



# Lawn Primary and Nursery School

## Lawn Primary and Nursery School Play Policy

### **Policy Owner**

OPAL Lead, Headteacher

### **Policy History**

June 2026	Policy created

## 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

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.*”

At Lawn, we are creating **children to be proud of** through the exploratory and innovative play the children engage in. Through discovering new types of play, forging new friendships and problem-solving independently, all while playing, our children are thriving even when they are in unstructured time. The team-building, communication, construction, imagination and exploration involved in play times at Lawn intertwine with our four values of **excellence, resilience, confidence** and **respect**. Our children are showing us their very best, at all times of the school day.

In their play, our children encourage each other, build their resilience and empower one another to use their pupil voice.

## 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.

Our children arrive in the classroom better equipped to learn after engaging in innovative and fulfilling play times. If a child is feeling both inspired and challenged in their play, their curiosity is sparked and



they are more motivated to learn. Not only this, but they will feel more confident in leading their own learning too and they will foster a greater sense of independence.

We pride ourselves on our exceptional pastoral care here at Lawn Primary & Nursery and having a suitable environment at play times for children to both have a release and express themselves is paramount to this nurturing environment. We are therefore developing more respectful and mature members of the community. It is our hope that we will also have continuous involvement with the local wider community when it comes to our ongoing play projects.

#### 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.

To create children who continually demonstrate our core values of **excellence, resilience, confidence** and **respect**, it is vital we listen to their views and make sure they can identify their own rights, including the right to play. We encourage our children to use their voices and opinions in order to keep on developing and improving our play at Lawn. Pupil voice is vital to our 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)

**The 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, 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. Risk-benefit assessments will be continuously reviewed and updated to reflect every piece of equipment we have out at playtimes and all equipment will be safety-checked before being used. Our children will also be able to identify when equipment is unsafe or broken and they will be supported to dispose of this in a safe way.

**A copy of the full HSE Managing Risk Statement (Doc 4.6) can be found by [clicking this link](#).**

## **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.

All supervising adults outside during playtimes will wear hi-vis vests to distinguish them, enabling children to identify an adult immediately whenever they need. There will always be a minimum of 4 members of staff circulating the playground/field during lunchtimes, and members of the senior leadership team will regularly circulate too. We will always have a level of supervision that enables the children to engage in creative and risky play, but have support there when they need it.

## **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.

There will be regular training for all playworkers to ensure they are up to date with the latest policies, equipment and risk-benefit assessment.

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.

All of our staff believe in creating fun, memorable and adventurous playtimes. They will be on hand to help and advise, but also to join in and deepen children's play. This goes for any adult in the school.

## **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**

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](http://www.freeplaynetwork.org.uk/pubs/bestplay.pdf)

With the help of our school Green Team and School Councillors, we will make sure all decisions are made with the children in mind, and also that the best practice for our wonderful school environment is considered. This will include: looking after nature and our surroundings with regular litter picks, planting, weeding and creating zones in our play space to enable all children to make the most of their precious playtimes.

A rich play setting supports safeguarding, helps children develop confidence in team building and advocating for their own rights, increases children's social and emotional capabilities, but also helps them develop a love and enjoyment of the outdoors, which is a key foundation for caring for the environment.

