Endeavour
Multi-Academy Trust

OUTDOOR PLAY AND LEARNING (OPAL) POLICY

River View Primary & Nursery School

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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.

Rationale
Our 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.

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 River View, the opportunity to develop play opportunities also enables our children to live the school values in a number of different ways at lunchtimes.



Together we make our community **RICHER**

For example,

Children need to be respectful of other children, staff and the equipment provided.
Children need to be independent and imaginative in their play.
Children need to be caring and share resources.
Children need to be helpful and work as part of a team.
Children need to show equality and play alongside all children no matter what age or gender.
Children need to be resilient and not give up easily if their play fails to go as expected.

Definition and value of 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. It may be serious or lighthearted. 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 River View Primary & Nursery 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 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.

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- 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.

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.
- Allow children the right to assess risk, get out and tidy away equipment.
- Ensure adults respect these rights, providing inclusive opportunities for creative, exciting play, use of restorative justice to resolve conflicts and to support children who have additional needs at playtime.

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.

Alongside the rights of the children, we want all children to follow the school values and also to aspire to the school's vision of 'Through curiosity, exploration and experience we learn, grow and succeed together in a nurturing environment.' It is our belief that all children can aspire to this at River View and have the right to be safe and enjoy play times, and demonstrate excellence in their play. Children's achievements at lunchtimes will be acknowledged and highlighted to show the value of good play.

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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 **(Appendix 1)**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.

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 adult's present outdoors.

River View Primary & Nursery School has generous ratios of adults to children for playtimes and lunchtimes. We recognise 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. Supervisors will use ranging and remote supervision models, so that children can quickly find an adult and adults can move around the site to gain an awareness of the kinds of play and levels of risk likely to be emerging.

The adult's role in play

River View Primary & Nursery 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 2)**. 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 play leader'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 **(Appendix 3)**. A skilled and experienced playleader 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. Playleaders 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.

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Adults in school will continue to have a continuing dialogue with children regarding their thoughts about play. This will predominantly happen in weekly play assemblies following the CINI structure – Celebrate, Inform, Negotiate, Innovate, school council meetings and via the two-way dialogue that occurs due to strong pupil-teacher relationships that exist in school.

1. 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.

2. 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

In particular, at River View Primary & Nursery School, we will make best use of the large field to provide whole year-round enjoyment.

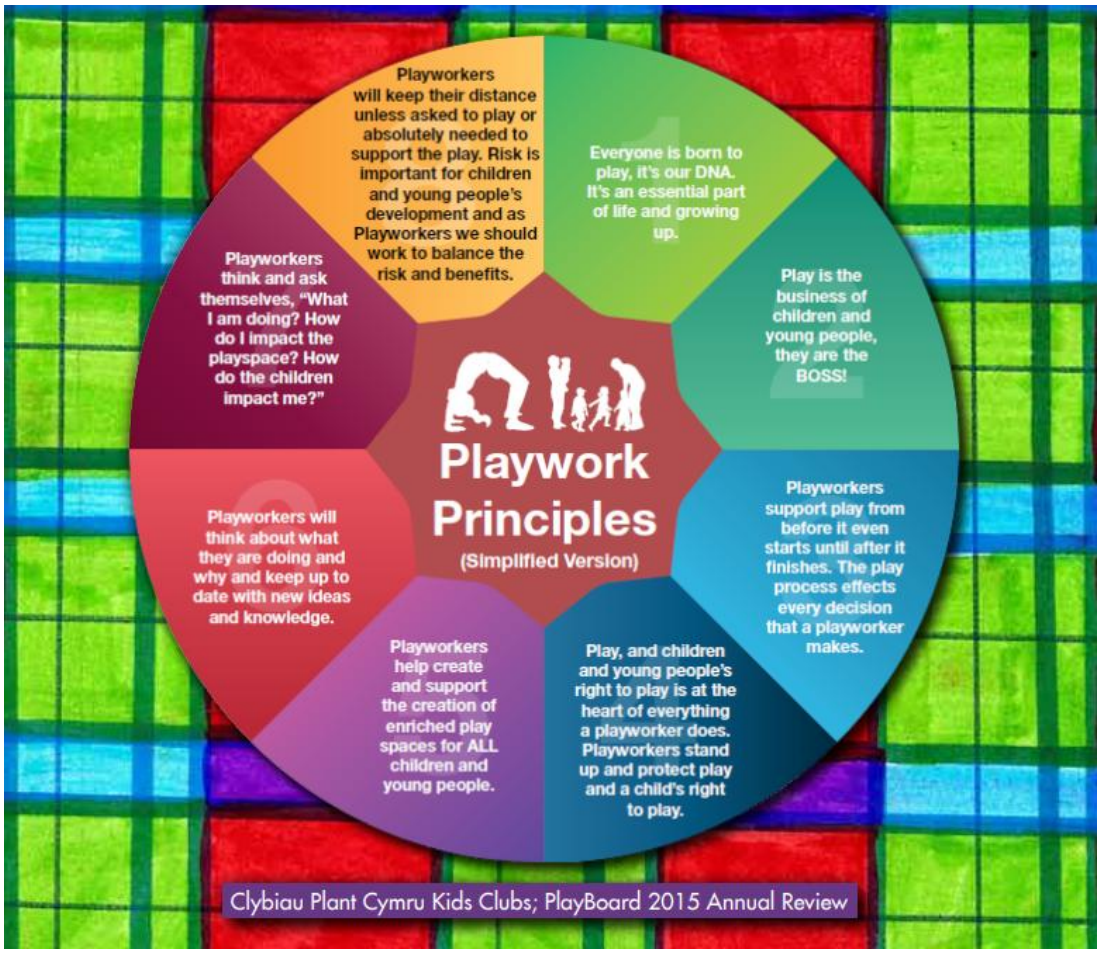
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Appendix 1 – Risk-Benefit Assessment Record Sheet

Risk-benefit assessment date: ..... **Assessed by:** .....

Description of activity, principle or object, who might be at risk and what kind of harm.	Benefit or utility or related policy	Description of risk management and maintenance agreed	Nominated person	Action date
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Appendix 2 – Playwork Principles



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Appendix 3 – 16 different play types



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