

# Monksmoor Park CE Primary School

## OPAL Play Policy

**Date ratified by Governors:**  
29/06/2022

**Dates reviewed by Governors:**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

**Note:** This document takes account of the most up to date central government information and guidance, at the time of writing (see footer). It is subject to change as guided by government policy.

## Policies at Monksmoor Park CE Primary School



Policies play an important part of any school and should not only set out procedural steps, but also embody the vision and values of the school. As a Church of England School, our values exemplify Christian values and all our policies express the same regard.

The Governing Body takes great care to ensure all decisions they make are in line with our values and their choice of wording in all HR and Finance documentation, although adopted from NCC, also illustrates this.



*'For I know the plans I have for you...plans to give you hope and a future.'*

*Jeremiah 29:11*

## Acceptance

*"Let us make every effort to do what leads to peace and to the strengthening of one another" (Romans 14:19)*

- ☐ We appreciate that each one of us is a unique human being created by God. In response, we are always accepting of others and ourselves, and seek to celebrate our diversity.

## Friendship

*"I speak to you as my friends" (John 15:15)*

- ☐ We recognise that Jesus came in to the world so that everyone could experience the 'forever friendship' that God offers. In response, we always treat others, as we would like to be treated ourselves.

## Hope

*"Those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength" (Isaiah 40:31)*

- ☐ We know that Christian hope is rooted in the love and faithfulness of God, who is a 'strong rock' and one whose promises can be trusted. In response, we see learning as an open-ended and hopeful activity involving the mind, body and soul for pupils and staff.

## Joy

*"The Lord has done great things for us and we are filled with joy" (Psalm 126:3)*

- ☐ We understand that joy comes from knowing God through Jesus Christ in the power of the Spirit. In response, we celebrate everything that is good about our school and wider community, and seek to be a source of joy to others.

## Respect

*"Show proper respect to everyone" (1 Peter 2:17)*

- ☐ We value the beautiful world that God has created for us to enjoy with others. In response, we seek to live with respect for the environment and each other, especially those who care for us at home, at school and in the wider community.

## Wellbeing

*"I have come in order that you might have life—life in all its fullness" (John 10:10)*

- ☐ We know that God wants us to flourish as human beings and to be the best that we can be. In response, we value and nurture all that leads to the creation of a sense of wellbeing in our lives as individuals and a community.

## **Aims**

At Monksmoor Park Church of England Primary School we aim to create a welcoming, caring environment where relationships are based on our values. The opportunity to build good relationships through play at break times and lunchtimes is fundamental to each child's happiness, well-being and successful learning, particularly post Pandemic. All staff are committed to maintaining high expectations of play as an essential contribution to the educational offer at Monksmoor Park. Play is an essential part of a happy and healthy childhood.

As a school, we endeavour to 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 draw on 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.

### **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**

At Monksmoor Park Church of England Primary School we believe that all children need opportunities to play that allow them to explore, manipulate, experience and affect their environment. The school acknowledges the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, especially Article 31, and supports the child's right to play. 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.*"

Here at Monksmoor Park Church of England Primary School our Vision shapes all we do and we also believe that play has an essential role in creating a happy and healthy childhood. Supporting our Vision of 'Nurturing all to Flourish and Aspire', we aim to 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.

Our values underpin all we do and we believe play has a vital role in promoting these whilst fostering children's health, happiness and wellbeing. It creates children who are independent, confident, imaginative, adaptable, social and able to assess risks. For example children can demonstrate Respect by respecting the boundaries that are put in place and learning to respect the equipment they children have opportunities to use.

### 3. Definition and value of play

Play is defined as any freely chosen activity that a child finds satisfying and creative. 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, 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 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 which 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 take these rights seriously and listen to children's views on their play.

### 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 (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. In doing so, the school will adopt a risk-benefit approach as detailed in *'Managing Risk in Play Provision': An Implementation Guide*. Many research studies have found that the social, physical and mental benefits to children of managed risks are vast. Children become more resilient, adaptable and are keen to try new experiences. 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. 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.

<https://www.hse.gov.uk/entertainment/childs-play-statement.htm>

Risk-taking is an essential feature of play provision, and of all environments in which children legitimately spend time at play. In order for children to achieve they need to experience risk and challenge to develop the resilience and self-motivation needed to overcome setbacks and progress.

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'*.

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. Our role as play providers is to facilitate the maximum amount of enriching opportunities for children to encounter. They need to learn to manage risk for themselves in an environment that is as safe as it needs to be, rather than completely devoid of risk. The benefit to children of challenging play opportunities should be balanced with any potential risk when carrying out risk assessments. We will adopt a risk-benefit approach and use dynamic risk assessments as above (Appendix 2) to manage our duty of care to protect and provide for children's needs.

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)

Monksmoor Park School will use the Health and Safety Executive's guidance on Managing Risk in Play and Leisure (Appendix 1) as its principle guiding documents in making decisions relating to risk and play.

## 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 recognizes OPAL's three models of supervision: Direct, Remote and Ranging. However within school only the Direct where appropriate and Ranging models will be used. Except for new children in Reception and Nursery, the school does not believe Direct supervision is possible or beneficial. Supervision will take the Ranging model, 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.

This will be part of the school's dynamic risk assessment benefits as part of this we have taken on the use of OPAL's Rapid Response to managing risk. OPAL have developed the five-part R.A.P.I.D. Response to managing risk in your school approach which should be followed alongside the guidance on managing loose parts set out in Doc 3.2 OPAL Loose Part Guidance. See Appendix 3

## **8. Risk-Benefit Assessment**

This means you should look at your usual environment and practices at least annually, and also when significant changes take place, and keep a written record of the areas in the table below using the risk-benefit template provided. Your assessments should cover hazards deemed to have the potential for unacceptable risk of death or serious injury.

Monksmoor Park has developed its own Risk Benefit assessment and this has been shared with staff and parents, and is available on the school's website.

## **9. Assemblies**

OPAL Play Assemblies are as described in guidance Doc 3.10, Appendix 4. These should be held regularly with children to discuss, inform and negotiate risks that arise during play. A brief written log must be kept noting risks discussed and how they will be managed. Regular assemblies will be delivered when new equipment is introduced into the school environment and to remind the children and staff of our values which relate to play and celebrate play successes and examples.

## **10. Policy**

A play policy approved by the governing body and leadership is essential and should form the basis for all staff understanding and decision making about managing risk in play. This should include formal adoption of the Health and Safety Executive's guidance.

## **11. Inspection**

Technical reports of engineered fixed play equipment. Fixed equipment should have an annual inspection by a certified inspector. Ongoing visual inspections should be carried out by a member of staff and a record kept of any inspections or equipment that is found to be damaged and needs fixing.

## **12. Dynamic Risk Management**

Staff should be aware of the changing nature of the play taking place. They should support children to assess and manage risk as much as possible for themselves, but they should also be vigilant and take action if they think that risk of serious harm is becoming unacceptably likely. Actions taken by staff when required should balance the reduction of likelihood or severity of harm whilst preserving as much of the benefit of the play as possible and empowering the children to manage future risk as much as possible.

Dynamic risk management in playwork requires that staff maintain 'relaxed vigilance'. This means that the quality of play will suffer if the adult's attitude is one of hovering, anxious over-attention. There should be an assumption that most play is not dangerous and that children can develop a high degree of competence, given practice, over time. However, staff should also be vigilant, they should be aware of the kinds of play and resources being used in their patch, who is playing and what the likely risks are.



### **13.Intervention**

If staff think that serious harm (meaning death, life-long debilitating injury or hospitalisation), is imminent or probable they should intervene to either stop or manage the risk. If they think that serious harm is possible but not probable, they should remain vigilant. If serious harm is very unlikely then they should probably focus their attention elsewhere or act to further improve the quality of the play offer. Dynamic risk assessment has been introduced to all members of staff as part of a school, Inset Day and regular meetings held with play leaders and Supervisors around their use of dynamic risk assessments.

### **14.The adult's role in play**

The school will help children maximize 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 3 Playwork Principles.

### **13. 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, as recognised in our Equality and Diversity Policy.

### **14. 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. We will also continue to aid development of a love of outdoors a key foundation for caring for the environment and global responsibility.

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