Greatstone Primary School

Play Policy

Policy Leads:	Fiona Roberts and Keren Davis
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To be read in conjunction with:	Behaviour Policy, Safeguarding Policy, Teaching & Learning Policy, Health and Safety Policy

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Our Aims:
At Greatstone Primary School we aim to create a welcoming, caring environment where relationships are based on the value of 'care' and aim to develop positive self-esteem in each child. The opportunity to build good relationship through play at break times and lunchtimes is fundamental to each child's happiness, wellbeing and successful learning. All staff are committed to maintaining high expectations of play as an essential contribution to the educational experience at Greatstone.

Greatstone School recognises that 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. At Greatstone 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.

1. Rationale
Our school believes 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."*

At Greatstone the opportunity to develop play opportunities also enables our children to live the school values in a number of ways at break time and lunchtimes.

Our Values:

CARE in order to develop different play opportunities with different people across the school and take care of the equipment that the children have the opportunity to use.

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DREAM to expand their creativity through imaginative play.

DARE to take reasonable risk in their play and to try out new things.

The way we conduct ourselves inside the classroom by demonstrating our school values and our school rules (**Ready, Respectful, Safe**) is replicated in the way we play together.

2. 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.

3. 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.

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- 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.

4. 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.

Alongside the rights of the children, we want all children to follow the school values and aspire to the school's vision where everyone is included and nurtured. It is our belief that every child has the right to be safe and happy in their play. We strive to empower each child and inspire them at this critical stage of their development. Children's achievements at break time and lunchtimes will be acknowledged and highlighted to show the value of good play.

5. 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)

Greatstone 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. (Appendix 1)*

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. 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.

6. 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, the school does not believe direct supervision is possible or beneficial. Supervision will take remote and ranging 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. To increase visibility and aid with easy identification, staff wear hi vis vests during playtimes. This helps other adults, as well as children, to be able to quickly find a Play Leader, when needed.

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 part set out in Doc 3.2 OPAL Loose Part Guidance.

1. Risk-Benefit Assessment We assess our usual environment and practices at least annually, and also when significant changes take place. The assessment covers hazards deemed to have the potential for unacceptable risk of death or serious injury.

2. Assemblies. Play Assemblies are held regularly with children to discuss, inform and negotiate risks that arise during play. Assemblies will be delivered when new equipment is introduced into the school environment and remind the children and staff of the Greatstone values which relate to play. A brief written log is kept noting risk discussed and how they will be managed.

3. Policy A play policy approved by the governing body and leadership is essential and will form the basis for all staff understanding and decision making about managing risk in play.

4. Inspection Fixed equipment should have an annual inspection by a certified inspector. Ongoing visual inspections will be carried out by a member of staff. A record is kept of any inspections or equipment that is found to be damaged and needs fixing.

5. Dynamic Risk Assessments 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 harm is becoming unacceptably likely. Actions taken by staff when required should balance the reduction of likelihood or severity or 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 assessment has been introduced to all members of staff as part of a school Inset training. There are regular meetings with staff about their use of dynamic risk assessments.

7. 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 (see Appendix 2). 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.

8. 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.

9. 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 'Design for Play' to guide us on what a quality play environment should contain. https://www.playengland.org.uk/design-for-play

Appendix 1 H&SE Managing Risk Statement

https://www.hse.gov.uk/entertainment/childs-play-statement.htm#:~:text=HSE%20fully%20endorses%20the%20principles,up%20the%20risks%20and%20benefits

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Children's play and leisure: promoting a balanced approach

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. Such decisions are often based on misunderstandings about what the law requires. The HSE has worked with the Play Safety Forum to produce a joint high-level statement that gives clear messages tackling these misunderstandings. HSE fully endorses the principles in this Statement.

This statement makes clear that:

- Play is important 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
- Those providing play opportunities should focus on controlling the real risks, while securing or increasing the benefits – not on the paperwork
- Accidents and mistakes happen during play – but fear of litigation and prosecution has been blown out of proportion

Children's Play and Leisure: promoting a balanced approach (PDF)

HSE — 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[1] 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.

Appendix 2 The Playwork Principles

The Playwork Principles

1

All children and young people need to play. The impulse to play is innate. Play is a biological, psychological and social necessity and is fundamental to the healthy development and well-being of individuals and communities.

2

Play is a process that is freely chosen, personally directed and intrinsically motivated. That is, children and young people determine and control the content and intent of their play, by following their own instincts, ideas and interests, in their own way for their own reasons.

3

The prime focus and essence of playwork is to support and facilitate the play process and this should inform the development of play policy, strategy, training and education.

4

For playworkers, the play process takes precedence and playworkers act as advocates for play when engaging with adult led agendas.

5

The role of the playworker is to support all children and young people in the creation of a space in which they can play.

6

The playworker's response to children and young people playing is based on a sound up to date knowledge of the play process, and reflective practice.

7

Playworkers recognise their own impact on the play space and also the impact of children and young people's play on the playworker.

8

Playworkers choose an intervention style that enables children and young people to extend their play. All playworker intervention must balance risk with the developmental benefit and well-being of children.

The Playwork Principles were developed by the Playwork Principles Scrutiny Group, Cardiff 2005.

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