



# Finham Primary School Play Policy Updated September 2024

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**UN Convention** - Article 31 states that countries must "recognize the right of the child 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."

At Finham Primary School we aim to consistently create a variety of play opportunities through our break time and lunchtime provision, ensuring ALL children have access to high quality and effective play opportunities.

There's no right or wrong way to play. Freely chosen play improves children's health, well-being and development. Play improves the cognitive, physical, social, and emotional well-being of children and young people. Through play, children learn about the world and themselves. They also learn skills they need for study, work and relationships such as: confidence, self-esteem, resilience, interaction, social skills, independence, curiosity and coping with challenging situations.

Physical play such as running, skipping and riding a bicycle helps children develop: good physical fitness, agility, stamina, co-ordination and balance.

Playing can help children develop their social skills with others. By listening, paying attention and sharing play experiences, this helps a child: explore their feelings, develop self-discipline, learn how to express themselves and work out emotional aspects of life. Children often want to create challenge and uncertainty in their play. Through risky, challenging play, children test themselves and find out their own limits. They learn how to deal with risk through play and can use these same skills later in life.

## 1. Commitment

At Finham Primary School we 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

We believe that all children need opportunities 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 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."*

*At Finham Primary School, the OPAL programme aligns with our key school values of Teamwork, Respect, Integrity, Enjoyment and Discipline.*

### 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 the school environment, the natural environment 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.
- Provide opportunities for children to use and develop their use of the school values of Teamwork, Respect, Integrity, Enjoyment and Discipline independently within their play.

## 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) to support the management of risk through play.

**Children's Play and Leisure: Promoting a Balanced Approach** states:

- *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.*
- *Accidents and mistakes happen during play.*

Finham Primary School adopts 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'*.

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.

## 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, with Reception children becoming knowledgeable of the school grounds, available equipment, how they can get help/support prior to freely chosen access to OPAL. Supervisors will use ranging and remote supervision models, so that children can quickly find an adult and adults can patrol designated areas to support play and the management of risks through Dynamic risk assessments.

## 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. They are also available to participate in the play if invited by the child or if deemed appropriate to support the management of risk.

## 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)

To be reviewed every two years

Signed by:

A blue ink signature, appearing to read 'R Crow', written in a cursive style.

Rachel Crow, Chair of Governor. Date October 2024

A black ink signature, appearing to read 'S. Bracken', written in a cursive style.

Sarah Bracken, Headteacher. Date October 2024