



Dundry Primary School OPAL Play Policy

The policy will be reviewed annually and revised where necessary.

Signed *A. Maggs* Headteacher Date: 25.10.24

This policy was endorsed by the Board of Governors at their meeting on

Signed *R. Noall* Chair of Governors Ratified at T1 2024 Governors

Date for Review: July 2025

1. Commitment

Article 31 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child states that ‘A child has the right to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts.’

Dundry CE Primary School recognises that play is an essential part of a happy and healthy childhood; and that children should have ‘the chance to play in a safe, supportive environment’ and. As a school, we 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 Dundry we are committed to using our school vision to make a ‘big difference’ to the lives of our children 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. These skills link closely to our values of Trust, Hope, Resilience, Joy, Kindness and Respect.

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

At Dundry 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 play times 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.*”

This ethos dovetails with the Thrive approach adopted through our Relationships and Behaviour Policy which supports and encourages the development of confident, curious, creative and capable



children and young people, who are open to learning and better equipped to deal with life's ups and downs.

We believe that all children need opportunities to play that allow them to explore, manipulate, experience and affect their environment. With better quality play opportunities there are fewer behaviour problems, a more positive attitude to school and improved skills development and learning. As the children improve their quality of play and have more enriching play times, there are fewer accidents and classroom learning is enhanced as the children come in from play happy and ready to learn.

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 we at Dundry Primary School aim to:

- Provide a varied, challenging and stimulating environment in which to play and be creative.
- 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 demonstrating our school values and applying our Dundry Learning powers.
- Enable children to develop respect for their surroundings and each other.
- Aid children's physical, emotional, social, spiritual and intellectual development.
- Promote independence and teamwork within children.
- Build emotional and physical resilience.
- Enable children to develop into confident individuals



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)

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'*.

Dundry Primary School will use the Health and Safety Executive's guidance on Managing Risk in Play and Leisure (www.hse.gov.uk) (**Appendix 1**) as its principle guiding documents in making decisions relating to risk and play.

In addition to standard risk-benefit assessments the school will practise dynamic risk management with children, encouraging them to identify and manage risks in an environment where adults are present to support them. We will adopt a risk-benefit approach and use dynamic risk assessments (**Appendix 2**) to manage our duty of care to protect and provide for children's needs.

7. The adult's role in play

We, as an entire staff, are fully committed to working with children to provide the play experiences that they want and need in their school. We will have a continuing dialogue with children about the play provision in the playground which will include regular play assemblies, pupil voice involvement, surveys and other pupil voice outlets.

The adult's role will also be to facilitate play and encourage children to assess the risks and benefits of activities within the play setting. The school is working with OPAL (www.outdoorplayandlearning.org.uk) to help guide a strategic approach to developing play at Dundry. In addition to this the Dundry Play Team (**Appendix 3**) will work in collaboration with parents, teachers, teaching assistants, SMSAs and all other staff as well as the children to implement the changes highlighted in this policy. The Dundry play team will use ranging and remote supervision models. They will ensure that the broadest possible range of play opportunities are available to children: to observe, reflect and analyse the play that is happening and select



a mode of intervention or make a change to the play space if needed to gain an awareness of the kinds of play and levels of risk likely to be emerging. The play team will ensure that the play space is inclusive – supporting all children to make the most of the opportunities available in their own way.

Children's Role in Play

The children will all have access to their own version of the play policy. **(Appendix 4)** It will also include the rights and responsibilities of the children to

- Have ownership of their play and outdoor learning experiences
- Respect and look after each other, their environment, equipment and toys.
- To be aware of sanctions surrounding purposely dangerous or unsafe behaviour
- Ensure that play times are fun for everybody

This children's policy will be shared and explained to all children regularly as part of ongoing assemblies, discussions and dialogue in class and with the pupil voice teams.

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

At Dundry Primary School we will:

- use the outdoor space as a natural resource for learning and playing, encouraging the children to value natural or found objects for play
- include the children when planning for playing and learning outdoors
- ensure that the outdoor area offers all children the opportunity to investigate, take risks and explore and use their imagination and creativity
- expect the children to respect the outdoor environment and care for living things
- give children the opportunity to manage the space and freedom afforded by the outdoors
- enrich the quality of the environment to maximise variety of play types and increase play value
- ensure that the playground is an integrated area where all children from Reception to Year 6 can play safely
- teach the children their responsibilities with regard to maintaining the quality of their outdoor space, and the equipment available and ensure they take an active part in doing this
- promote children's pride for the outdoor space that belongs to them



At Dundry Primary School we encourage all stakeholders to reflect on how 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 and helps develop a love and enjoyment of the outdoors, which is a key foundation for caring for the environment.

Appendix 1

[Health and Safety Executive's guidance on Managing Risk in Play and Leisure](#)

Appendix 2

Risk Assessment Date: 25.10.24 **Assessed by:** Anne-Marie Maggs/Sarah Warren

[Risk Benefit Assessment](#)

Appendix 3

Structure of adult roles in practice

OPAL Team

This is the team working directly with OPAL to ensure policy is in place and develop play and outdoor learning at Dundry Primary School. It consists of:

The Head Teacher- Mrs Anne-Marie Maggs

Curriculum Leader for Play- Mrs Sarah Warren

Play Coordinator 1 - Mrs Sally Elliott

Assistant Play Co-ordinator - Miss Lucy Law

SMSA representative- Miss Lucy Law

Play Team Members- Mrs Shelley Chaplin, Mrs Laura Lagana, Mrs Laura Bazeley, Miss Amy Patch

Parent and governor representative- Mrs Jessica Wyrwas

Dundry Primary Play Team

All adults working at the school are part of the play team and have a responsibility to follow this policy.

However more specifically at lunch times the following structure exists:

Curriculum Leader for Play
(Leads and manages strategy)



Play Coordinator 1

(Leads and manages playtimes alongside the assistant coordinator)

Assistant Play Coordinator

(Works alongside play leader and steps up in their absence)

Play Team Members

(Support children's play as describe in paragraph 7)

Appendix 4

Children's Play Policy

- We have the right to have fun at playtimes. We have the responsibility to make sure that everyone has fun and our play does not stop this.
- We have the right to make our own decisions about our play and choose what we do. We have the responsibility to make sure our decisions don't affect others in a negative way.
- We have the right to choose who we play with. We have the responsibility that no one is left out of play or forced to do something they don't want to.
- We have the right play with lots of different toys and have a well looked after environment. We have the responsibility to take pride in, respect and look after our environment and toys.
- We have the right to explore, be creative and take thoughtful risks. We have the responsibility to think about what we are doing and talk to a play maker about the risks we are taking if they ask us to.