



Alderton Junior School Play Policy

Commitment and Rationale

This policy sets out the school's commitment to ensuring that quality environments for play and informal recreation are available to all children and that the school is committed to providing the strategic and operational leadership needed to create and maintain quality play provision.

Our school believes that all children need opportunities to play that allow them to explore, manipulate, experience and affect their environment. The school acknowledges and recognises the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, especially Article 31, (*The right to play, recreation and leisure*) and supports the child's right to play. We believe play provision should be welcoming and accessible to every child, irrespective of gender, economic or social circumstances, ethnic or cultural background or origin; or individual abilities.

The OPAL programme rationale is that “... *better, more active and creative play times 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.*”

We believe that play has a vital role to play in pupils' health, happiness and wellbeing. It creates pupils who are independent, confident, imaginative, adaptable, social and able to assess risks. These skills link closely with the Alderton Values of Perseverance, Aspiration, Creativity, independence, Engagement and Resilience.

Definition and value of play

Play is defined as any freely chosen, personally directed and intrinsically motivated activity that a child finds satisfying and creative. It may or may not involve equipment or other people. At Alderton Junior School, we believe:

- Play is essential for physical, emotional, social, spiritual and intellectual development.
- Play can be physical, imaginative, creative, co-operative and explorative.
- 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 with their peers, across age groups or alone.

- Play enables children to develop a balance between their right to act freely and their responsibilities to others.
- Play encourages self-confidence and the ability to make choices, co-operate and solve problems through being challenged and taking managed risks.

Aims

We recognise that play times are approximately 20% of the school day and so therefore this time needs to be coherent and planned for. In relation to play our school aims to:

- Ensure play settings provide a varied, challenging and stimulating environment which promote independence and teamwork
- Allow children to take acceptable 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.
- Build emotional and physical resilience.
- Develop the role of adults who plan for or provide for play within the school to gain a greater understanding of play, its principles and qualities through regular training.
- Consult children in decision making on the planning, design, creation and supervision of play opportunities.

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 (2012)

The school will use the Health and Safety Executive guidance document **'Children's Play and Leisure – Promoting a Balanced Approach' (September 2012) (Appendix 1)** 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.** <https://dera.ioe.ac.uk/8625/1/00942-2008DOM-EN.pdf>

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'*.

Risk and challenge is not limited to physical risk- it also includes the uncertainty involved in making new friends and the building emotional resilience through trying out new experiences with the possibility of failure.

In addition to standard written risk-benefit assessments, we will practice dynamic risk management in order to respond to the fluid nature of risk and challenge in the play environment. **(Appendix 2)**. The school will also manage risk by building children's skills in identifying and managing appropriate risks themselves.

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, 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.

The adults' role in play

As a staff, we are fully committed to working with children to provide the play experiences that they want and need at Alderton Junior School. We will ensure there is a designated member of SLT staff responsible for play as a curricular play lead.

The adults role in play will be governed by the Playwork Principles which state:

- The prime focus and essence of playwork is to support and facilitate the play process which will be informed by in school training.
- The role of the playworker is to recognise their own impact on the play space and to support all children in the creation of a space in which they can play.

<https://www.playscotland.org/play/playful-learning/information-on-playwork/>

- Adults will try to facilitate an environment that nurtures children's self directed play and maximises opportunities for a wide range of play experiences.
- Adults will refer to the Playwork principles when appropriate interventions are needed
- Adults can support access to new materials and tools and act as a stimulus for children to play and learn
- Adults are available to participate in play if invited.

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.

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 continually improve the quality and diversity of our school's grounds to enhance play. We will use the document 'Best Play' to guide us on what a quality play environment should contain.

<http://www.playengland.org.uk/resource/best-play/>

Links to other policies

Relationships and Behaviour policy

Equalities objectives and policy

Appendices

1. HSE Guide '*Children's Play and Leisure – Promoting a Balanced Approach*' (September 2012)
2. Dynamic Risk Assessment template/Example
3. Playwork Principles