Elveden C of E Primary Academy

Play Policy

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Completed by: Z Maguire

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Our PLAY Policy

1. 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.

2. Rationale

Our school believes that all children need opportunities to play that allow them to explore, manipulate, experience and affect their environment. The school acknowledges the UN Convention on 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 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.*"

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Our Play Aims and Principles

Elveden C of E Primary Academy is committed to providing a high quality learning experience for all pupils and our play provision is no exception. At the heart of our educational mission lies a steadfast commitment to nurturing the holistic development of every learner. Our play provision intent is grounded in the values of hope, trust, respect,forgiveness,friendship and perseverance which underpin our aspiration to cultivate not only knowledgeable individuals but also responsible and compassionate members of society.
Our 6 Values are:

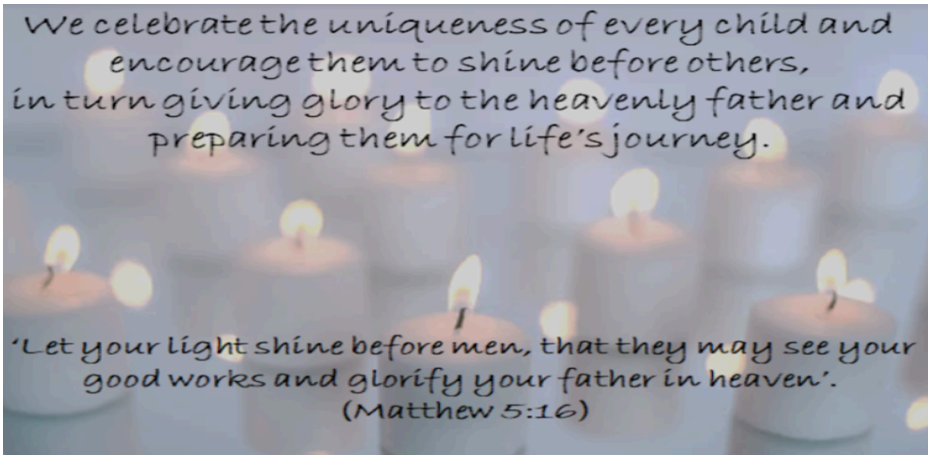
- ***Hope:*** be hopeful for their own development in their curiosity, being willing to learn from their mistakes and describe their progress.
- ***Trust:*** be trustworthy and show others they can be trusted to make good decisions and use resources carefully.
- ***Respect:*** be respectful of each other's ideas, thoughts and explanations.
- ***Forgiveness:*** be aware of how their words/actions can impact others when discussing their ideas and learning.
- ***Friendship:*** to build friendships with their peers, using social skills to communicate and interact with others.
- ***Perseverance:*** to continue to try their hardest even when things become tough, to learn from mistakes and not to give up.

Our Play opportunities enrich our children's wellbeing and actively enhance their physical development. Our play takes place each day at lunchtimes and during this time all children have the opportunity to interact and play with peers of all ages. This encourages solid relations to be built with different aged children and allow them to socially connect with those they may not have previously. Our play opportunities are intrinsically child-led, which allow our children to have ownership of their play, not only can they be totally imaginative and creative in free flow play, but they also learn key skills of instigation and facilitation of play with others. Our play opportunities provide them with a stimulating but safe environment, where transferable skills such as taking risks, building resilience and making autonomous choices are acquired. It offers them all a safe and nurturing environment through hands-on activities; where our 6 Christian Values are sufficiently interwoven within Free Play ideology.

In the outdoor space, our play opportunities also actively encourage all learning styles and can uncover 'multiple intelligences' in our children which not only support them holistically, but allows them to be the individuals that they deserve to be.

As a Christian school family, we feel it is paramount that our play sessions prepare children for their future and build on our key values of hope, trust, respect, forgiveness,friendship and perseverance.Children deal with conflict through play, build better relations and learn to be empathetic to others. They learn to forgive and be respectful through play. Play is also an opportunity for us to celebrate diversity and value all God's children with dignity. We also believe that play is a great opportunity for our children to 'Let Their Light Shine before others, so that they may see their good works' and through daily play experiences they can do this.

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Through play opportunities, our children have become more confident and resilient learners, who are also more imaginative and inquisitive about the world around them. Through discussions with children and parents, play at Elveden has shown to have a positive impact on the physical and mental wellbeing of our children.

3. Definition and value of play

Play is defined as any freely chosen activity that a child finds satisfying and creative. 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, different concepts and different 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.

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- 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 which 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.

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 (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.*

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. In the words of 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.

Appendix 1- H&SE Managing Risk Statement

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 recognizes OPAL's three models of supervision: Direct, Remote and Ranging. Except for new children in reception, 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 large sites to gain an awareness of the kinds of play and levels of risk likely to be

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emerging. The play zones will be made aware to the children before their opportunity to play and they must decide in which zone they wish to play. Each zone will be supervised by 2 adults from our Elveden Play Team.

8. The adult's role in play

The school will help children maximize 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. 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.

See Appendix 2- copy of the Playwork Principles

9. Equality and diversity

Through providing a rich play offering 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 (Please read our Equality and Inclusion Policy).

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 for all our children. We are aware of the importance of safeguarding and how a rich play environment support this, how it helps our children develop confidence in team building and advocating for their own rights, how it can increase their social and emotional capabilities and help them to develop a love and zest for the outdoors; a key foundation for life-long caring for the environment. We will use the document 'Best Play' to guide us on what a quality play environment should contain.*
http://www.playengland.org.uk/resource/best-play/

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Appendix 1

HSE

Health and Safety Executive

CHILDREN'S PLAY AND LEISURE – PROMOTING A BALANCED APPROACH

1. Health and safety laws and regulations are sometimes presented as a reason why certain play and leisure activities undertaken by children and young people should be discouraged. The reasons for this misunderstanding are many and varied. They include fears of litigation or criminal prosecution because even the most trivial risk has not been removed. There can be frustration with the amounts of paperwork involved, and misunderstanding about what needs to be done to control significant risks.

2. The purpose of this statement is to give clear messages which tackle these misunderstandings. In this statement, HSE makes clear that, as a regulator, it recognises the benefits of allowing children and young people of all ages and abilities to have challenging play opportunities.

3. 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 danger.

4. HSE wants to make sure that mistaken health and safety concerns do not create sterile play environments that lack challenge and so prevent children from expanding their learning and stretching their abilities.

5. This statement provides all those with a stake in encouraging children to play with a clear picture of HSE's perspective on these issues. HSE wants to encourage a focus on the sensible and proportionate control of real risks[1] and not on unnecessary paperwork. HSE's primary interest is in real risks arising from serious breaches of the law and our investigations are targeted at these issues.

Recognising the benefits of play

Key message: 'Play is great 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. No child will learn about risk if they are wrapped in cotton wool'.

6. HSE fully recognises that play brings the world to life for children. It provides for an exploration and understanding of their abilities; helps them to learn and develop; and exposes them to the realities of the world in which they will live, which is a world not free from risk but rather one where risk is ever present. The opportunity for play develops a child's risk awareness and prepares them for their future lives.

7. Striking the right balance between protecting children from the most serious risks and allowing them to reap the benefits of play is not always easy. It is not about eliminating risk. Nor is it

[1] The Courts have made clear that when health and safety law refers to 'risks', it is not contemplating risks that are trivial or fanciful. It is not the purpose to impose burdens on employers that are wholly unreasonable (R v Chargot (2009) 2 All ER 660 [27])

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about complicated methods of calculating risks or benefits. In essence, play is a safe and beneficial activity. Sensible adult judgements are all that is generally required to derive the best benefits to children whilst ensuring that they are not exposed to unnecessary risk. In making these judgements, industry standards such as EN 1176 offer bench marks that can help.

8. Striking the right balance *does* mean:

   - Weighing up risks and benefits when designing and providing play opportunities and activities
   - Focussing on and controlling the most serious risks, and those that are not beneficial to the play activity or foreseeable by the user
   - Recognising that the introduction of risk might form part of play opportunities and activity
   - Understanding that the purpose of risk control is not the elimination of all risk, and so accepting that the possibility of even serious or life-threatening injuries cannot be eliminated, though it should be managed
   - Ensuring that the benefits of play are experienced to the full

9. Striking the right balance *does not* mean:

   - All risks must be eliminated or continually reduced
   - Every aspect of play provision must be set out in copious paperwork as part of a misguided security blanket
   - Detailed assessments aimed at high-risk play activities are used for low-risk activities
   - Ignoring risks that are not beneficial or integral to the play activity, such as those introduced through poor maintenance of equipment
   - Mistakes and accidents will not happen

What parents and society should expect from play providers

Key message: 'Those providing play opportunities should focus on controlling the real risks, while securing or increasing the benefits – not on the paperwork'.

10. Play providers[2] should use their own judgement and expertise as well as, where appropriate, the judgement of others, to ensure that the assessments and controls proposed are proportionate to the risks involved.

11. They should communicate what these controls are, why they are necessary and so ensure everyone focuses on the important risks.

12. It is important that providers' arrangements ensure that:

    - The beneficial aspects of play - and the exposure of children to a level of risk and challenge - are not unnecessarily reduced
    - Assessment and judgement focuses on the real risks, not the trivial and fanciful
    - Controls are proportionate and so reflect the level of risk

[2] Play providers include those managing or providing play facilities or activities in parks, green spaces, adventure playgrounds, holiday playschemes, schools, youth clubs, family entertainment centres and childcare provision.

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13. To help with controlling risks sensibly and proportionately, the play sector has produced the publication *Managing Risk in Play Provision: Implementation Guide* which provides guidance on managing the risks in play. The approach in this guidance is that risks and benefits are considered alongside each other in a risk-benefit assessment. This includes an assessment of the risks which, while taking into account the benefits of the activity, ensures that any precautions are practicable and proportionate and reflect the level of risk. HSE supports this guidance, as a sensible approach to risk management.

If things go wrong

Key message: 'Accidents and mistakes happen during play – but fear of litigation and prosecution has been blown out of proportion.'

14. Play providers are expected to deal with risk responsibly, sensibly and proportionately. In practice, serious accidents of any kind are very unlikely. On the rare occasions when things go wrong, it is important to know how to respond to the incident properly and to conduct a balanced, transparent review.

15. In the case of the most serious failures of duty, prosecution rightly remains a possibility, and cannot be entirely ruled out. However, this possibility does not mean that play providers should eliminate even the most trivial of risks. Provided sensible and proportionate steps have been taken, it is highly unlikely there would be any breach of health and safety law involved, or that it would be in the public interest to bring a prosecution.

September 2012

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Appendix 2

PLAYWORK PRINCIPLES

These Principles establish the professional and ethical framework for playwork and as such must be regarded as a whole. They describe what is unique about play and playwork, and provide the playwork perspective for working with children and young people. They are based on the recognition that children and young people's capacity for positive development will be enhanced if given access to the broadest range of environments and play opportunities.

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

Playwork Principles Scrutiny Group, Cardiff 2005.

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