



## POLICY DOCUMENT



**Title:** OPAL Play Policy

**Reference and Source Documents:**

- [play a report by the allparty parliamentary group on fit and healthy childhood corrected 1.pdf](#)
- [Supporting school improvement through play: An evaluation of South Gloucestershire's Outdoor Play and Learning Programme](#)
- [Outdoor Play and Learning \(OPAL\) in School Communities: Results from the Pilot Programming in Toronto – TransForm](#)
- Ball, D, Gill, T and Spiegel, B (2008) Managing risk in play provision: implementation guide. London: Play England.
- Bilton, H (ed.) (2005) Learning outdoors. Improving the quality of young children's play outdoors.
- Play England (2009) Charter for children's play. London: Play England.
- Tovey, H (2007) Playing outdoors: spaces and places, risk and challenge. Maidenhead: Open University Press.
- White, J (2008) Playing and learning outdoors. Making provision for high quality experiences in the outdoor learning environment. London: Routledge

**The key purpose:**

To define our school rationale to play, to explain the benefits of play, the aims of OPAL play, the role of adults in play and to outline the benefits of risk in play.

**Lead Staff Responsibility:**

Sarah Cotton

**Governing Body Responsibility:**

Curriculum and Standards Team

**Reviewing Cycle and next date:**

Biannual, June 2027

**Approved by Leadership Team:**

09.06.2025

**Approved by Governing Body:**

16.06.2025

## **St. Barnabas CE Primary School & Green Lane Pre-School Vision**

### **Inspire, Nurture and Achieve**

We believe, as Jesus did that in our happy, purposeful and welcoming **Christian school** and pre-school **all** are **valued, encouraged** and **cared for**:

- **Inspire** each child to think and feel positively about themselves and others.
- **Nurture** each child so that they grow with others in a secure and happy environment; where they enjoy a wealth of opportunity and experience a love of learning.
- A place where **achievements** are celebrated and expectations are high for all.

This is underpinned through the understanding that in Jesus, **all** are welcome and unique and have a God given purpose and place in the world. Jesus inspires us that **all** people can flourish.

**Matthew 19 v14**

Jesus said, "Let the children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these."

***We aim to:***

***Inspire a positive approach to life and learning;***

***Value and nurture each child as an individual: developing resilience, independence, and an understanding of what they bring to the world;***

***Create a rich, stimulating environment where achievements are celebrated and team work and co-operation are expected;***

***Promote high expectations and self-confidence for each individual;***

***Ensure each child strives towards excellence supporting those who find learning difficult and challenging the most able children;***

***Develop and foster motivation for learning and enthusiasm for life;***

***Promote a sense of belonging and build outstanding relationships between school, home, church and the wider community.***

***Help every child understand their unique purpose and place in God's world.***

## 1. Commitment

St Barnabas CE Primary School undertakes to refer to this play policy in all decisions that affect children's play. St Barnabas CE Primary School is committed to providing the strategic and operational leadership needed to provide and maintain quality play provision for all our children.

## 2. Rationale

St Barnabas CE Primary 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.

St Barnabas CE Primary School believes that 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**

St Barnabas CE Primary 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. These aims align with the Christian vision and values which are promoted throughout the school.

At St Barnabas CE Primary School, we take pride in our ambition to:

- Create a happy, stimulating, caring learning environment where risk taking and challenge is encouraged
- Awaken and nurture a love of learning that will last a lifetime and provide everyone with the skills to pursue learning independently and collaboratively
- Enable everyone to reach the highest standard of which they are capable, academically and in other fields such as sport, arts and culture
- Encourage all learners to develop their own interests, passions, enthusiasms, creativity and individuality
- Help learners to understand and care about the world in which they live, and to believe in their ability and responsibility to change that world to make it better
- Empower learners to develop a strong sense of right and wrong, good and bad, equality and justice. Give them the inner strength to act according to these values
- Provide learners with the skills and understanding to live a healthy, successful life, physically, emotionally and spiritually
- Foster respect, tolerance and love for others, regardless of race, gender, religion or difference, within a framework of equality of opportunity and fairness
- Help learners to appreciate human achievements and aspirations and to believe in their own potential to attain great things
- Promote a feeling of pride and confidence in learners' identities, as individuals, as members of our academy, as part of the local community and as citizens of the world

## 5. Rights

St Barnabas CE Primary 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.

## 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)

St Barnabas CE Primary School 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, we 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, St Barnabas CE Primary 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.

## 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.

St Barnabas CE Primary 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, St Barnabas CE Primary School does not believe direct supervision is possible or beneficial. The 'Play Team' 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.

## 8. The adults' role in play

St Barnabas CE Primary 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 to create an environment that nurtures children's self-directed play.

The Play Teams' 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 can enrich 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. The Play Team 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.

## **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.

## **10. Environment**

St Barnabas CE Primary School believes 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.

## **11. Review**

This policy will be subject to the normal cycle of policy review and will be reviewed and ratified by the Governing Body every two years. This is delegated to the Curriculum and Standards Team.

Furthermore, there may be occasions where this policy is reviewed outside the normal review cycle, including but not limited to:

- a change in the national advice around play
- a change or review of any Health and Safety advice or legislation

### **Approval / review by Governing Body:**

**Headteacher signed:**

**Date: 10.06.25**

**Chair of Governors signed:**

**Date: 16.06.25**

**Date of next review: Summer Term 2027**