

Christ Church
Church of England
Primary School



Play Policy



May 2024

Vision:



JOHN 8:12

Our Vision



At Christ Church:

- Pupils will feel safe, accepted, loved and positively understand their worth and potential as members of God's wider world.
- All will grow in the light of Christ and gain a positive experience and understanding of Christianity.
- Pupils will experience a depth and breadth of education of the highest quality, inspiring them to develop skills and enthusiasm for lifelong learning.

Together we learn, Together we achieve, Together we grow in the light of Christ.

Background:

Introduction:

Christ Church Primary School recognises the importance of high-quality, sustainable play for children, regardless of their needs and abilities. We understand that inclusive play is achieved by offering carefully considered outdoor spaces that offer a range of play opportunities. As a result, we have embarked on an outdoor play and learning project with OPAL to further develop our play offer.

Commitment and Rationale:

Children spend 1.4 years of their time at primary school engaging in playtimes – this is 20% of their school career. Changes in culture and society have led to 'play poverty' in childhood. Playtime is therefore valuable and needs coherent planning in order for children to bridge the gap and give children the same opportunities that many of us had as children.

Here at Christ Church we recognise that play is an essential part of a happy and healthy childhood. 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.

Play during school break times is recognised for the important contribution it makes on education and lifelong learning. Play is also recognised for having a positive impact on children's behaviour and learning in class. We have learnt through experience that children that have enjoyable break times and are fulfilled by the activities they engage in are more likely to be focused and ready for learning in the classroom.

Knowing the growing importance of play, Play England drew up The Charter for Children's Play which sets out a vision for play and states that:

- Children need time and space to play at school.
- Adults should let children play.
- Children value and benefit from staffed play provision.
- Children's play is enriched by skilled play workers.
- Children sometimes need extra support to enjoy their right to play.

By embarking on the OPAL project we hope that children will:

- be happy and have improved mental health and wellbeing.
- have increased self-awareness and self-esteem;
- improve their language and communication skills;
- improve their concentration;
- improve their imagination, independence and creativity;
- improve their social skills;
- be resilient, confident problem solvers;
- be ready for anything as a result of negotiation and independence of thought;
- develop life skills; and
- improve physical development, coordination and fitness

Christ Church Primary School fully recognises its duties and responsibilities in supporting children with play during break times and intends to make them rich environments, full of opportunities for learning and enjoyment. We want to help children to be safe, reliable, independent and well-rounded individuals that are prepared for the 21st century. We also aim to give our children confidence and a desire to achieve their full potential in and out of the classroom environment. We hope that the project will also enhance the children's overall health and wellbeing.

What is play?

Play is any freely chosen activity which a child finds satisfying and creative. It may or may not involve equipment or other people. It may be serious or light hearted. It may produce something or it may be done simply for its own sake. It allows children an opportunity to be creative, to make decisions and to assess and manage risks.

At Christ Church Primary school we recognise that play may need to make a noise, get dirty, make a mess and sometimes be out of the direct gaze of adults. We believe that the role of the adults is to support the play process. We aim for children to have the opportunity for 'free range' play within the school grounds.

We know that play has many benefits. Here at Christ Church we believe;

- 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.

Rights:

Christ Church recognises the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which include:

Article 12: All children have the right to have a say in all matters affecting them and to have their views taken seriously.

Article 31: All children have the right to relax, play and join in with artistic and cultural activities.

At Christ Church Primary School we promote these rights as a central focus in all that we do. We aim to provide a secure, caring environment where all children are happy, motivated, relaxed and able to reach their full potential. Children have the right to be happy and to play and therefore, they have the responsibility to be ready, respectful and safe at lunchtime. This means that they must follow instructions and use equipment safely, risk assess and tidy equipment away to have fun. Adults respect this right by providing opportunities for creative, exciting play, by assessing risk daily, encouraging the children to assess risk daily and also helping the children to tidy up. Adults respect this right also by using emotion coaching and conflict resolution in line with our behaviour policy to support all children.

Our Aims:

Our school aims are:

- To provide children with a play setting which is both stimulating and challenging.
- To allow children to take risks
- To provide children with a range of environments which will support their learning across the curriculum and about the world around them.

We aim to give the children the opportunity to:

- Explore the world around them through playful experimentation
- Develop social skills, enhancing communication, collaboration and problem solving.
- Encourage resilience and self-confidence.
- Think creatively
- Develop independence and take responsibility for themselves and others.
- Develop physical health
- Develop emotional health, allowing the balance between acting freely and allowing everyone to have their rights.
- To develop skills in self-assessing and managing risk.

Health, Safety, Benefit and Risk

An essential element of exploration within the medium of play is the opportunity for children to experience freely chosen activities, where they can take acceptable risks and challenge themselves beyond their existing capabilities.

'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)

Allowing children to take acceptable risk develops their ability to judge risk independently and learn new skills. All children both need and want to take risks in order to explore limits, venture into new experiences and develop their capacities, from a very young age and from their earliest play experiences. Children would never learn to walk, climb stairs or ride a bicycle unless they were strongly motivated to respond to challenges involving a risk of injury.

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'*.

Christ Church 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).

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.

To manage the levels of risk we will follow the guidelines below:

- Recognise the need for professional judgment in setting the balance between safety and goals.
- All staff should self-assess and manage risk, e.g. red tape should be used to section off play areas or equipment which are deemed to be 'high risk.'
- Ensure risks are as apparent as possible to staff and children.
- Ensure risks that children may not appreciate are controlled and managed Provide staff with training to supervise play setting.
- We may not be able to see every child all of the time, especially when the children are using the trees.
- All staff are assigned a zone on a termly rotation and it is expected that staff will move around throughout the playtime, finding out what the children are doing and where the children are playing.

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 will 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. Supervision will take remote and ranging models, so that children can quickly find an adult, and adults can patrol the playground to gain an awareness of the kinds of play and levels of risk likely to be emerging. We will ensure that the numbers of staff available and overseeing the play area to support play are assessed and is suitable for the number of children at play.

The Adults' Role in Play

We recognise through experience that play can be further enhanced when it is properly directed by adults who are trained and equipped with play skills.

Christ Church Primary School aims to maximize the benefits children gain from play by training all staff who supervise playtime in the Playwork Principles. Staff will use and refer to these principles when appropriate interventions are needed, and ultimately will strive for facilitating an environment which nurtures children's self-directed play. The Playwork Principles guidance includes:

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

The playworker's core function is to create an environment which will stimulate children's play. Playworkers 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 to make changes that could further enhance play and learning. Playworkers should ensure that the play space is inclusive – supporting all children to make the most of the opportunities available in their own way. 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.

Playground rules will be kept to the minimum required to maintain safety and all playground rules will be agreed by the Play working party.

The 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.

Therefore, Christ Church Primary School will create plans to transform the school grounds over several years to promote the continued creation and recreation of the play space by the children. In order to do this we have to landscape some of the playground and provide plenty of open ended materials for play opportunities.

We aim to:

- Play outdoors in all weathers and minimise the amount of indoor play.
- Use the outdoor space as a natural resource for learning and playing;
- Include the children when planning for playing and learning outdoors;
- Ensure that the outdoor area offers children the opportunity to investigate and explore, problem solve, use their imagination and creativity;
- Encourage the children to respect the outdoor environment and care for living things;
- Give children the opportunity to manage, play in and use the space and freedom afforded by the outdoors; and
- Enrich the quality of the environment to maximise variety of play types and increase play value.

The greater the range of experiences presented by a play environment, the more children will naturally explore and learn through play. The vital ingredients for these experiences are loose parts: attractive, flexible materials that children can readily change, manipulate and control for themselves.

The school intends to provide a range of loose parts and to continue to introduce new loose parts as the project continues.

Health and Safety

All activities, play areas and equipment will be subject to standard checks on a daily and/or periodic basis. These checks will be documented through the benefit risk assessment, or kept on file in the office.

The play workers will be responsible for the site, equipment and resources in general, which are intended to be open access. They will also be responsible for any activities as well as the conduct and behaviour of those in their care. They

will be responsible for ensuring that those persons in their care use the site and equipment in a safe, controlled and appropriate manner to ensure the wellbeing of ALL users on site.

It is the responsibility of all visitors and staff to work within agreed policy and procedures and to adhere to all control measures imposed as a result of assessments.

It is the responsibility of all playworkers to bring any potential hazard or concerns regarding the site, equipment or activities to the attention of the Playleader on duty.

It is then the responsibility of the Playleader on duty to act upon any concerns and to ensure that any deficiencies are rectified immediately and to report to the OPAL lead as soon as possible.