

# OPAL Policy

## (Outdoor Play and Learning)



Status	Date
Date issued	
Prepared by	Play Team
Review date	
Date adopted by Governing Body	

**Belong. Believe. Become.**

**Mandale Mill Primary School**  
**Outdoor Play and Learning Policy**

**Rationale**

Our school believes that all children need opportunities to play which allow them to explore, manipulate, experience and affect their environment. The school acknowledges the UN Charter on the Rights of the Child, especially Article 31, and supports the child's right to play. Children spend up to 20% or 1.4 years of their time in school at play. Therefore, this time needs to be led and planned for to ensure high quality and varied provision is made available.

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 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".**

**The 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. When a child plays, they learn about them self and their surroundings. This includes how to coordinate their body movements, talk with friends, apply rules, and more. But the learning process is even broader than this, 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, be resilient, be independent and to be creative.
- Play helps to develop speech and language skills as well as encouraging children to be creative and imaginative.

- Play maintains children’s openness to learning.

**Aims:**

The school aims to address the provision of improved play opportunities:

- To ensure play settings provide a varied, challenging and stimulating environment.
- To allow children to take risks and use a common-sense approach to these risks and their benefits.
- To provide opportunities for children to develop their relationships with each other.
- To enable children to develop respect for their surroundings and each other.
- To aid children’s physical, emotional, social, spiritual and intellectual development.
- To provide a range of environments which will encourage children to explore and play imaginatively.
- To provide a range of environments which will support children’s learning across the curriculum and learning about the world around them.
- To promote independence and team work within children.
- To build emotional and physical resilience.

**Benefit and Risk**

‘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’

Managing Risk in Play Provision: Implementation guide is published for Play England 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 principle value statement informing its approach to managing risk in play. It will adopt a benefits/risk approach as detailed in ‘Managing Risk in Play Provision’ Implementation Guide. Managing Risk in Play Provision Risk-taking is an essential feature of play provision, and of all environments in which children and young people legitimately spend time at play. Play provision aims to offer children and young people the chance to encounter acceptable risks as part of a stimulating, challenging and controlled learning environment. 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. 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'.

See appendix one for 'Benefit – Risk record sheet'.

### **The Adults Role in Play**

The school will help children maximize the benefits they can gain from play by provision of trained staff who are informed by and work to the Playwork Principles (Appendix 2).

- Play is essential for physical, emotional, social, spiritual and intellectual development
- Play enables children to explore the physical and social environment, different concepts and ideas
- Encourages self-confidence and the ability to make choices
- Play is critical to children's physical and emotional health, and enables them to explore and develop the balance between their right to act freely and their responsibilities to others
- Free play can have a direct positive impact on a child's ability to reach their potential

The play worker's and play team's 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 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.

## **Adult Intervention**

### **Hinders**

- You're going to hurt yourself
- That's too big for you
- Passes on own anxiety
- Distracts child from engaging in certain play types
- Adulterates play – gets too involved/excited
- Over competitive
- Allows child to always win
- Judgmental
- Risk-averse
- Dominating

### **Helpful**

- Supportive
- Models behaviour
- Follows child's direction
- Provides resources
- Thinks about when to intervene
- Waits to be invited
- Observes
- Learns and Reflects

### **Supervision**

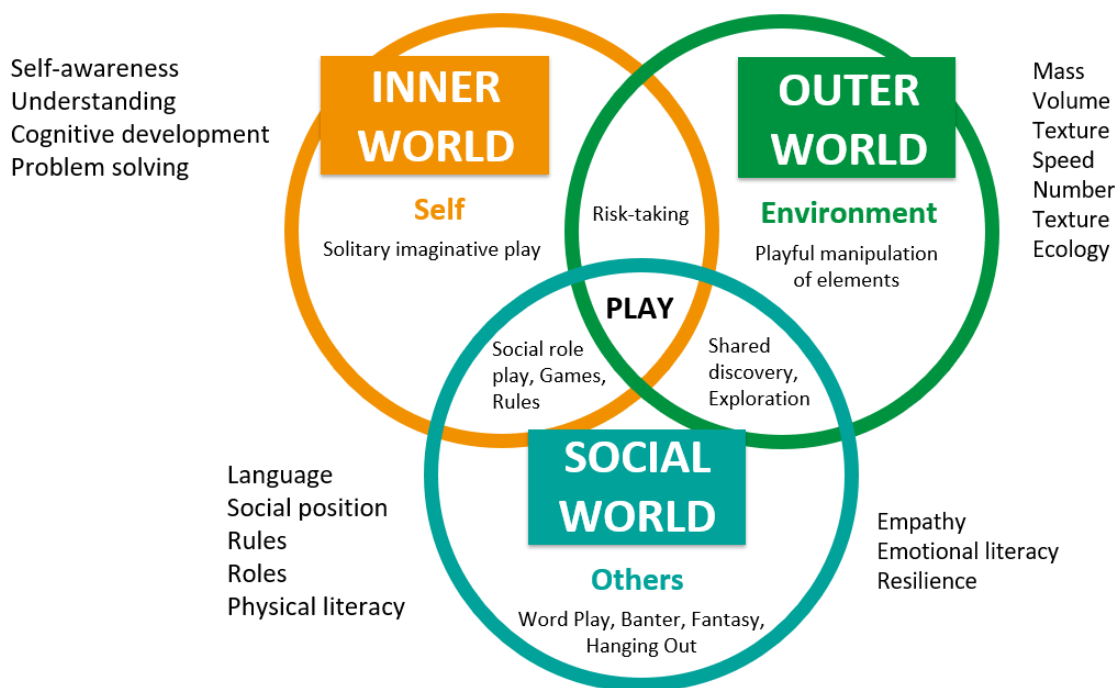
The law requires that children in school have supervision but for primary school playtimes there are no stated ratios. During the school day there should be one or more adults present outdoors. The school recognizes OPAL's three models of supervision Direct, Remote and Ranging. Except for new children 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. Adults will wear orange hi vis, to be clearly visible during play and lunch times. Should an accident occur, our first aid bag is always available outside in the playground. (See appendix 3)

**Environment**

We believe that a rich play setting should ensure that all children have access to a stimulating environment that are free from unacceptable risk. Thereby offer the opportunity to explore both themselves, through their freely chosen play.

Play should include-



Play should meet the sensory needs of all children-

<b>Sensory Area:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• touch</li> <li>• feel</li> <li>• Smell</li> <li>• hug</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• digging</li> <li>• rough and tumble, boxing</li> <li>• punch bag</li> <li>• soft play</li> <li>• exercise balls</li> <li>• carrying heavy/weighted resources</li> <li>• Speed</li> <li>• Height</li> <li>• climb</li> </ul>	<b>Resources to fiddle and manipulate:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• pipe cleaners,</li> <li>• stress balls</li> <li>• tangle toys</li> <li>• sorting items</li> <li>• lego, buttons,</li> <li>• play-doh, slime, bubbles.</li> </ul> <p>A paddling pool full of fidgets!</p>	<b>Places to hide:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• feel safe</li> <li>• warm</li> <li>• dark,</li> <li>• hidden</li> </ul> <b>Places of calm</b>
<b>Places to...</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• swing</li> <li>• rock</li> <li>• roll</li> <li>• hang upside down</li> </ul>			<b>Staff :</b> Connection, empathy, listening, communication skills, emotional literacy

These can be essential to help children regulate



**Rights**

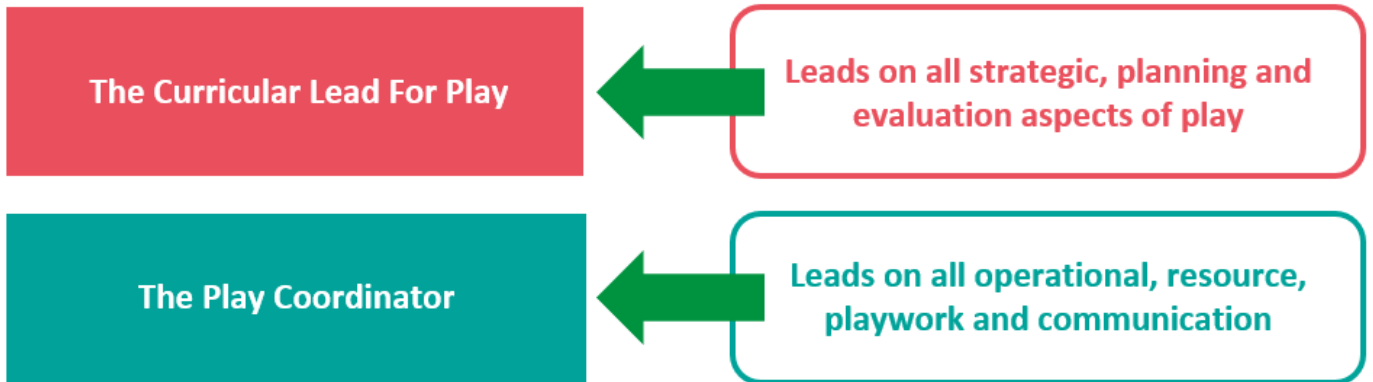
Our school recognises the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which includes the right to play, recreation and leisure (Article 31) and the right of children to be listened to on matters important to them (Article 12). We acknowledge that we have a duty take these rights seriously and listen to children’s views on their play. Article 31 of the Unicef 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. From this, Play England created The Charter for Children’s Play which clearly states that:

- Children should have spaces to spend adequate time playing at school.
- Adults should always let children play, this is a non-negotiable.
- Children greatly value and benefit from staffed play provision.
- Children’s play is augmented by expert play workers.
- Children sometimes need extra support to enjoy their right to play, this should always be provided when needed.

**Responsibility of Play Leader:**

- Formulating, reviewing and updating policy document guidelines.
- Ensuring that the curriculum (provison) is relevant to the ability and needs of all pupils and reflects cross curricular opportunities, special educational needs and equal opportunities.
- Producing an action plan.
- Monitoring standards of play in accordance with the monitoring schedule.
- Informing the Head teacher and curriculum lead of standards and developments within the subject.
- Keeping up to date with the latest developments and inform staff.
- Acting as a consultant to other members of staff.
- Liaising with outside agencies.
- Organising and maintaining resources.
- Monitoring progress and checking pupil understanding of key skills and knowledge.

- Liaising with Governors and other stakeholders.
- Provide CPD to staff where necessary.
- Work alongside curriculum leader.



### Links with other policies

- Health and Safety Policy
- Safeguarding Policy
- Emotional Health and Well Being Policy
- Managing Risk Statement
- Play Risk Assessments



**Article 3:** All adults should do what is best for you. When adults make decisions, they should think about how their decisions will affect children.

**Article 28:** Every child has the right to a good education.

**Article 29:** Your education should help you use and develop your talents and abilities.

It should also help you learn to live peacefully, protect the environment and respect other people.

**Article 41:** Every child has the right to relax and play, and to join in a wide range of cultural, artistic and other recreational activities.



Appendix One-

**Benefit-Risk Assessment Record Sheet**

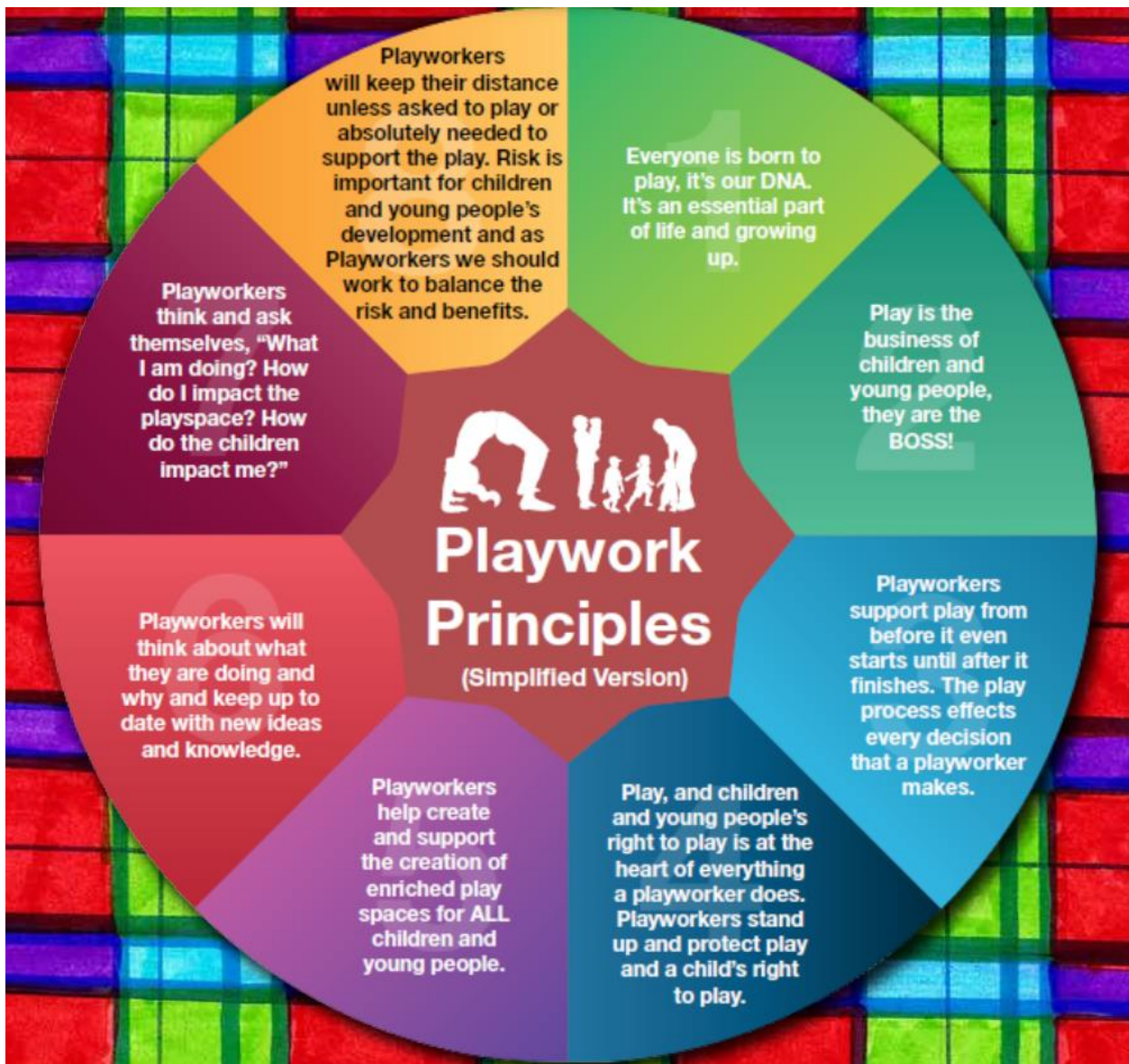
Risk Assessment Date.....

Assessed by.....

	Description of Activity, Principle or Object, who might be at risk and what kind of harm.	Benefit or Utility Or Related Policy	Description of risk management and maintenance agreed	Nominated person	Action Date

Appendix Two-

The Playwork Principles-





## Appendix Three-

### Types of Play



## Appendix Four-

### Type of Supervision –

**Direct** – This is where the supervisor(s) will be able to see all areas of play, and be close at hand.

**Remote** – This is where a supervisor or supervisors are located at a relatively static location some distance from an activity.

**Ranging** – This is where the supervisor moves around the play area. On a large site supervisors should have zones so that they know which parts of the site they are covering.