



**1. Commitment**

Tadley Community Primary 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.”

Play is an important part of our school curriculum, and the OPAL program aligns with our school values of Pride, Kindness, Diversity and Community alongside our six learning behaviours.

**Pride** – We take pride in our play and creativity. We are proud of how we work together to build, explore, and experience our environment.

**Kindness** – We are kind to one another in our play, including everyone and sharing our space and playthings.

**Diversity** – We include and welcome everyone in our play.

**Community** – We build our school community through our play. Playing with others across our school, making new friendships and playing together.



### 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.

### 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.

All children and young people have the right to play and need to play; children should be free to choose what they do – lively or relaxed, noisy or quiet – with the chance to stretch and challenge themselves, take risks and enjoy freedom.

## 6. Benefit and risk

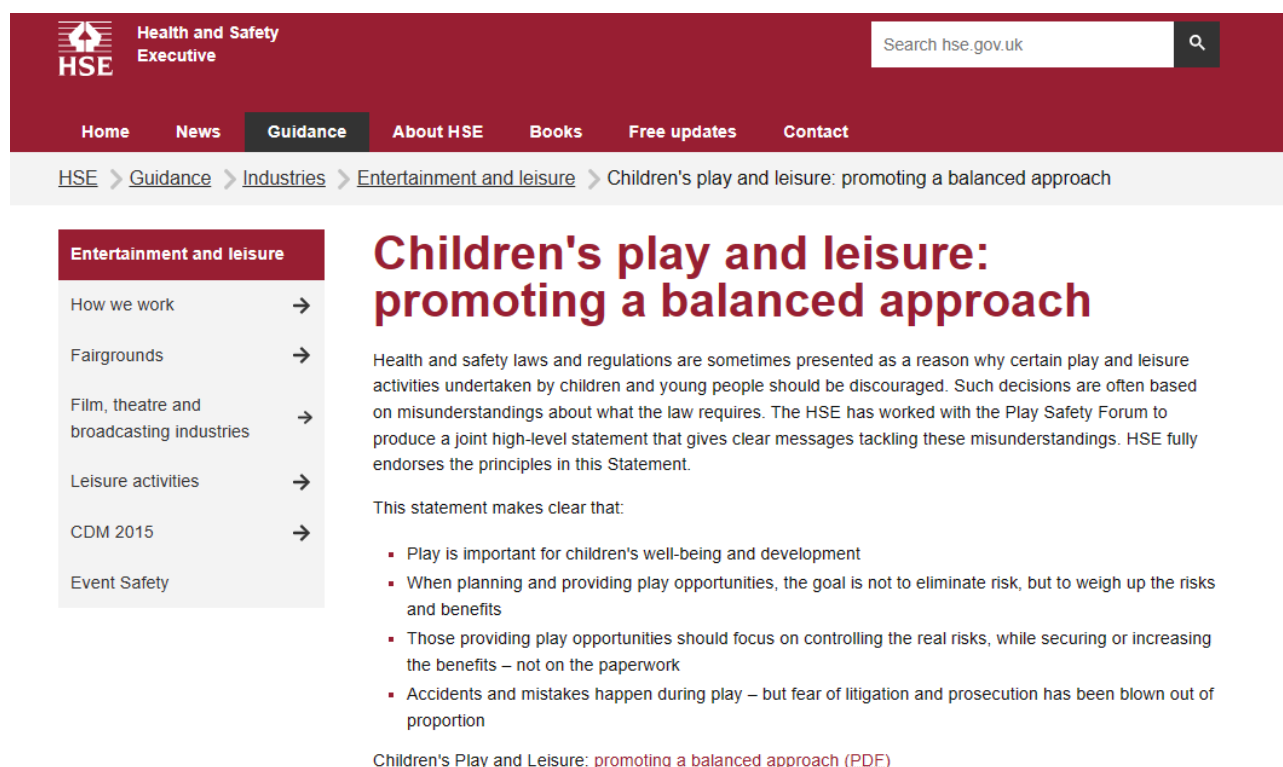
*'Play is great for children's wellbeing and development. When planning and providing play opportunities, the goal is not to eliminate risk, but to weigh up the risks and benefits. No child will learn about risk if they are wrapped in cotton wool.'*

Managing Risk in Play Provision: An Implementation Guide (Play Safety Forum, 2012)

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.

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)*.



The screenshot shows the HSE website interface. At the top, there is a search bar and navigation links for Home, News, Guidance, About HSE, Books, Free updates, and Contact. The breadcrumb trail reads: HSE > Guidance > Industries > Entertainment and leisure > Children's play and leisure: promoting a balanced approach. On the left, a sidebar menu lists 'Entertainment and leisure' with sub-items: How we work, Fairgrounds, Film, theatre and broadcasting industries, Leisure activities, CDM 2015, and Event Safety. The main content area features the title 'Children's play and leisure: promoting a balanced approach' in large red text. Below the title, a paragraph explains that health and safety laws are sometimes misinterpreted as discouraging play, and that the HSE has worked with the Play Safety Forum to produce a joint statement. A bulleted list follows, stating that play is important for children's well-being, that the goal is to weigh risks and benefits, that play should focus on real risks while securing benefits, and that accidents during play are common but fear of litigation has been blown out of proportion. At the bottom, a link is provided for the PDF version of the statement.

Please see the full HSE Managing Risk Statement in Appendix 1 of this policy.

## 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.

At Tadley Community Primary School we will ensure that the numbers of staff available and patrolling the play area to support play are regularly assessed and are suitable for the number of children at play.

OPAL have developed the five-part RAPID Response to manage risk in our school approach which we are following alongside the guidance on managing loose parts set out in **Appendix 2**.

### **RAPID**

**Risk-Benefit Assessment** - we look at our usual environment and practices annually, and also when any significant changes take place, and keep a written record of the areas using the risk-benefit template provided by OPAL. Our assessments will cover hazards deemed to have the potential for unacceptable risk of death or serious injury. **This has been shared with all staff, governors, parents and is available on our school website.**

**Assemblies** - Every Monday we hold an OPAL Play section as part of our whole school assembly. This allows us to inform, discuss and negotiate risks that arise during play. We keep a log of these assemblies noting the risks that have been discussed and how they will be managed.

**Play Policy** - this policy has been approved by our governing body and leadership and forms the basis of our understanding and decision making about managing risk in play. This includes the formal adoption of the Health and Safety Executive's guidance.

**Inspection** - Fixed equipment will have an annual inspection by a certified inspector. Ongoing visual inspections are carried out by our play coordinator and site manager and recorded. This allows us to identify damaged equipment and fix things as required.

**Dynamic Risk Assessment** - our play team will be aware of the changing nature of the play taking place. They will support children to assess and manage risk as much as possible for themselves, but also be vigilant and take action if they think that risk of serious harm is becoming unacceptably likely. Actions taken by our play team 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.

At Tadley we are committed to maintaining a 'relaxed vigilance' to ensure that play does not suffer due to adults being over-anxious and having too much direct input. We believe that most play is not dangerous and that children can develop a high degree of competence, given practice, over time. However, our play team will be vigilant and be aware of the kinds of play and resources being used in their area, who is playing and what the likely risks are.

At Tadley, all staff have been introduced to dynamic risk assessment as part of our OPAL whole school training. Our play team has regular meetings around their use of dynamic risk assessments to ensure it is clear of all expectations.

## 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.

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.

We have a dedicated Play Leader who leads our Play Team in training, reflection and support. We follow the following Play Principles (See Appendix Three):

### Play Principle One:

*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.*

### Play Principle Two:

*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.*

### Play Principle Three:

*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.*

### Play Principle Four:

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

### Play Principle Five:

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

### Play Principle Six:

*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.*

### Play Principle Seven:

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



Play Principle Eight:

*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.*

## **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)

A rich play environment supports children in developing confidence and how to advocate for their own rights. It increases their social and emotional capabilities and helps to develop a love and enjoyment of the outdoors, which is a key foundation for caring for the environment and our world.

Written by: SLT & OPAL  
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