



Play Policy

Approval confirmed:

Designation	Name	Date	Signature
Headteacher	Mrs J Laird	March 2024	
Chair of LAB	Mrs M Saunders	March 2024	

Paternoster School Play Policy

Commitment

Paternoster School is committed to providing high quality play provision that is welcoming and accessible to every child. This policy is in place to guide decisions that influence play provision and to ensure that pupils have access to rich and varied opportunities to explore and learn through play throughout the school day.

Rationale

On average, children spend 20% of their school week accessing self-directed time or play opportunities. At Paternoster School this figure can be higher dependant on the individual needs of the pupils. 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."*

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 be messy, noisy and dirty. Play can involve other people or it can be a solitary activity and it may, or may not involve equipment.

Paternoster School believes that play is integral to children's happiness, health and development. We recognise that children's play must be facilitated, meaning consideration must be given to the way opportunities are provided for the children to explore, manipulate, create, reflect, affect their environment, take risks and challenge themselves.

Rights

Paternoster 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 will involve children in decisions that influence their play experiences at our school through the use of pupil voice, play assemblies and school council.

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)

Paternoster 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. Allowing children to take acceptable risk develops their ability to assess and respond to risks independently and to learn new skills as a result of this. 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'.

Comprehensive risk-benefit assessments will be reviewed annually and more regularly as appropriate. In addition to this, the school will also practice dynamic risk management with children, encouraging them to identify and manage risks in an environment where adults are present to support them.

Responsibility for ensuring children's safety extends to all staff taking appropriate action in the event of broken, dangerous or defective equipment being identified.

Supervision

Children should be supervised appropriately. This means allowing children to move between play areas within the school grounds, explore different play opportunities and have time away from adults. Adults should consider their role in children's play and that this is not defined by supervision alone. Adults can actively facilitate children's play through offering support and encouragement, asking questions and guiding children toward new ideas and concepts, demonstrating new ways to play with equipment, mediating between children and organising and leading playground games.

Equality and diversity

Paternoster is committed to providing a rich play offer that meets every child's needs regardless of age, gender, race, disability or other special needs. Children will be free to define for themselves what is 'age appropriate' in their play.

Play should not be limited to play and dinner times. Access to play should not be restricted by adverse weather conditions and every effort must be made to work with parents to provide suitable clothing for all types of play that children seek to experience at Paternoster School.

Environment

Paternoster School is committed to offering an inviting and enriching play environment. This includes consideration of the equipment offered, children's ability to roam freely and access different provisions and offering access to additional activities as required. Ongoing consideration will be made to providing access to quality play provision for children who may not be able to access play environment in a typical way.

Parents will be kept informed of Paternoster's School play provision through the website, parent mail and newsletters as appropriate.