

GAYTON PRIMARY SCHOOL



Play & Risk Management Policy

Approved by:

Governors

Last Reviewed on:

May 2021

Next review due by:

September 2022

Introduction

This policy sets out Gayton Primary School's commitment to ensuring that all children have quality play opportunities. As a school, we will refer to this 'Play and Risk Management' 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 and managing the risks and benefits associated with them.

This document is intended for:

- The Play Team
- All teaching staff
- All staff with classroom responsibilities
- School governors
- Parents
- Inspection teams

In line with article 31, of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, it states that,

Article 31 1. States Parties recognise the right of the child to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts.

Our school believes that all children need opportunities to explore, manipulate, experience, and investigate their environment, with acceptable levels of risk. The children have the right to have fun in a way that they want to. Play is an essential part of a happy and healthy childhood. We believe that play should be available and accessible to every child, irrespective of their gender, sexual orientation, economic or social circumstances, ethnic or cultural background or origin, or individual abilities.

As a school, we aim to provide consistently high quality, sustainable play opportunities for all children. We offer a rich choice of easily accessible play experiences for every child by providing a diverse range of opportunities, materials, and equipment, and enabling access to carefully considered outdoor spaces.

Gayton Primary school is following the OPAL programme, whose 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”.

At Gayton 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.

This is also reflected in our school values which aim to support the personal, social and spiritual development of every pupil throughout the school. Our six core values are:

Friendship, Respect, Perseverance, Truthfulness, Compassion & Courage.

Rationale

Children spend up to 20% or 1.4 years of their time in school at play. Therefore, this time needs to be coherent and planned for. Changes in society such as heavier traffic, busier lifestyles, fewer areas for play and risk aversion have led to a significant reduction in children's opportunities for play. This makes their play opportunities at school even more vital.

Better quality play leads to happier children and happier staff. With better quality play opportunities comes a more positive attitude to school, improved skills development and learning and there are fewer behaviour problems. As the quality of opportunities for play improves children have more enriching play times, there

are fewer accidents and playtime incidents, and classroom learning is enhanced as the children come in from play happy and are ready to learn.

Play is recognised for the important contribution it makes to children's enjoyment of life and to their growth and development; a finding confirmed by many studies of early childhood. Play is essential to the health and well-being of children and promotes the development of creativity, imagination, self-confidence, self-efficacy, as well as physical, social, cognitive, and emotional strength and skills. Play can enhance problem solving, encourages a 'can do' approach and through its opportunities for social interaction supports language development, which is vital for all our children and in particular for EAL learners and those children with delayed speech and language. The contribution of play to educational development is generated 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 in a supportive and well managed environment.

We surveyed the children in May 2021 for their views on play time, they highlight the need for improvements. It needs to be noted that the survey was conducted during Covid times and the children were still in bubbles, with certain groups accessing different areas of the school grounds. Many were positive about their playtime, but the survey's findings found that the children wished for:

- More access to the field and playing in the bushes
- Consistent message between adults
- Nice places to sit
- More loose parts to play with

Definition and value of play

Play is defined as any freely chosen activity which a child finds satisfying and creative. It may or may not involve equipment or other people.

A concept taken from 'Early Years Matters', can also be applied to all the age ranges of children.

Play underpins the EYFS. It also underpins learning and all aspects of children's development. Through play, children develop language skills, their emotions and creativity, social and intellectual skills. For most children their play is natural and spontaneous although some children may need extra help from adults. Play takes place indoors and outdoors and it is in these different environments that children explore and discover their immediate world. It is here they practise new ideas and skills, they take risks, show imagination and solve problems on their own or with others. The role that adults have is crucial. Adults provide time and space and appropriate resources. These might include clothes, boxes, buckets, old blankets that will inspire play and fire children's imaginations. They observe play and join in when invited, watching and listening before intervening. They value play and provide safe but challenging environments that support and extend learning and development.

Play has unique behavioural characteristics that make it different to other forms of behaviour and such a powerful force in children's lives, these include:

Personal Control –the increased degree of personal or collective control in play, compared to other aspects of children's lives requires real active engagement.

Intrinsic Motivation – children are motivated to play by the pleasure and satisfaction they gain from playing. In play there is a greater focus on the process of playing rather than any products that may be produced from it.

Flexibility and Variability – in play children can try out highly variable and diverse combinations of behaviour, where the narratives are often flexible if not completely unpredictable.

Pretence – in play children will take an ‘as if’ approach enabling them to be ‘other’ in important but non-serious ways. This is made possible by the psychological ‘frame of safety’, created in play, a virtual reality in which the constraints of the real world are suspended

Creation of Uncertainty – children seek out “scary fun” the physical and emotional pleasure that comes from playing with risk/uncertainty.

Taken together these characteristics enable children to express and refine skills and competencies associated with their holistic development, mental health, well-being and resilience, including, physical activity, emotion regulation, motivation and reward, responsiveness to stress, attachments to people and place, creativity and learning.

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, different concepts and different 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 be creative.
- Play maintain children’s openness to learning, develops their capabilities and allows them to push the boundaries of what they can achieve.

Aims:

In relation to play Gayton Primary School aims to:

- provide the children with a varied, challenging and stimulating environment.
- enable the children to develop independence, where they can take responsibility for themselves
- allow children to take risks and learn how to manage these risks, using a common-sense approach with an understanding of the risks they take and the benefits of these risks.
- enable the children to develop respect for their environment and of each other.
- aid children’s physical, emotional, social, spiritual and intellectual development.
- provide a range of environments which will encourage children to explore, play imaginatively, create, investigate and relax.
- 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.

Rights:

Gayton Primary 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.

Risk and Benefit

“Striking the right balance between protecting children from the most serious risks and allowing them to reap the benefits of play is not about eliminating risk. Nor is it 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.” **Children’s Play and Leisure: Promoting a balanced approach (Joint HSE/Play Safety Forum High Level Statement)**

Research studies have found that the social, physical, emotional, and intellectual benefits to children of engaging with risk and uncertainty in play are substantial. Children become more resilient, adaptable and are keen to try new experiences and importantly less fearful of experiences that are new to them. Risky play or playing with uncertainty enables children to place themselves in situations that have a sense of jeopardy and risk without actually over-exposing themselves to the serious likelihood of harm (*Gordon & Esbjorn-Hargens, 2007; Pellis, 2013*).

When creating risky scenarios, like den building and climbing, in their play, children might more accurately be described as being in control of generating the feeling of being out of control. Ellen Sandseter (2010) found that these forms of play (children called, ‘scary fun’) were very important to children. Children develop this scary fun in their play because it’s exhilarating and thrilling, gives them a sense of pride and achievement when mastering a new challenge, and influences their self-esteem, self-confidence, and peer relationships. Children should be provided with opportunities to challenge themselves and also to experience successes and failures.

Risk and challenge are not limited to physical risk but also include 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. Risk is an ever-present factor of life and therefore risk management skills are an essential life skill, the development of which is best supported through direct experience in a supportive environment.

The school will use the Health and Safety Executive guidance document ‘Children’s Play and Leisure – Promoting a Balanced Approach’ (September 2012) as the principle 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. (Appendix 1)*

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. In the words of 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 additions 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.

As indicated in ‘Managing Risk in Play Provision: Implementation Guide –Play England’, it states that there are good and bad risks.

Good risks and hazards in play provision are those that engage and challenge children, and support their growth, learning and development. These might include equipment with moving parts, which offers opportunities for dynamic, physically challenging play; changes in height that give children the opportunity to overcome fears and feel a sense of satisfaction in climbing; and natural loose materials that give children the chance to create and destroy constructions using their skill, creativity and imagination.

Bad risks and hazards are those that are difficult or impossible for children to assess for themselves, and that have no obvious benefits. These might include sharp edges or points on equipment, weak structures that may collapse, and items that include traps for heads or fingers.

Therefore, good risks and hazards are acceptable in play provision and playable spaces.

Our role as play providers is to facilitate enriching opportunities for children. They need to learn to manage risk for themselves in an environment that is as safe as it needs to be, rather than completely devoid of risk.

The benefit to children of challenging play opportunities should be balanced with any potential risk when carrying out risk assessments. We adopt the OPAL R.A.P.I.D response to risk management which includes, Risk-Benefit Assessments (**Appendix 2**), Assemblies (**Appendix 3**), this play and risk management Policy, Inspections and Dynamic risk benefit assessments to manage our duty of care to protect and provide for children's rights and needs.

Supervision

The law requires that children in school have supervision but for primary school playtimes there are no stated ratios. The school recognizes OPAL's three models of supervision: Direct, Remote and Ranging. Except for new children in reception, the school does not believe direct supervision is possible or beneficial. Supervision will take remote and ranging 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. We may not be able to see all of the children all of the time, especially when they are in Lucy's Wood amongst the trees and bushes. Therefore, due to the nature of our site we will have enhanced supervision to ensure risks can be managed appropriately during playtimes. Each member of the Play Team are designated to a zone daily. It is expected that staff will move around throughout playtime within their zone, finding out what the children are doing and where they are playing. All staff follow the school's behaviour policy over lunchtimes and playtimes. For further details, please see the school's Behaviour Policy.

The Adult's Role in Play

The school will help children maximize 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' (Playwork Principles Scrutiny Group) (**Appendix 4**) Staff will use and refer to these principles when appropriate interventions are needed, and ultimately will strive for facilitating an environment which nurtures children's self-directed play. All staff will have in-house training and education.

The adults (Play Team) core function is to create an environment which will stimulate children's play and maximise their opportunities for a wide range of play experiences. A skilled and experienced play team member 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. Play team members 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.

First Aid

There will be two First Aid stations, one situated on the field and another on the playground. Each station will contain basic First Aid equipment, class report forms and Head bump/First Aid slips, which must be handed to the class teacher. If an incident involving a child requires a phone call home, this must be reported to the class teacher. All staff have basic First Aid training, with several staff having paediatric First Aid qualifications.

Clothing

During times when the play environments are wet or damp, children and adults should wear appropriate footwear (wellingtons) and outdoor wear (waterproof coats).

Inclusion

All children are entitled to welcoming and accessible play provision, irrespective of gender, economics or social circumstances, ethnic or cultural background or origin or individual abilities. It is our responsibility to ensure adequate provision is provided.

Review

This policy will be closely monitored by the Head teacher and Play Curricular Lead teacher. A working group, comprising of Head teacher, Play curriculum lead teacher, Play Coordinator, play leaders, parents, governor and other school staff, will take responsibility for managing the action plan for play.

This policy has been shared with the whole school community.