

School Policy

School policies are reviewed by the school Senior Leadership Team (SLT) and then reviewed and ratified by the Governing Body. Different committees have responsibility for ratifying policies. They are: Full Governing Body (FGB), Data and Curriculum Committee (D+C) and Leadership and Management Committee (L+M)

This policy is the most up to date version. It is reviewed and amended according to the review frequency, and the chronology gives the log of this.

Policy Name	Outdoor Play and Learning (OPAL) Policy
Review Frequency	
Responsible to	

Chronology

Date reviewed and ratified	Reviewed and agreed by	Date of next review

Outdoor Play and Learning (OPAL) Policy

Commitment:

Mount Pleasant CE VC Junior School refers 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.

Rationale:

Mount Pleasant CE VC Junior 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.

Recent feedback from staff, governors, parents and pupils highlights that children have much less access to free play opportunities than they used to in previous generations. With this in mind, along with the increase in child obesity, childhood stress and anxiety, we prioritise outdoor play provision as an important part of our school day. Play accounts for 20% of the time that children are in school therefore it deserves attention and resources to make it effective, enjoyable and beneficial.

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 Mount Pleasant CE VC Junior School, the play curriculum has been tailored to enable our pupils to become independent, creative individuals through a happy, safe and inclusive play environment. Our OPAL team and dedicated play makers will ensure that all children are provided with opportunities to develop important skills and knowledge to develop their learning journey through the means of play. Our school vision and Christian Ethos is at the forefront of our approach to play, giving children the opportunity to develop our key values and Christian Values through creative play.

School Vision:

Learning through Faith, Family and Friendship

*We are a happy, safe, inclusive school where excellence is celebrated. A Christian ethos encourages responsible behaviour and respect through Friendship, Trust and Forgiveness. We inspire a **love** of learning that encourages individuality, creativity and independence that extends from the school family into the wider world, enabling all to flourish.*

Jesus said, 'Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another.' John 13:34

Christian Values:



Definition and Value of Play:

Definition of Play

The following definitions give an insight into the importance of play, and why it is needed to develop children holistically.

- "Play is a free activity standing quite consciously outside 'ordinary' life as being 'not serious,' but at the same time absorbing the player intensely and utterly. It is an activity connected with no material interest, and no profit can be gained by it. It proceeds within its own proper boundaries of time and space according to fixed rules and in an orderly manner." - Johan Huizinga (Homo Ludens, 1955).
- "Children's play is characterised as an activity that is (a) "desired" by the child whom is playing, (b) "always involves an imaginary situation," and (c) "always involves rules" (which are decided upon by the players)". (Lev Vygotsky, 1978).

- "The right to play is a child's first claim on the community. Play is nature's training for life. No community can infringe that right without enduring harm to the minds and bodies of its citizens." (David Lloyd George, 1926).

Our Vision for Play:

At Mount Pleasant CE VC Junior school, we have high expectations for play. We believe that our children should be given the opportunities for independence and creativity throughout carefully planned play. Through our shared play charter, we promote happy, safe and inclusive play for our whole school community. We believe that play should be imaginative and open-ended with calculated risk to develop children as adventurous risk takers who are aware of their environment preparing them to flourish in later life.

Our Play Charter:



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.

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.

Article 31 of the Unicef Convention on the Rights of the Child states that children have the right to relax and play, and to join in a wide range of cultural, artistic and other recreational activities. From this, PlayEngland created The Charter for Children's Play which clearly states that:

- Children should have spaces to spend adequate time playing at school.
- Adults should always let children play; this is non-negotiable.
- Children greatly value and benefit from staffed play provision.
- Children's play is augmented by expert play workers.
- Children sometimes need extra support to enjoy their right to play, this should always be provided when needed.

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'*.

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. All staff are aware of the

risk-benefit assessment and have access to this. Please see **Appendix A** for further information.

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. 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.

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 (**Appendix B**). Children will be introduced to new play equipment or play areas through play workshops prior to it being introduced into the school's play provision. Play workshops will be used to celebrate play, introduce new play equipment or resources for play, negotiate how to play safely as a community and innovate play opportunities.

Supervision:

The school recognises OPAL's three models of supervision: Direct, Remote and Ranging. Except for new children in Year 3, 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 Mount Pleasant CE VC Junior School, we have divided our school site into five supervision zones (see Appendix D). Each zone will have a designated member of staff who will supervise the children and range of activities in that zone. Supervisors will also wear hi-vis jackets to allow for children to find an adult as quickly as possible. To support the supervision of our school site, all staff on supervisory duty have a walkie-talkie on their person to aid our communication and dynamic supervision.

Remote – this is where a supervisor or supervisors are located at a relatively static location some distance from an activity, e.g. supervisor on the playground and activity 20 metres or more away. This style is widely used in other countries and its purpose is for an adult to be present to respond rapidly to an accident or serious behaviour incident.

Ranging – this is where the supervisor moves around the play area, usually on a set course/schedule. The distance from pupils therefore differs but can be 20 metres or more away. On a large site, supervisors should have zones so that they know which parts of the site they are covering and they should modify their attention based on the kinds of play and their judgement about areas of highest risk

The school facilitates the use of OPAL equipment during the hours of 8.45am-3:30 pm Monday to Friday. We do not recommend children using this equipment outside of school hours and if parents/carers wish to let their children do so, parents/carers will have full responsibility for this.

Impact on Parents:

We understand that allowing children access to the fields all year round, in addition to resources which could be muddy, can impact on parents' wash load. We firmly believe the benefits and happiness of the children, along with the other benefits mentioned previously, outweigh the cons. We will be more relaxed on clothing and footwear in school in order to support parents. Children should always have a waterproof jacket or coat in school but they may also have separate bottoms and a pair of wellies so they can access the field at all times. Your support is sincerely appreciated.

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 (**Appendix C**). 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.

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.

Appendices:

A: [HSE Managing Risk Guidance \(2012\)](#)

B: [Best Play. What Play Provision Should Do for Children. National Playing Fields Association \(2000\)](#)

C: [Playwork Essentials \(OPAL\)](#)

D: Mount Pleasant CE VC Junior School Supervision Areas.



Yellow Zone: Positioned between the quad and LKS2 playground. In the future, this position will provide direct supervision for wheeley play and remote supervision for the quad.

Blue Zone: Moving between the mud kitchen and digging area. This position will provide ranging supervision across these activities and the top half of the field.

Red Zone. Positioned near the large loose parts. When opened, this position will provide direct (at first then ranging) supervision for large loose parts whilst acting as a remote supervisor for the remaining areas of the field.

Green Zone: Positioned near the bottom of the steps. This position will provide ranging supervision for both the playground and trim trail. There a number of low-risk activities in this area.

Orange Zone: Moving between the UKS2 trim trail and Yurt depending on the movement and flow of children. This position will provide ranging supervision for the Yurt and the boat once it is implemented. As OPAL progresses and more children are accessing the field, the position may become more mobile between UKS2 and the Yurt dependent on pupil numbers.

Types of supervision:

Direct: Supervising an area or activity directly.

Ranging: Supervising an area whilst moving around and surveying the activities within an area. Moving between activities and providing supervision where required.

Remote: Remaining static and available to any child within the area. Reacting to a situation as it emerges and providing direct or ranging supervision if required.

[E: Mount Pleasant CE VC Junior School OPAL Worship Log.](#)

[F: Mount Pleasant CE VC Junior School OPAL Risk Benefit Assessments](#)