Great Corby School and Nursery

Play Policy

At the time of publishing the following roles were held:	
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Position:	Headteacher
Signed:	JWinder Kirsty Fox
Date:	September 2024
Review date[2]**:**	July 2026

Our Commitment
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.

At Great Corby School and Nursery our ethos is to Explore, Discover and Learn and because of this we recognises that play is an essential part of a happy and healthy childhood. Our values of Be Ready, Be Respectful, Be Responsible encompass our expectation both in school and in the wider world.

Intent

Children spend up to 20% or 1.4 years of their time in school at play. Therefore, this time needs to be coherent and planned for. Changes in society such as heavier traffic, busier life styles and the wider spread and availability of technology on young people has seen play change. The school acknowledges the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child, especially Article 31, and supports the child's right 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."*

OPAL will promote our Great School Corby and Nursery ethos to enable children to

Explore, Discover and Learn

What is 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.

Following a play questionnaire 100% of parents stated that they felt play is important for their child, stating that they remember playing with skipping rope, chalk, imagination play, den building and climbing trees.

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.
- Creating opportunities for children to be responsible for themselves, other and the environment.
- Build emotional and physical resilience. We want children to be ready for anything.

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.

Benefit and risk

'Without opportunities to take acceptable levels of risk, children's development is inhibited, undermining their capability to deal with the wider unsupervised world'. (DCFS)

Many research studies have found that the social, physical and mental benefits to children of managed risks are vast. Children become more resilient, adaptable and are keen to try new experience. Children should be provided with opportunities to challlenges themselves and also to experience successes and failures. Taking risk and facing potential failure helps to develop pupils character which we define as a set of positive personal traits, dispositions and virtues that informs their motivation and guides their conduct. Enabling them to reflect on our school values and putting them into practise.

'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).*

Great Corby School and Nursery will use the Health and Safety Executive 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.

Our role as play providers is to facilitate the maximum amount of enriching opportunities for children to encounter. Children need to learn to manage risk for themselves in an environment that is as safe as it needs to be rather than completely devoid of risk.
At Great Corby School and Nursery, we aim to balance any potential risks by adopting a risk-benefit approach using dynamic risk assessments (Appendix 2)

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.

Direct	Remote	Ranging
This is where the supervisor(s) will be able to see all areas of play, and be nearby, around a maximum of 20 metres away. Some play features in these areas, such as playhouses or planting, may offer semi-hidden opportunities. This will be most common in nursery and reception classes.	This is where a supervisor or supervisors are located at a relatively static location at a good vantage point some distance from an activity, eg supervisor on the playground and activity 20 metres or more away, or supervisor in the middle of a flat school field. 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.	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.

Except for new children in school particular those in EYFS, 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 designated zones to gain an awareness of the kinds of play and levels of risk likely to be emerging. All staff will carry a basic first aid kit to enable them to deal with any minor accident that may occur quickly and efficiently.

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 to facilitate 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.

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