></p> <p><b>(From the Behaviour Support Policy)</b></p>	<p>As part of our ethos, all staff are expected to be proactive in managing and dealing with behaviour. To foster good relationships, MDS staff will consistently 'catch children being good' and share this with them. In the lunch hall, MDS staff are encouraged to hand out Green Tokens to tables, these will be added to the whole school total also.</p> <p>We will be beginning our OPAL journey this year and would like our unstructured times to become a more positive experience with the adults leading and engaging children in active play.</p> <p>Behaviour incidents should be managed at lunch time in line with the policy. Children who are displaying 'silly behaviours' should be spoken to first and given a warning. If this continues, they should be given a short time out and asked to stand near the adult during the consequence. Serious incidents of non-negotiable behaviours should be addressed by staff and referred to the Senior Leader on duty. Behaviour should be addressed in a calm and discrete way. Loud voices are to be used only when the volume level is unsafe and attention needs to be gained or if a child is at immediate risk or danger. All other behaviour needs normal talking volume or quieter.</p>

**Reporting behaviour incidents**

MDS are all assigned to a class. If an incident has resulted in a time out or more significant then this needs to be shared with the Class Teacher / TA on handover. It is important that this is done discretely and not in front of the children. These will then need to be logged in the class behaviour log.

## Appendix 1 - HSE Managing Risk Statement

### [HSE Managing Risk Statement](#)

## The playwork principles

### 1. Understand Need

All children and young people need to play. The impulse to play is innate. Play is a biological, psychological and social necessity, and is fundamental to the healthy development and well-being of individuals.

### 2. Understand Process

Play is a process that is freely chosen, personally directed and intrinsically motivated. Children and young people determine and control the content and intent of their play, by following their own instincts, ideas and interests, in their own way for their own reasons.

### 3. Support Process

The prime focus and essence of playwork is to support and facilitate the play process and this should inform the development of play policy, strategy, training and education.

### 4. Advocate for Play

For playworkers, the play process takes precedence and playworkers act as advocates for play when engaging with adult led agendas.

### 5. Create Spaces

The role of the playworker is to support all children and young people in the creation of a space in which they can play.

### 6. Learn and Reflect

The playworker's response to children and young people playing is based on a sound up to date knowledge of the play process, reflective practice.

### 7. Understand Impact

Playworkers recognise their own impact on the play space and also the impact of children and young people's play on the playworker.

### 8. Choose Intervention Styles

Playworkers choose an intervention style that enables children and young people to extend their play. All playworker interventions must balance risk with the developmental benefit and well-being of children.

## Appendix 3

### Structure of Adult Roles in Practice

#### OPAL Team

This is the team working directly with OPAL to ensure the policy is in place and to develop play and outdoor learning at Race Leys Infant School.

It consists of:

- Curricular Lead: Mrs Langtree
- Play Governor: Whole Governing Body
- Play Co-ordinator: Mrs Clarke and Mrs Bond
- Parent Representative: Vacancy

#### Race Leys Infant 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 Leaders.

However, more specifically at lunchtimes, the following structure exists:

- Curriculum Lead for Play (Leads and manages strategy)
- Play Co-ordinator (Leads and manages playtimes)
- Play Team (Facilitate and provide rich play experiences)

## Appendix 4

### Children's Play Policy

We have the right to have fun at playtimes.

We have the responsibility to make sure that everyone has fun and our play does not stop this.

We have the right to make our own decisions about our play and choose what we do.

We have the responsibility to make sure our decisions don't affect others in a negative way.

We have the right to choose who we play with.

We have the responsibility that no one is left out of play or forced to do something they don't want to.

We have the right to play with lots of different toys and have a well looked-after environment.

We have the responsibility to take pride in, respect and look after our environment and toys.

We have the right to explore, be creative and take thoughtful risks.

We have the responsibility to think about what we are doing and talk to a Play Maker about the risks we are taking if they ask us to.