



OPAL Play Policy

This policy should be read alongside our Mental Health and Wellbeing and health and Safety Policy

This policy was last revised and adopted by the Governing Board in: June 2024

After each revision the policy is circulated to all Governors, school staff and displayed in the staff room and on the school website.

The policy is to be reviewed by the Governing Board in: 2026

School Mission Statement

Jarrow Cross Church of England Primary School provides a caring, Christian environment where EVERYONE is welcome and given the opportunity to develop their full potential

Introduction

At Jarrow Cross Church of England Primary School, we understand the curriculum and the whole school day to be all of the learning and other experiences that we plan for our pupils. We aim to make this broad, balanced, inclusive and progressive which will allow our pupils to achieve their full potential and prepare them for life after the primary school.

1. Commitment

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.

2. Rationale

In our school our Christian vision shapes all we do, it builds upon the biblical teaching 1 Thessalonians 5.11 "Encourage one another and build each other up" as, instead of being disappointed or giving up when things get tough, we should give each other the motivation and encouragement to remind each other that a better day lies ahead.

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.

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."*

3. Definition and value of play

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.

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

4. Aims

In relation to play our school aims to:

- Ensure play settings provide a varied, challenging and stimulating environment.
- Allow children to take 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.
- Provide a range of environments that will encourage children to explore and play imaginatively.
- Provide a range of environments that 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.

5. 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 to take these rights seriously and listen to children's views on their play. This links to our Mission Statement which states:

Jarrow Cross Church of England Primary School provides a caring Christian environment where EVERYONE is welcome and given the opportunity to develop their full potential.

this statement represents what we want our children to experience in every aspect of their life at Jarrow Cross

This Mission Statement is underpinned by our school values of Trust, Honesty, Friendship and Forgiveness. Our values were chosen by the children of Jarrow Cross.

Through our values we remember how Moses put his trust in God during times of hardship,

Exodus 3:13 "Behold, I am going to the sons of Israel, and I will say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you.'

how Jesus taught his followers to be honest in their speech and to keep their promises,

1 John 5:20 And we know that the Son of God has come, and has given us understanding so that we may know Him who is true;

the friendship between David and Jonathan which was severely tested ,

1 Samuel 42 Jonathan said to David, "Go in peace, for we have sworn friendship with each other in the name of the Lord"

and how Joseph forgave his brothers and the many stories such as The Prodigal Son in which Jesus taught us to forgive one another.

5 Luke 11:32 But we had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found."

6. 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 (Play Safety Forum, 2012)

Jarrow Cross C of E Primary 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. 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).

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'*.

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. This Links to our school vision "Encourage one another and build each other up" and aims to make sure school life is, balanced, inclusive and progressive allowing our pupils to achieve their full potential and prepare them for life after the primary school.

See Appendix 1 for the full HSE Managing Risk Statement

7. 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, 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.

At Jarrow Cross we have six lunchtime supervisors and two teaching assistants who will supervise the lunchtime period. Member of SLT will also supervise throughout lunchtime.

8. The adult's role in play

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. 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.

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.

See Appendix 2 for Playwork Principles

9. 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. This links directly with our school's Equal Opportunities Policy (including gender and race equality).

10. 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. www.freeplaynetwork.org.uk/pubs/bestplay.pdf

Presented and approved by Governors - June 2024