



Burnside Primary School Play Policy

This policy sets out Burnside Primary School's commitment to ensuring quality play opportunities are available to all children. As a school we aim to improve the way we think and provide opportunities for play. We believe that play is essential for physical, emotional, social, spiritual and intellectual development. In a time where outdoor play environments and opportunities are on the decline, the school grounds provide a crucial place for children to experience self-initiated play.

Our Aims

Our school play 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 children's learning across the curriculum and about the world around them.

Rationale

Children spend up to 20% 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 lifestyles, less areas for play and awareness of risk have led to 'play poverty' for today's children. This makes their play opportunities at school even more vital. Better play leads to happier children and in turn less behaviour problems, a more positive attitude to school, skills development, fewer accidents and more effective learning in the classroom as less staff time is spent resolving issues.

In addition to these reasons to prioritise play in school, 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.'

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 and make decisions. 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 it should give children the opportunity to play with all ages and that it is the role of the adults to support the play process. Children will also have the opportunity for 'free range' play within the school grounds.

We aim to give the children the opportunity to:

- Explore the world around them through playful experimentation
- Develop social skills, enhancing communication, collaboration, tolerance 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

Risk and Benefit

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 experiences. Children should be provided with opportunities to challenge themselves and also to experience successes and failures. At Burnside Primary School we are committed to providing these experiences for our children in a managed way. The Health and Safety Executive offer guidance on the provision of play in educational settings and state that: 'HSE fully supports the provision of play for all children in a variety of environments. HSE understands and accepts that this means children will often be exposed to play environments which, whilst well managed, carry a degree of risk and sometimes potential dangers'. (HSE, 2013)

Our role as play providers is to facilitate opportunities for children to encounter and manage risk for themselves in an environment that is as safe as it needs to be rather than completely devoid of risk. The benefit to children of challenging play opportunities should be balanced with any potential risk when carrying out risk assessments. We will adopt a risk-benefit approach to manage our duty of care to protect and our duty of care to provide for children's needs. At Burnside Primary School we use the Health and Safety Executive's guidance on Managing Risk in Play and Leisure (www.hse.gov.uk) and 'The Statement on Managing Risk in Play Provision' (Appendix 1) as our principle guiding documents in making decisions relating to risk and play.

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

- Recognise the need for professional judgement in setting the balance between safety and goals
- Ensure risks are as apparent as possible to staff and children.
- Design spaces where the risks of hazards are clearly apparent.
- Ensure risks that children may not appreciate are controlled and managed.
- Provide staff with training to supervise play setting.

Adults' Role in Play

All adults involved in the play sessions will be expected to be aware of and act on the following:

- check that all indoor and outdoor areas are safe for all children;
- make sure children know the rules and the boundaries;
- be consistent when applying rules;
- observe children during play;
- selectively and sensitively intervene during play;
- scaffold the child's learning in order that the learning experience is enhanced;
- welcome and value children as individuals; and
- understand that children can sometimes unleash powerful feelings in their play and be sensitive and responsive to cues that they may need comfort and reassurance.

When supervising children, we may not be able to see every child all of the time, especially when the children are using the trees. It is expected that staff will move around throughout playtime, finding out what the children are doing and where the children are playing. Staff can then check in on the children's play throughout playtime.

Inclusion

All children are entitled to welcoming and accessible play provision, irrespective of gender, economic or social circumstances, ethnic or cultural background or origin or individual abilities. It is our responsibility to ensure adequate provision is provided.

Review

This policy will be closely monitored by the head teacher and OPAL lead. A working group comprising of play workers, play consultants, governor, head teacher, deputy head and outdoor specialist, will take responsibility for managing the action plan for play. This policy has been shared with the whole school community.

Date agreed by Governors: February 2018

Date for review: February 2019