



REDLAND PRIMARY SCHOOL  
OPAL PLAY POLICY

Reviewed by	Christa O'Brien
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# Redland Primary School OPAL Play Policy

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## 1. Commitment

Our school undertakes to refer to this play policy in all decisions that affect children's play. We are committed to providing the strategic and operational leadership needed to provide and maintain quality play provision for all of our children.

## 2. Rationale

Redland 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."*

The OPAL rationale aligns with our school values and rules:

**Be Kind, Be Respectful, Be Responsible.**

## 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.

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## 4. Aims

In relation to play Redland 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.

## 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)

**Redland 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) - Appendix 1 and assess risk using the *Benefit-Risk Assessment Record Sheet – Appendix 2*.

Risk-taking is an essential feature of play provision and of all environments in which children legitimately spend time at play. We understand that risk is not limited to physical risk. It includes the uncertainties involved in making new friends and building emotional resilience through trying out new experiences with the possibility of failure. 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.

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### **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.

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

Redland school are fully committed to working with children to provide the play experiences that they want and need. We will have continued dialogue with the children through regular play assemblies, children's play suggestion box, pupil conferencing and adult participation in play.

As staff at Redland School, our main play objective is to create an environment that will stimulate children's play and maximise their opportunities for a wide range of play experiences. Any member of our team 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. Key members of the Redland Play Team meet regularly and communicate to review and reflect on the current play opportunities, and explore ways to extend this further. The school's governing body are involved in observations of play and regular updates on the school's play provision. The governing body and FORS (Friends of Redland School) are also asked to share any play opportunities which may become available within our local community.

### **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 aligns with our school's equality and diversity policy.

### **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.

### **11. Safeguarding**

Redland School understands the importance of play in supporting safeguarding. Effective play helps children develop confidence in team building and advocating for their own rights, increases children's social and emotional capabilities and helps them to develop a love and enjoyment of the outdoors. This is a key foundation for caring for our environment. Effective play allows children to assess and explore risks in a controlled environment which will support them when faced with assessing risks outside of school. Redland School is

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committed to developing confident and independent pupils who have the ability to assess and manage risk.

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix 1 – HSE Managing Risk Statement

[Children's play and leisure: promoting a balanced approach](#)

### Appendix 2 – Benefit and Risk Assessment Record Sheet

	Description of Activity, Principle or Object, who might be at risk and what kind of harm	Benefit or Utility or Related Policy	Description of risk management and maintenance agreed	Nominated person	Action date

### Appendix 3 – Play Team

Play Leader (Leads and manages strategy) – Christa O’Brien, Abigail Moore-Banks

Play Leader (Leads and manages play times) Co-ordinator – Maggie Mitchell

Year 6 children have the responsibility of being OPAL leaders (known as the OPAL Crew).