



Peasedown St John

Primary School

Play Policy

This policy will be reviewed annually and revised where necessary by the Play Co-ordinator.

Signed: R.Noall

Headteacher

Date: 10.10.24

This policy has been endorsed by the Board of Governors on 10th October 2024

Signed: H.Soper

Governor

Date: 10.10.24

Date of review: October 2025

The school ensures it refers to the play policy in all decisions, which affect children's play, enabling everyone to experience play in a safe, fun and engaging environment.

Commitment

Article 31 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child states that 'A child has the right 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.'

Participating in play is an essential part of every child's life, leading to a happy and healthy childhood. At PSJ, we aim to consistently provide high quality, sustainable, and inclusive play opportunities for every pupil. We strive to achieve this by offering carefully crafted outdoor spaces, equipment and toys that offer an enriching choice of accessible play experiences for every child, irrespective of gender, sexual orientation, economic or social circumstances, ethnic or cultural background or origin, or individual abilities.

At Peasedown, we are committed to using our school vision and this play policy to guide us when providing purposeful play opportunities for all. We believe that play is imperative when thinking about wellbeing, health and happiness. Fundamentally, play creates children who are independent, collaborative and sociable, confident, imaginative, adaptable and children who are able to assess the risks for themselves.

Many of the skills we hope our children will develop through play coincide with the visions and values at PSJ Primary. We CARE. We want our children to be curious, aspirational and resilient. We also want them to embody equality and empathy and think carefully about everyone they meet, making them global citizens. Through play, we can help develop these life skills.

Rationale

Play is recognised for the important role it has in contributing to education and life-long learners - a finding confirmed by many studies of early childhood development. It enables children to enhance skills such as problem solving and also language development and the understanding of social cues.

During a child's time at primary school, they can spend up to 20% or 1.4 years of their time participating in play either independently or with their peers. We believe that this time needs to be both purposeful and planned for so that children can maximise this time. Over time, there has been a shift in society and aspects such as heavier traffic, busier lifestyles, reduced play areas and awareness of risk have led to perceived 'play deprivation' in many students. Hence, why we believe the opportunity to play in school is even more vital.

With an improved play provision, there is a reduction in behavioural issues, an increased positive attitude towards education and an improvement in skill development and learning. As the quality of play increases, classroom learning is enhanced: children come into class happy and ready to learn.

At the start of the year (September 2021), observations of lunchtimes took place alongside children questionnaires and it was identified that there was a lack of provision on the playground and children wanted more to do and more opportunities to play with their friends, leading to the decision on how we play to change.

Definition and value of play

Whitebread, 2012 stated that *'play in all its richest variety is one of the highest achievements of the human species, alongside language, culture and technology.'* Thus, why we feel that play is an integral part of day-to-day life at Peasedown St John

Play is defined as any freely chosen activity that a child finds satisfying and creative. It may or may not involve others or equipment. At PSJ, we believe that play has many benefits and think that:

- Play enables children to be curious, creating a co-operative
- Play can be sociable
- Play can be solitary
- Play improves happiness and, through happiness, learning improves
- Play is agreed by the whole group who are participating
- Play is something you choose to do and can be fun
- Play enables children to process their experiences of the world
- Play is led by the children and adults must be responsive to invitations and requests
- Play is a right and children can choose what they play with (as long as it is safe) regardless of age, gender, social and cultural background
- Play should constantly be assessed for risks and benefits, by adults and children
- Play develops children's ability to identify risks

Moyle (1989) demonstrated that for every aspect of children's development, there is a form of play behind it. Therefore, play combined supports all aspects of physical, intellectual and social-emotional growth.

- Physical (direct impact on physical development, coordination and fitness)

- Intellectual (cognitive development and imagination)
- Educational (the knowledge and understanding of academic outcomes)
- Social (the development of values, beliefs and self-perception and the parallel communication skills, leadership and teamwork it enhances)

Therefore, we believe that a balance of experience of each of these types of play is essential in bringing key developmental and learning benefits to all children.

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 teamwork within children
- To build emotional and physical resilience
- To ensure 20 percent of school time is designated playtime (A child in Year 6 will have spent 1.2-1.4 years in play)
- To aim for children to have at least 45 minutes of play each day through break time and lunchtime

Rights and responsibilities in the role of children in play

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.

The children will have access to their own rules which link to the play policy created through school council meetings (Appendix 1) Within this document, it will include the rights and responsibilities of the children to

- Have ownership of their play and outdoor learning experiences
- Respect and look after each other, adults, their environment, equipment and toys
- Ensure playtimes are fun for all
- Be aware of the consequences and sanctions surrounding purposely dangerous or behaviour that put themselves and others at risk

The children's rules will be shared and explained to all children regularly as a part of ongoing OPAL assemblies, class discussions and within school council meetings.

Benefits and Risks

Risk and managing risk is an important part of everyday life. There are many social, physical and mental benefits to children when there is a vast array of managed risks. These include: children being able to understand their comfort zone and how to stretch this, how to understand the world around them, build resilience and how to manage a risk by themselves - promoting independence.

Through managing these, children demonstrate a higher level of resilience, they are more adaptable and are keen to try new experiences and challenges. It is pivotal that children are provided with opportunities to do this and also to experience success and failure. Physical risk is not the only thing that children should be exposed to; they should also have the uncertainties which are involved in making friends, playing with children from different backgrounds, building emotional resilience, and also working through issues using restorative justice techniques.

Providing the children with these risks in a managed way is important and we are committed to doing this.

'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 up in cotton wool.'

Managing the risk in Play Provision: An Implementation Guide (2012)

To ensure we are managing risk effectively, we will use (Appendix 2) **Health and Safety Executive Guidance Document 'Children's Play and Leisure - promoting the balanced**

approach' (September 2012) as the principal value statement when informing our approach to managing risk and making decisions relating to play.

The Health and Safety Executive offer guidance on the provision of play in educational settings and state that:

'HSE fully supports the provision of play for all children in a variety of environments. HSE understands and accepts that this means children will often be exposed to play environments which, whilst well managed, carry a degree of risk and sometimes potential dangers'. (HSE, 2013)

As providers of play, we believe that our role is to provide and facilitate as many enriching opportunities for play as possible. Children need to learn to manage risk for themselves in an environment that is as safe as it needs to be, not devoid of risk completely. When carrying out risk assessments, the benefit of the play opportunities should be balanced with any risks. If the benefits of play outweigh the risks, we will aim to facilitate and encourage the children to participate in play. We will adopt and adhere to a risk-benefit approach and use dynamic risk assessments (Appendix 3) to help us protect and provide for all children's needs.

Supervisions

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. However, we ensure that the playground is well staffed throughout break and lunch times. 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 beneficial to develop and enhance children's play.

Supervision, at PSJ, will be remote and ranging models so that children can quickly find an adult, and adults can patrol large areas of the site to gain an awareness of the kinds of play and levels of risk likely to be emerging. Should we feel a different model is appropriate we will then update the policy. As well as having a well-staffed playground, we have first aiders on the playground and back up contactable through walkie talkie. We encourage children to seek these staff members out if they need support.

The adults role in play

As an entire staff, we are passionate to help enrich children's play. We are fully committed to provide the play experience that they want and need in their school. We will have a continuing

dialogue with children about the play provision we offer through school council meetings, regular play assemblies and pupil conferencing.

We aspire to help children maximise the benefits that they can gain from play by the provision provided by trained staff who are informed by and work in accordance with the Playwork Principles (Appendix 3). Staff will use and refer to these, when appropriate, and assess if interventions are needed. At PSJ, we strive to facilitate an environment that nurtures, encourages children to assess risks and enhances children's self-directed play. The school is working with OPAL (<https://outdoorplayandlearning.org.uk/>) to help guide a strategic approach to developing play at PSJ.

Alongside this, the team at Peasedown St John (Appendix 4) will work in collaboration with parents, teachers, learning support assistants and play rangers and all other staff as well as children to implement the changes 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.

Play Rangers ensure that the play space is inclusive - supporting all children to make the most of the opportunities available in their own way.

Equality and Diversity

One of our key drivers at Peasedown St John is equality. We are an inclusive school which offers everyone equal opportunities. Through providing a rich play offer, which meets every child's needs, we will ensure that all children regardless of their age, gender, race, disability or other special needs can develop and thrive. Through play, we aspire for all to build strong relationships and enjoy every aspect of school.

Environment

A positive environment, where children are encouraged to play, is imperative to our play times and lunchtimes.

At Peasedown St John, we will:

- Use the outdoor space as a natural resource for learning and playing, encouraging the children to value natural or found objects for play
- Include the children when planning for playing and learning opportunities
- Ensure that the outdoor area offers all children the opportunity to investigate, take risks and explore, using their imagination and creativity

- Expect the children to respect the outdoors and care for all living things
- Give children opportunities to manage space and use the freedom provided by the outdoors
- Enrich the quality of the environment to maximise the potential for a variety of play types and increase the value of play at PSJ
- Ensure the playground is an integral part of school life where all children from Nursery to Year 6 can play safely and happily
- Teach the children their responsibilities with regarding to maintaining the quality of their outdoor space, equipment available and ensure they are active participants when doing this
- Promote children's pride for the outdoor space that belongs to them

Appendices

Appendix 1 - Children's Play Policy



The PSJ Children's Play Policy

We have the right to play but the duty to ensure we all have fun.

We have the right to choose to play individually or as a group but the responsibility to not leave anyone out or force them to do something they don't want to.

We have the right to experience different types of play using toys and equipment and the responsibility to look after what we have.

We have the right to make our own decisions but the responsibility to not let our choices affect others negatively.

We have the responsibility to respect everyone.

Opal

The Peasedown ST JOHN primary school

Appendix 2 - Children's Play and Leisure - Promoting a balanced approach

CHILDREN'S PLAY AND LEISURE – PROMOTING A BALANCED APPROACH

1. Health and safety laws and regulations are sometimes presented as a reason why certain play and leisure activities undertaken by children and young people should be discouraged. The reasons for this misunderstanding are many and varied. They include fears of litigation or criminal prosecution because even the most trivial risk has not been removed. There can be frustration with the amounts of paperwork involved, and misunderstanding about what needs to be done to control significant risks.
2. The purpose of this statement is to give clear messages which tackle these misunderstandings. In this statement, HSE makes clear that, as a regulator, it recognises the benefits of allowing children and young people of all ages and abilities to have challenging play opportunities.
3. HSE fully supports the provision of play for all children in a variety of environments. HSE understands and accepts that this means children will often be exposed to play environments which, whilst well-managed, carry a degree of risk and sometimes potential danger.
4. HSE wants to make sure that mistaken health and safety concerns do not create sterile play environments that lack challenge and so prevent children from expanding their learning and stretching their abilities.
5. This statement provides all those with a stake in encouraging children to play with a clear picture of HSE's perspective on these issues. HSE wants to encourage a focus on the sensible and proportionate control of real risks and not on unnecessary paperwork. HSE's primary interest is in real risks arising from serious breaches of the law and our investigations are targeted at these issues.

Recognising the benefits of play

Key message: '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'.

6. HSE fully recognises that play brings the world to life for children. It provides for an exploration and understanding of their abilities; helps them to learn and develop; and exposes them to the realities of the world in which they will live, which is a world not free from risk but rather one where risk is ever present. The opportunity for play develops a child's risk awareness and prepares them for their future lives.
7. Striking the right balance between protecting children from the most serious risks and allowing them to reap the benefits of play is not always easy. It is not about eliminating risk. Nor is it

1. The Courts have made clear that when health and safety law refers to 'risks', it is not contemplating risks that are trivial or fanciful. It is not the purpose to impose burdens on employers that are wholly unreasonable (*R v Chagot* (2009) 2. All ER 660 [27]) 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. In making these judgements, industry standards such as EN 1176 offer benchmarks that can help.

8. Striking the right balance does mean:

- Weighing up risks and benefits when designing and providing play opportunities and activities
- Focussing on and controlling the most serious risks, and those that are not beneficial to the play activity or foreseeable by the user
- Recognising that the introduction of risk might form part of play opportunities and activity
- Understanding that the purpose of risk control is not the elimination of all risk, and so accepting that the possibility of even serious or life-threatening injuries cannot be eliminated, though it should be managed
- Ensuring that the benefits of play are experienced to the full

9. Striking the right balance does not mean:

- All risks must be eliminated or continually reduced
- Every aspect of play provision must be set out in copious paperwork as part of a misguided security blanket
- Detailed assessments aimed at high-risk play activities are used for low-risk activities
- Ignoring risks that are not beneficial or integral to the play activity, such as those introduced through poor maintenance of equipment
- Mistakes and accidents will not happen

What parents and society should expect from play providers

Key message: 'Those providing play opportunities should focus on controlling the real risks, while securing or increasing the benefits – not on the paperwork'.

10. Play providers should use their own judgement and expertise as well as, where appropriate, the judgement of others, to ensure that the assessments and controls proposed are proportionate to the risks involved.

11. They should communicate what these controls are, why they are necessary and so ensure everyone focuses on the important risks.

12. It is important that providers' arrangements ensure that:

- The beneficial aspects of play - and the exposure of children to a level of risk and challenge - are not unnecessarily reduced
- Assessment and judgement focuses on the real risks, not the trivial and fanciful
- Controls are proportionate and so reflect the level of risk

Play providers include those managing or providing play facilities or activities in parks, green spaces, adventure playgrounds, holiday playschemes, schools, youth clubs, family entertainment centres and childcare provision.

13. To help with controlling risks sensibly and proportionately, the play sector has produced the publication *Managing Risk in Play Provision: Implementation Guide* which provides guidance on managing the risks in play. The approach in this guidance is that risks and benefits are considered alongside each other in a risk-benefit assessment. This includes an assessment of the risks which, while taking into account the benefits of the activity, ensures that any precautions are practicable and proportionate and reflect the level of risk. HSE supports this guidance, as a sensible approach to risk management.

If things go wrong

Key message: 'Accidents and mistakes happen during play – but fear of litigation and prosecution has been blown out of proportion.'

14. Play providers are expected to deal with risk responsibly, sensibly and proportionately. In practice, serious accidents of any kind are very unlikely. On the rare occasions when things go wrong, it is important to know how to respond to the incident properly and to conduct a balanced, transparent review.

15. In the case of the most serious failures of duty, prosecution rightly remains a possibility, and cannot be entirely ruled out. However, this possibility does not mean that play providers should eliminate even the most trivial of risks. Provided sensible and proportionate steps have been taken, it is highly unlikely there would be any breach of health and safety law involved, or that it would be in the public interest to bring a prosecution.

September 2012

Appendix 3 - Dynamic Risk Assessment

<u>Date</u>	<u>Risk assessed by</u>	Description of Activity, Principle or Object, who might be at risk and what kind of harm. (bullet point)	Benefit or Utility Or Related Policy (circle)	Description of risk management and maintenance agreed (bullet point)	Nominated person (zone leader)	Action Date	<u>Shared with Play leader (Y/N)</u>
			Play policy Behaviour policy				
			Play policy Behaviour policy				

Appendix 4 - Playwork Principles

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. That is, 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 ADULT 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.

Structure of adults roles in practice

OPAL Team

This team works directly with OPAL to ensure policy is in place and develop play and outdoor learning at PSJ. It consists of:

The Head Teacher

Play Co-ordinator

Play Leader

Caretaker

Pupil Voice Member

Parent Representative/Associate Governor

Peasedown Play Team

All adults in the school are part of the play team and have the responsibility to follow this policy. When on the playground, at play times, staff should act as play rangers.

At lunchtimes, the following structure exists:

Play co-ordinator

(Leads and manages strategy)

Play Leader

(Leads and manages playtime)

Play Rangers

(Supports children's play as described in role of the staff)