

HIGH LITTLETON CHURCH OF ENGLAND PRIMARY SCHOOL



PLAY POLICY

1. 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.'

At High Littleton Church of England Primary School, we recognise that play is an essential part of a happy and healthy childhood. We provide consistently high quality, sustainable play opportunities for all children. These inclusive opportunities in play are achieved by offering carefully considered outdoor spaces, equipment and toys that offer a rich choice of accessible play experiences for every child.

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 the whole school day.

2. Rationale

Children spend up to 20% 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 awareness of risk have led to 'play deprivation' for many of today's children. 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 there are fewer behaviour problems, a more positive attitude to school and improved skills development and learning. As the children improve their quality of play and have more enriching play times, there are fewer accidents and classroom learning is enhanced as the children come in from play happy and ready to learn.

3. What is Play?

The Government's Play Strategy defines play as 'encompassing children's behaviour which is freely chosen, personally directed and intrinsically motivated. It is performed for no external goal or reward, and is a fundamental and integral part of healthy development – not only for individual children but also for the society in which they live'.

This activity meets the four components of a child's development:

Physical (direct impact on physical development, co-ordination and fitness);

Intellectual (cognitive development, imagination);

Educational (the knowledge and understanding of academic outcomes); and

Social (the development of values, beliefs and self-perception and the parallel communication skills, leadership and teamwork this enhances).

4. Risk and Benefit

At High Littleton Church of England Primary School, we firmly believe that children should be provided with opportunities to challenge themselves and also to experience successes and failures. Risk and challenge is not limited to physical risk – it includes 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.

We are committed to providing these experiences for our children in a managed way. The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) 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)

We will use the Health and Safety Executive’s guidance on Managing Risk in Play and Leisure (www.hse.gov.uk) (**Appendix 1**) as its principle guiding documents in making decisions relating to risk and play. We have adopted a risk-benefit approach and use dynamic risk assessments (**Appendix 2**) to manage our duty of care to protect and provide for children's needs.

5. The role of adults during play

We are fully committed to working with children to provide the play experiences that they want and need in their school. We will have a continuing dialogue with children about the play provision in the playground which will include regular play assemblies, School Council involvement, surveys and other pupil voice outlets.

Adult’s role will also be to facilitate play and encourage children to assess the risks and benefits of activities within the play setting. The school is working with OPAL to help guide a strategic approach to developing play at school. In addition to this the OPAL Play Team will work in collaboration with parents, teachers, teaching assistants, SMSAs and all other staff as well as the children to implement the changes highlighted in this policy. Teaching assistants and SMSAs will take on the role of the Play Team. 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. The Play Team ensure that the play space is inclusive – supporting all children to make the most of the opportunities available in their own way.

6. Supervision

At High Littleton Church of England Primary School, our expectation is that we have two supervision styles: **remote** and **ranging**.

Remote: This is where the member of staff is located in a relatively static location some distance from the activity. This style is used to respond rapidly to an accident or serious behaviour incident.

Ranging: This is where the member of staff moves around the play area. On our site, our staff have zones so that they know which parts of the site they are covering and that they can modify their attention based on the kinds of play and their judgement about areas of highest risk.

7. The role of children in play

The children will all have access to their own version of the play policy. (**Appendix 3**) In it will also include the rights and responsibilities of the children to:

- Have ownership of their play and outdoor learning experiences
- Respect and look after each other their environment, equipment and toys.
- To be aware of sanctions surrounding purposely dangerous or unsafe behaviour
- Ensure that playtimes are fun for everybody

This children's policy will be shared and explained to all children regularly as part of on-going assemblies, discussions and dialogue in class and with School Council.

8. Monitoring and review

This policy will be reviewed by the Local Governing Body on an annual basis. The OPAL Team will take responsibility for implementing the Play Action Plan.

Gareth Griffith

September 2024

To be reviewed: September 2025

Appendix 1

HEALTH AND SAFETY EXECUTIVE 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 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 bench marks 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

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 2022

HIGH LITTLETON CHURCH OF ENGLAND PRIMARY SCHOOL CHILDREN'S PLAY POLICY

We have the right to have fun at playtimes.

It is our responsibility to make sure that everyone has fun and our play does not stop this.

We have the right to make our own decisions about our play and choose what we do.

It is our responsibility to make sure our decisions don't affect others in a negative way.

We have the right to choose who we play with.

It is our responsibility that no one is left out of play or forced to do something they don't want to.

We have the right play with lots of different toys and have a well looked after environment.

We have the responsibility to take pride in, respect and look after our environment and toys.

We have the right to explore be creative and take thoughtful risks.

It is our responsibility to think about what we are doing and talk to a play maker about the risks we are taking if they ask us too.